



February 3, 2023

## Agenda B-2: NMFS Management Report

### Status of Actions Report Online

Updated daily at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/akro/amendments.pdf>

### Progress on Rulemaking

Highlights on progress since the June 2022 meeting include:

- NMFS approved Amendment 52 to the Fishery Management Plan for King and Tanner Crabs of the BSAI on **December 30, 2022**. A final rule is scheduled to be published on **February 6, 2023** with an effective date of **March 8, 2023**.
- The comment period on BSAI Amendment 124, GOA Amendment 112, and the proposed rule to implement the IFQ Omnibus regulatory amendments ended on **January 3, 2023**. NMFS approved Amendments 124/112 on **January 27, 2023**. A final rule is expected to be published in early 2023.
- The comment period on the proposed BSAI and GOA harvest specifications ended on **January 13, 2023** and **January 3, 2023** respectively. Final harvest specifications are expected to be published in early 2023.
- The comment periods on BSAI Amendment 123, and the proposed rule to implement Amendment 123 to the BSAI FMP; Halibut Abundance-Based Management end on **January 23, 2023** and **February 7, 2023** respectively. MSA decision day is **March 9, 2023**. If approved, a final rule is expected to be published in 2023.
- Comments on Proposed Amendment 122 to the BSAI FMP to implement the Pacific Cod Trawl Cooperative Program are invited through **March 1, 2023**. MSA decision day is **March 30, 2023**. A proposed rule to implement Amendment 122 is scheduled to be published on **February 9, 2023** with comments invited through **March 13, 2023**.
- **Attachment 1** provides additional detail.

### NOAA Fisheries Denies Request for Emergency Action to Close the Red King Crab Savings Area and Subarea

Announced on January 20, 2023, NOAA Fisheries denied a request for emergency action to close the red king crab savings area and red king crab savings subarea to all fishing gears from January 1, 2023 to June 30, 2023. The Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers submitted the petition on September 28, 2022 to protect Bristol Bay red king crab and their habitat at a time of historically low crab abundance. More information is available in this [media release](#).



### **New Legislation: Alaska Salmon Research Task Force Act**

The Alaska Salmon Research Task Force Act requires a task force be convened within 90 days of its passage, which would be by March 2023. The purposes of the Act are (1) to ensure that Pacific salmon trends in Alaska regarding productivity and abundance are characterized and that research needs are identified; (2) to prioritize scientific research needs for Pacific salmon in Alaska; (3) to address the increased variability or decline in Pacific salmon returns in Alaska by creating a coordinated salmon research strategy; and (4) to support collaboration and coordination for Pacific salmon conservation efforts in Alaska.

As specified in the legislation, the Task Force will consist of 13 to 19 members with specific appointments from NOAA, the State of Alaska, NPFMC, the Pacific Salmon Commission, academia, commercial, recreational and subsistence users and Alaska Native representation. Thirty days after convening the larger body, the Task Force will also form a work group focused on the AYK (Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim) regions of Western Alaska consisting of no fewer than 5 representatives. After one year, the Task Force will produce a report that describes the scientific review and recommendations on filling knowledge gaps that warrant further scientific inquiry. The Alaska Fisheries Science Center will provide organizational and staff support for the Task Force.

### **New Legislation: Marine Mammal Research and Response Act (MMRRA)**

The Marine Mammal Research and Response Act (MMRRA) was included as Title CIV in the [James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act](#) (passed Dec 23, 2022). The MMRRA makes changes to Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program including to the Prescott Grant Program, expands data and results to be available in HealthMAP, and requires 3 reports to Congress. The Marine Mammal Response Capabilities in the Arctic report is due not later than 1 year of enactment with NMFS Alaska Region's Protected Resources Division as lead. This report will describe the response capabilities for sick and injured marine mammals in the Arctic regions of the United States and a temporal and spatial analysis of marine mammal strandings and unusual mortality events. The report will involve NOAA, USFWS, USGS, and consultation with the Marine Mammal Commission. We will be reaching out to stranding network members, co-management partners, Alaska Native Organizations, and state and local government agencies to address the specific requirements of the report.

### **Cost Recovery Fee Percentages**

The 2022 Rockfish fee percentage was 2.53%, a decrease from the 2021 fee percentage of 2.77%. The decreased fee percentage was due to a 18.2% increase in fishery value, combined with a 8.3% increase in management costs.

The 2022 IFQ fee percentage was 1.90%, a decrease from the 2021 fee percentage of 2.30%. The decreased fee percentage was due to an increase of 26.8% in fishery value, combined with an overall decrease of 16.10% in direct program costs.

### **Observer Standard Prices**

On December 29, 2022, NMFS published a notice of North Pacific Observer Program standard ex-vessel prices for 2023 (87 FR 80164, December 29, 2022). The 2023 standard prices for halibut and sablefish increased for all ports. The 2023 standard price for Pacific cod saw changes for several ports, but the overall price change is minor.

### **Charter Halibut Permit (CHP) Annual Registration Now Available Online**

On January 27, 2023, Charter Halibut Permit Holders received the following message:

You can now complete the annual registration of your Charter Halibut Permits (CHP) online, via the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Alaska Region web site. A CHP must be registered with NMFS before it can be used for fishing. After you register a CHP, it is valid for use until the end of the calendar year.

#### **How do I register my CHP online?**

First, you need to create an eFISH account through the NMFS Alaska Region. You may already have an eFISH account if you participate in the Guided Angler Fish (GAF) program. If you do not have an eFISH account, you must first obtain a user ID through NMFS (see contact information at bottom). Instructions for setting up and activating an eFISH account can be found online at this link: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/resources-fishing/alaska-online-services>.

After you set up and activate your eFISH account, your account will include a link titled ‘**Register a Charter Halibut Permit**’ within the CHP menu tab. When you open the link, you will be asked to review and potentially change the CHP owner’s address and contact information. You will be required to answer a yes-or-no question that asks whether the CHP was leased in the previous year. You will also be required to review and verify the ownership and owner affiliation information for the CHP. After you complete these steps, you will electronically sign and submit your CHP registration.

\*Please note, if the online ownership information for your CHP is not correct or requires changes, then you will be unable to use the online option and must renew your CHP through RAM using the standard application process.

#### **After I register online, how do I get my CHP?**

NMFS will mail the CHP to the owner, using the address that is shown on the CHP registration form. After the CHP is registered, it will be valid until December 31 of the current year. The CHP will be printed on paper that does not allow the permit to be fraudulently copied or misused. A valid, original CHP must be onboard a charter vessel that is catching and retaining halibut.

#### **Can I still register my CHP using a paper form?**

Yes. NMFS will continue to accept and process paper CHP registrations that are mailed to us. CHP Registration forms, CHP Transfer forms, GAF Transfer forms, and other CHP forms will continue to be available online here: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/permit/alaska-sport-charter-halibut-applications-and-reporting-forms>.

### **If I still have questions, who should I contact?**

Many answers to your questions about CHP registrations can be found in this Frequently Asked Questions page on the NMFS web site: <https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/dam-migration/chp-annual-registrationfaq0120.pdf>.

If you still need help, please contact NMFS Restricted Access Management (RAM) staff regarding this or any other programmatic requirements at (800) 304--4846, option 2, or (907) 586-7474. You may also email staff at [RAM.Alaska@noaa.gov](mailto:RAM.Alaska@noaa.gov).

### **Trawl EM EFP**

The Council took Final Action on the Trawl Electronic Monitoring (EM) program in October, 2022. In December, NMFS Alaska Region communicated that implementation of the Trawl EM program is unlikely to occur prior to the 2025 fishing year. Therefore, the Trawl EM EFP was modified to extend the effective date through December 31, 2024. In addition to the extension, one modification to the permit was made for 2023 and 2024. The regulations at § 50 CFR 679.22(b)(1) prohibit non-pelagic trawl gear on board a vessel fishing in certain areas near Kodiak. Most vessels participating in Trawl EM in CGOA carry both pelagic and non pelagic trawl gear on board. An exemption from this regulation during the EFP will test the use of electronic monitoring for other compliance purposes, including compliance of closure areas. Other proposed changes were minor and were addressed through the annual process for updating Vessel Monitoring Plans, which do not require modifications to the EFP. These changes included updated contact information for project participants and to update the participation list of vessels, tenders and processors in subpart A of the EFP.

### **Community Development Quota (CDQ) Regulation of Harvest**

NMFS posted guidance on the [CDQ page](#) regarding the calculation of pollock maximum retainable amounts (MRAs) at offload for AFA vessels. Pursuant to section 305(i)(1)(B)(iv) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, NMFS authorizes AFA vessels that participate in the groundfish CDQ fisheries for Amendment 80 groundfish species to calculate the pollock MRA on an offload to offload basis as established at 50 CFR 679.20(e)(3)(iii). NMFS intends to update its current regulations to clarify that they should be read consistently with that provision.

### **Tribal Engagement Update**

*New Tribal Liaison:* NMFS Alaska Region is excited to announce that we have hired a tribal liaison, **Amilee Wilson**. To learn more about Amilee, please read our [web story](#) and see her [staff directory page](#). As the AKRO tribal liaison, Amilee will greatly increase our capacity to conduct effective and meaningful outreach with our tribal partners.

*Consultations:* NMFS has two scheduled formal Tribal Consultations in February. The first Consultation scheduled for February 3rd will focus on the effects of the groundfish harvest specifications on salmon bycatch, while the second Consultation scheduled for February 15th will focus on how NMFS engages in meaningful tribal consultation.

For further information on NMFS Sustainable Fisheries tribal engagement activities please contact Kelly Cates at [kelly.cates@noaa.gov](mailto:kelly.cates@noaa.gov).

### **ESA Section 7 update**

In December 2022, NMFS AKR presented a plan for upcoming ESA Section 7 consultations to evaluate the effects of the GOA and BSAI groundfish fisheries on ESA-listed species and critical habitats. Since the December Council meeting, NMFS has created an internal working group and begun compiling information necessary to complete the analyses needed for the consultations.

As a reminder, the proposed scope of the consultations will include all groundfish fisheries managed under the GOA and BSAI groundfish FMPs, including State of Alaska parallel groundfish fisheries.

The consultations will focus on the effects of the current fishery management regime (i.e. status quo) and NMFS will use the best scientific information available in the analyses. NMFS will keep stakeholders informed throughout the consultation process.

NMFS has determined that allowing the groundfish fisheries to continue to operate during this reinitiation period will not violate ESA section 7(a)(2) or 7(d). These consultations will be a significant undertaking and will require considerable NMFS AKR staff time and resources.

### **Personnel Changes**

#### ***New Staff--***

**Gretchen Harrington** has joined the Sustainable Fisheries team as the new Assistant Regional Administrator (ARA) for the SF Division. Since April 2018, Gretchen has served as the Assistant Regional Administrator for the AKR Habitat Conservation Division. Prior to becoming the ARA for HCD, Gretchen served as the NEPA Coordinator for the Alaska Region, advising and assisting all AKR divisions on NEPA requirements. Gretchen worked for SF for nineteen years and played a critical role on crab rationalization, fishery disasters implementation, salmon bycatch reduction, Steller sea lion protection measures, observer restructuring, and electronic monitoring. Gretchen possesses a wealth of practical experience as well as considerable leadership, strategic thinking, and analytical and creative problem solving skills. We are excited to welcome her back to SF!

**LANTERN Detailees** - SF is excited to welcome several new faces through [NOAA's LANTERN program](#). This program promotes employee growth, networking, and collaboration through in-person and remote detail opportunities for employees to work in a different part of NOAA for a period of time (positions range from 30 days to 1 year).

**Joel Kraski** joined the SF team at the beginning of December and is working with us part-time until the end of February. Joel works for the AFSC's Fisheries Monitoring and Analysis Division (FMA, aka the Observer Program) in their Anchorage office. Joel has a degree in Marine Biology University of Oregon. He has been with the Observer Program since 2020. Prior to that he worked for Saltwater, Inc as a fisheries observer in Alaska and off the West Coast. During his time with SF, Joel has been working primarily with the Monitoring Branch on Electronic Monitoring.

**Justin Kavanaugh** began his full-time detail assignment with us on January 3 and will continue until May. Justin works for the West Coast Region SF Division in their Permits & Monitoring Branch in Seattle. He is working on catch share projects and assisting with the

implementation of the Pacific cod Trawl Program (PCTC). Justin has a degree in Biological Sciences from the University of Nebraska, extensive experience as a North Pacific fisheries Observer, IPHC Sea Sampler, Observer Program debriefer, and has worked with the WCR Electronic Monitoring Program since 2016.

**David Bryan** joined the SF team on January 18. David works for AFSC as a research fish biologist in Seattle where he focuses on technological approaches to reducing bycatch and design of gear to observe fishing gear and fish behavior. In his detail with SF, he is working on the snow crab rebuilding plan and elements of the Cook Inlet salmon FMP amendment. David has a M.S. in marine biology from Nova Southeastern University, extensive experience as a researcher with NOAA, the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, and several universities, as well as time as a fisheries observer.

## Attachment 2 -- Inseason Management Report

Catch during 2023 is through January 28, 2023 and is compared to catch during 2022 through January 29, 2022. All catch amounts are in metric tons. Additional information is available from [daily catch reports and information bulletins](#).

### Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands

#### **Bering Sea Pollock**

The 2023 Bering Sea pollock TAC is 1,300,000 mt compared to 1,111,000 mt in 2022. For 2023, NMFS plans to reallocate projected unharvested AI pollock TAC from the Aleutian Islands to the Bering Sea since the Bering Sea TAC is set less than the Bering Sea acceptable biological catch.

Directed fishing opened by regulations at noon, A.l.t., January 20, 2023. Pollock catch is for eight days of fishing.

| Bering Sea       | 2023 A season allocation | 2023 A season catch | Percent taken |
|------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Inshore          | 252,000                  | 26,608              | 11%           |
| CP               | 201,600                  | 26,086              | 13%           |
| Mothership       | 50,400                   | 6,415               | 13%           |
| CDQ <sup>1</sup> | 130,000                  | 10,843              | 8%            |
| Total            | 634,000                  | 69,652              | 11%           |

#### **Salmon in the Bering Sea Pollock Fisheries**

NMFS has determined that 2022 was a low Chinook salmon abundance year, based on the State of Alaska's estimate that Chinook salmon abundance in western Alaska is less than 250,000 Chinook salmon. Therefore, in 2023, the Chinook salmon PSC limit is 45,000 Chinook salmon, allocated to each sector as specified in 50 CFR 679.21(f)(3)(iii)(A). The current salmon PSC is preliminary and subject to change.

## Blackspotted and Rougheye Rockfish

For 2023, the maximum species specific catch recommended in the Western Aleutian Islands is 61 mt. All sectors are requested to avoid blackspotted/rougheye rockfish. A [weekly report](#) is available to monitor total catch of blackspotted/rougheye rockfish in the Western Aleutian Islands.

## BSAI Pacific cod by Sector

The 2023 Pacific cod TAC is 127,409 mt in the Bering Sea and 8,425 mt in the Aleutian Islands compared to the 2022 Bering Sea TAC of 136,466 mt and Aleutian Islands TAC of 13,796 mt. In 2023, NMFS has prohibited directed fishing for three sectors: pot CVs  $\geq$  60 feet, hook-and-line/pot CVs less than 60 feet, and AFA CPs.

| BSAI Sector                   | 2023                             |              |                 |                     | 2022                             |              |                 |                     |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------------|
|                               | A season allocation <sup>1</sup> | Catch Jan 28 | A season closed | # of vessels Jan 28 | A season allocation <sup>1</sup> | Catch Jan 29 | A season closed | # of vessels Jan 29 |
| CDQ                           | 8,721                            | 134          | n/a             | 11                  | 9,647                            | 534          | n/a             | 14                  |
| Hook-and-line CP              | 29,964                           | 7,533        | n/a             | 16                  | 33,164                           | 3,916        | n/a             | 10                  |
| Pot CP                        | 923                              | 250          | n/a             | <3                  | 1,021                            | 268          | n/a             | <3                  |
| Pot CV $\geq$ 60 ft           | 5,168                            | 5,087        | Jan 12          | 22                  | 5,720                            | 6,959        | Jan 23          | 27                  |
| Hook-and-line CV $\geq$ 60 ft | 123                              | 0            | n/a             | 0                   | 136                              | 0            | n/a             | 0                   |
| Hook-and-line/Pot CVs < 60 ft | 3,363                            | 3,336        | Jan 16          | 20                  | 3,746                            | 3,976        | Jan 26          | 19                  |
| Jig                           | 69                               | 0            | n/a             | 0                   | 52                               | 0            | n/a             | 0                   |
| Trawl CV                      | 19,837                           | 67           | n/a             | 52                  | 21,944                           | 85           | n/a             | 39                  |
| AFA CP                        | 2,092                            | 170          | Jan 20          | 13                  | 2,315                            | 252          | Jan 20          | 15                  |
| Amendment 80 CP               | 12,191                           | 467          | n/a             | 13                  | 13,485                           | 366          | n/a             | 15                  |
| Total                         | 82,452                           | 17,044       |                 | 147                 | 91,230                           | 16,356       |                 | 139                 |

<sup>1</sup>In 2023, NMFS reallocated 950 mt, and in 2022 NMFS reallocated 1,075 mt of the A season jig allocation to the hook-and-line or pot gear less than 60 ft length annual allocation.

## Pacific cod directed fishing - trawl CVs

Currently, the trawl CV sector is voluntarily standing down from directed fishing for Pacific cod until February 6, 2023. The stand down is to delay fishing for Pacific cod when catch rates are expected to be higher and halibut prohibited species catch rates are expected to be lower. Current catch reported is incidental in other target fisheries.

## Gulf of Alaska

### Pacific cod

In 2023, NMFS closed directed fishing for the A season for some sectors with allocations that are necessary to support incidental catch:

Western GOA – Hook-and-line CV, Trawl CP

Central GOA – Trawl CV, Trawl CP

### Pacific cod - Western GOA

| Sector           | 2023                |              |                 |                     | 2022                |              |                 |                     |
|------------------|---------------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------------|
|                  | A season allocation | Catch Jan 28 | A season closed | # of vessels Jan 28 | A season allocation | Catch Jan 29 | A season closed | # of vessels Jan 29 |
| Hook-and-line CP | 555                 | 0            | n/a             | 0                   | 732                 | 91           | n/a             | <3                  |
| Hook-and-line CV | 36                  | 0            | Jan 1           | 0                   | 47                  | 0            | Jan 1           | 0                   |
| Jig              | 78                  | 14           | n/a             | 4                   | 146                 | 0            | n/a             | 0                   |
| Pot CV/CP        | 1,009               | 918          | 2/1             | 8                   | 1,330               | 515          | n/a             | 10                  |
| Trawl CV         | 1,607               | 175          | n/a             | 7                   | 2,118               | 0            | n/a             | 0                   |
| Trawl CP         | 46                  | 0            | Jan 20          | 0                   | 60                  | 0            | Jan 20          | 0                   |
| Total            | 3,331               | 1,107        |                 | 19                  | 4,433               | 605          |                 | 10                  |

### Pacific cod - Central GOA

| Sector                  | 2023                |              |                 |                     | 2022                |              |                 |                     |
|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------------|
|                         | A season allocation | Catch Jan 28 | A season closed | # of vessels Jan 28 | A season allocation | Catch Jan 29 | A season closed | # of vessels Jan 29 |
| Hook-and-line CP        | 452                 | 30           | n/a             | <3                  | 602                 | 0            | n/a             | 0                   |
| Hook-and-line CV <50 ft | 1,026               | 208          | n/a             | 9                   | 1,366               | 12           | n/a             | <3                  |
| Hook-and-line CV ≥50 ft | 618                 | 41           | n/a             | <3                  | 823                 | 64           | n/a             | 3                   |
| Jig                     | 67                  | 0            | n/a             | 0                   | 89                  | 0            | n/a             | 0                   |
| Pot CV/CP               | 1,963               | 878          | n/a             | 12                  | 2,615               | 1,180        | n/a             | 10                  |
| Trawl CV                | 2,785               | 24           | Jan 20          | <3                  | 3,710               | 0            | Jan 20          | 0                   |
| Trawl CP                | 221                 | 0            | Jan 20          | 0                   | 294                 | 0            | Jan 20          | 0                   |
| Total                   | 7,131               | 1,181        |                 | 21                  | 9,499               | 1,256        |                 | 13                  |



## Pollock

For Area 610, NMFS closed directed fishing for the A season on January 20, 2023 because the TAC does not support directed fishing.

The pollock fleet voluntarily is waiting to fish pollock in Area 620 from January 20 to February 4 and in Area 630 from January 20 to February 14. There is some incidental catch reported from the non-trawl Pacific cod fisheries. There has been some effort in area 640.

| 2023 A season       | 610        | 620    | 630   | 640            |
|---------------------|------------|--------|-------|----------------|
| A season allocation | 1,685      | 58,039 | 9,121 | 7,523 (annual) |
| A season catch      | 1          | 0      | 1     | 384            |
| A season closure    | January 20 | n/a    | n/a   | n/a            |

## Halibut PSC Data

The current halibut PSC and groundfish are preliminary and subject to change. In 2023 relative to 2022, the total halibut PSC and groundfish are higher in the BSAI, and the total halibut PSC is slightly higher and the total groundfish is lower in the GOA.

| Area, Gear, and Sector    | 2023              |            |       | 2022              |            |       |
|---------------------------|-------------------|------------|-------|-------------------|------------|-------|
|                           | Halibut mortality | Groundfish | Rate  | Halibut mortality | Groundfish | Rate  |
| BSAI Total                | 106               | 89,837     | 0.12% | 51                | 77,854     | 0.07% |
| Amendment 80              | 68                | 7,752      | 0.88% | 14                | 8,423      | 0.17% |
| BSAI trawl limited access | 17                | 60,639     | 0.03% | 25                | 52,426     | 0.05% |
| Non-trawl Pacific cod     | 19                | 10,424     | 0.18% | 7                 | 5,330      | 0.13% |
| Non-trawl Other           | 0                 | 0          | 0     | 0                 | 0          | 0     |
| CDQ                       | 2                 | 11,023     | 0.02% | 5                 | 11,675     | 0.04% |
| GOA Total                 | 3                 | 2,017      | 0.15% | 2                 | 3,436      | 0.06% |
| Trawl, Deep-water         | 0                 | 0          | 0     | 0                 | 0          | 0     |
| Trawl, Shallow-water      | 0                 | 1,648      | 0.00% | 0                 | 3,147      | 0.00% |
| Hook-and-line CP          | 0                 | 37         | 0.00% | 1                 | 133        | 0.75% |
| Hook-and-line CV          | 3                 | 332        | 0.90% | 1                 | 156        | 0.64% |