



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
P.O. Box 21668  
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

March 29, 2024

## **Agenda B-2: NMFS Management Report Tribal Relations Update**

### *Tribal Consultation Invitations*

On March 5, 2024, NMFS Alaska Region (AKR) provided an invitation for Tribal Consultation on upcoming action items at the April 2024 NPFMC Meeting.

1. The invitation for Tribal Consultation included a new online form to ensure a timely response to requests for consultations. NMFS encouraged tribal partners to use the online form to request tribal consultation as soon as possible if they had an interest in consulting with us on any of the topics listed in the invitation for Tribal Consultation.
2. NMFS Tribal Relations Coordinator worked with staff from the Tanana Chiefs Conference and Native of Village of Eagle to update our tribal directory for Western/Interior Tribes.
3. On March 6, 2024, NMFS Tribal Relations Coordinator forwarded the tribal consultation invitation to several Alaska Native Tribes, Corporations and Organizations via the NMFS tribal directory to maintain inclusive coverage while further updates to the directory are worked on.
4. NMFS did not receive a response from tribal entities for Tribal Consultation on April Council actions.

### *Tribal Engagement*

#### Preliminary Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on Bering Sea Chum Salmon Bycatch Management

Between January and March 2024, NMFS participated in three tribal engagement meetings hosted by the Kuskokwim Intertribal Fish Commission. Attendees included Kawerak, Inc., Bering Sea Elders Group, Tanana Chiefs Conference, Yukon River Intertribal Fish Commission, Association of Village Council Presidents, and several other tribal entities. On March 19, 2024, NMFS hosted a Tribal engagement session at which it fielded questions about the preliminary DEIS.

During these sessions, tribal entities shared their concern that the current scope of PSC limits (200,000-550,000) within the alternatives analysis in the preliminary DEIS was insufficient; Fall 2023 outreach on this action item was insufficient, and needs better timing to be more proactive and accessible to people who live in rural areas; concerns over Alternative 2, option 2, suboptions for abundance indices that focus on the Yukon River; additional opportunities for incorporation of information and Indigenous knowledge received from all effected tribal entities; and the need for co-stewardship opportunities on salmon management in the marine environment. There were additional tribal concerns about limited time between the production of the preliminary DEIS and the April meeting for tribal representatives, including elders, to digest the large amount of information available and be prepared to meaningfully participate in the Council process because of the lack of an executive summary.



### Cook Inlet Salmon Fishery Management Plan Amendment 16

NMFS held three tribal engagements early this year with Cook Inlet Tribes to share updated information on the status of the Cook Inlet salmon issues where tribal entities expressed their desire to develop an Indigenous subsistence set-aside. We are currently focused on completing the Cook Inlet FMP Amendment and rulemaking required by court order. We intend to honor these tribal consultation requests in the coming months and host conversations with Cook Inlet Tribes regarding the topic of a tribal subsistence fishery in the Cook Inlet EEZ Area. NMFS has been keeping CI Tribes updated on NMFS' progress of the final rulemaking.

### Additional Tribal Engagement Meetings, Events & Responses

1. Tribal engagement on Chinook salmon bycatch emergency petition - On February 27, 2024, NMFS met with members of Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fisheries Commission, Tanana Chiefs Conference, Association of Village Council Presidents, Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fisheries Commission, and Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association regarding their petition, submitted January 17, 2024, for emergency action to minimize and evaluate Chinook salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery.
2. Pre-April Council meeting Tribal engagement session - On March 18, 2024, NMFS hosted a Tribal engagement session focused on all upcoming actions for the April Council meeting. The chum bycatch topic was not included in this session because it had its own engagement session on March 19th (see page 1 for details).
3. Upcoming PEIS Planning Tribal engagement session - NMFS and NPFMC staff will host the first of a series of tribal engagement sessions regarding Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) Planning on April 17, 2024:
  - a. Time: 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM
  - b. Meeting Link: [meet.google.com/tiu-sttn-wzo](https://meet.google.com/tiu-sttn-wzo)
  - c. Phone Number: (US)+1 402-782-1262
  - d. PIN: 849 003 497
4. Central Council Tlingit & Haida Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA) tailings spill response - On March 14, 2024, NMFS Habitat Conservation Division received a letter from CCTHITA regarding a January 31, 2024 tailings spill that occurred at the Kensington Gold mine, operated by Coeur Alaska, Inc. The Tribe shared that the toxic tailings pose significant implications for the environment, public health and well-being of tribal citizens. NMFS provided a response letter describing our coordination with various state and federal agencies to address the situation on Friday, March 22, 2024. A follow up meeting with CCTHITA is being scheduled.

### *Tribal Newsletter*

On March 6, 2024, NMFS released the April Edition of our Tribal Newsletter. The newsletter is an information source for upcoming Council meetings as well as NMFS' contacts, job postings, grants and educational opportunities. The April Tribal Newsletter also included an invitation for tribal consultation on action items scheduled for the upcoming April Council meeting. NMFS highlighted two additions to the newsletter including, 1) an online form for responding to NMFS invitations for Government-to-Government Tribal Consultation on Council action items and 2) March and April meeting calendars with embedded links to various tribal engagement sessions, events, and review deadlines that may be of interest to Alaska Native Tribes, Corporations, and organizations.