



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

October 1, 2021

## **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 2021 meeting include:

- Notice of Decision to approve Amendment 51 to the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs, Amendment 17 to the FMP for Scallops, and Amendment 15 to the FMP for Salmon published on **September 17, 2021**. The objective of these amendments is to explicitly and clearly define the standardized bycatch reporting methodology in each FMP, as required by section 303(a)(11) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.
- Comment period for Amendment 14 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Salmon Fisheries in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) Off Alaska (Salmon FMP) ended on **July 19, 2021**. Comment period for the proposed rule to implement Amendment 14 to the Salmon FMP ended on **July 6, 2021**. NMFS approved Amendment 14 on August 12, 2021.
- The draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) for the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands halibut abundance-based management of Amendment 80 prohibited species catch limit was submitted to the EPA on September 1, 2021 and was published in the **Federal Register** on September 10, 2021. NMFS is accepting public comments on the DEIS until October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021. For an electronic version of the DEIS and instructions on how to submit public comments, please visit: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/environmental-impact-statement-bering-sea-and-aleutian-islands-bsai-halibut>.
- **Attachment 1** provides additional detail.

### **Crab Cost Recovery Fee Percentage**

On July 7, 2021, NMFS published a notice providing the cost recovery fee percentage for the BSAI Crab Rationalization Program (86 FR 35756, July 7, 2021). The fee percentage decreased by approximately 17 percent from 1.31 percent for the 2020/2021 crab fishing year to 1.09 percent for the 2021/2022 crab fishing year.



## Updates to the IFQ Committee

Below is a summary of the updates provided to the IFQ Committee at its meeting on September 27, 2021. Additional detail is available in the NMFS updates on the IFQ Committee Agenda at: <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/2500>.

### IFQ Temporary Transfers in 2021 Emergency Rule

The emergency rule published on March 30, 2021 which authorizes NMFS to approve temporary transfers of IFQ in 2021 is effective through September 27, 2021 (86 FR 16542). Applications for temporary transfer authorized under this emergency rule received after September 27, 2021 will not be approved.

### IFQ Cost Recovery - End of Year Process

Due to the late end of the IFQ fishing season on December 7, 2021, the halibut and sablefish Cost Recovery annual process will be affected. NMFS has requested assistance from IFQ holders and Registered Buyers to facilitate this year's shortened end of year process: **NMFS requests that individuals contacting the staff during this time practice patience during this holiday season. NMFS requests on time submission of the IFQ Registered Buyer Ex-vessel Value and Volume Report, no later than October 15, 2021.**

### Rulemaking Update to Remove GOA Sablefish IFQ Pot Gear Tags and Notary Certification Requirements

NMFS expects a proposed rule to publish in the *Federal Register* this fall and intends a final rule to remove pot gear tags and notary certification requirements to be effective prior to the start of the 2022 halibut and sablefish IFQ fishing season.

SF and RAM Staff Changes – See below for this information.

## Seabird Bycatch Report

To fulfill requirements of the 2021 groundfish biological opinion and the 2018 halibut biological opinion, NMFS submitted a letter to USFWS reporting two observed takes of short-tailed albatross in the BSAI groundfish fishery in 2020. This report is due by June 1st each year.

2020 seabird bycatch information for all species has been published as a NMFS Alaska Region Technical Memorandum: <https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/32076>. Prior technical memorandums can be found here: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/bycatch/seabird-bycatch-alaska>.

## **Aquaculture Opportunity Area Identification Process**

NOAA continues to work to implement Aquaculture Opportunity Areas, as required by the May 2020 Executive Order (EO) on *Promoting American Seafood Competitiveness and Economic Growth*.

The National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science conducted spatial analysis for the Gulf of Mexico and Southern California and will publish two Aquaculture Opportunity Atlases this fall, presenting the results of their siting analysis and accompanying maps for each of these regions. After the Atlases are published, NOAA Fisheries will determine which of those areas to carry forward, and publish a notice of intent (NOI) to prepare a (PEIS). That NOI will describe the areas that we are considering for AOA identification, and invite public comment.

In addition, NOAA Fisheries is considering where to begin the next AOA process, and expects to make an announcement in late fall. This decision will be based on comments received last fall through the [Request for Information](#) and an analysis of the opportunities and challenges in each region where stakeholders expressed interest. Alaska state agencies and legislature provided support for AOA identification in Alaska, along with individuals, industry, and Alaskan native tribes. AOAs may be identified in federal and/or state waters. However, NOAA will only consider identifying areas within state waters at the invitation of the state. The majority of the letters NOAA received for Alaska AOA development indicated interest in AOAs within state waters only. Finfish farming in Alaska is prohibited under Alaska Statute 16.40.210, and thus would not be considered for AOA identification in aquaculture activities in Alaska. There was broad support for shellfish and seaweed farming, and leveraging Alaska's seafood infrastructure and expertise to further promote economic development and seafood security.

You can find more information on our AOA [website](#).

## **Revising the Conservation Plan for Northern Fur Seals**

NMFS informed the Council via a May 20, 2021, letter that we are revising the 2007 Conservation Plan for the Eastern Pacific Stock of Northern Fur Seal pursuant to section 115(b) of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. We originally planned to brief the Council on our progress in October, but the Ecosystem Committee requested that we reschedule the discussion for February. We now aim to complete the revised conservation plan by spring 2022.

## **Petition to List Sunflower Sea Stars under the Endangered Species Act (ESA)**

On August 18, 2021, NMFS received a petition from the Center for Biological Diversity to list the sunflower sea star (*Pycnopodia helianthoides*) as a threatened or endangered species under the ESA and to designate critical habitat for the species. The petition asserts that sunflower sea stars are critically endangered, and since 2013 a severe disease outbreak has decimated more than 90 percent of the population, with 80 to 100 percent population declines between 2013 and 2017 from California to Alaska.

When NMFS receives an ESA listing petition we are required to review it within 90 days to the maximum extent practicable and make a finding as to whether the petition presents substantial scientific or commercial information indicating that the petitioned action may be warranted. For the purposes of a 90-day finding, “substantial scientific or commercial information” refers to credible information in support of the petition’s claims, such that a reasonable person conducting an impartial scientific review would conclude that the action proposed in the petition may be warranted. We evaluate the petitioners’ request based upon the information in the petition, including its references and information readily available in NMFS files. We do not conduct additional research at this stage and may not solicit information from parties outside the agency to help evaluate the petition. If we make a positive 90-day finding we initiate a status review, which is a more detailed look at the merits of listing in light of the best available scientific information about the species and the threats it faces, and we seek public input and can confer with others who have relevant expertise. We would then issue a 12-month finding as to whether listing is warranted. If we make a negative 90-day finding, the process ends.

Because this petition deals with a species that ranges from California to Alaska, NMFS’s Alaska Region and West Coast Region are reviewing it jointly. NMFS will keep the Council informed as the process unfolds.

### **Red King Crab Savings Subarea (RKCSS)**

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game issued an [Advisory Announcement](#) on September 3, 2021 closing the 2021/22 Bristol Bay red king crab fishery. In response and pursuant to 50 CFR 679.21(e)(3)(ii)(B)(1), NMFS will issue a directed fishing closure for vessels using non-pelagic trawl gear in the RKCSS for the 2022 federal groundfish fishery. The RKCSS is the portion of the RKCSA between 56°00’ and 56°10’ N. latitude.

### **SF and RAM Staff Changes**

#### Sustainable Fisheries

**Melanie Rickett-Henry** has joined the Monitoring Branch in Sustainable Fisheries where she will focus on scale/video inspections for the at-sea fleet and act as a liaison between SF and the Alaska Fishery Science Center (AFSC) on issues related to observers and catch monitoring. Melanie has worked for the AFSC, Fishery Monitoring and Analysis Division (FMA), (AKA the Observer Program), since 2009. Melanie was the FMA vessel inspection lead and has diverse experience in many Observer Program responsibilities including observer training, debriefings, and data quality and control. Prior to working for FMA, Melanie was an observer for multiple programs including as a groundfish observer, Alaska Marine Mammal observer, and as a State of Alaska scallop and crab observer. Melanie will continue in her new role from Seattle to enhance our service to the at-sea fleet that operates out of the Seattle area, and to facilitate her liaison role with AFSC.

**Mason Smith** will be in the Catch Shares Branch led by Alicia M. Miller. Mason has worked for Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission since 2011 after completing his M.S. in Biology at the University of North Florida. Mason brings a diverse set of skills and knowledge of marine and freshwater fisheries management. Mason's most recent work focused on coordinating

the development of an agency habitat management plan for Lake Okeechobee. Mason is also completing his Ph.D. in geosciences at Florida Atlantic University.

**Vernon (Skip) Shoemaker** is retiring in early October. Vernon has been with the Alaska Regional office for five years, starting in October 2016. He came to AKR with a diverse background including an extensive career in the U.S. Army, several years as a fisheries observer on vessels off Alaska and the West coast, and as a contractor with Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. While with AKR, Vernon worked in both the Catch Accounting and Data Quality Branch and the Monitoring Branch where he was primarily responsible for the scale and video inspections on catcher processors, logbooks, and assisting in Elandings development. Vernon's leadership was amazing when he took initiative to work with the industry to develop alternative scale inspection procedures that focused on the safety of vessel crew, vendors and agency personnel during the pandemic. This alternative inspection process was very successful due to Vernon's diligence and strong relationships he has maintained with the vessel operators, owners and scale vendors. We will miss Vernon and wish him well in his retirement.

**Vacancy Announcement:** NMFS Alaska Region, Sustainable Fisheries Division has issued vacancy announcements for a Technical Editor due to the departure of Benjamin Huskinson. The announcements are available in USAJobs beginning September 27, 2021 and the application period closes on October 11, 2021.

The vacancy announcements are available at:

NMFS-AKR-2021-0022 (MAP): <https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/615052200>

NMFS-AKR-2021-0023 (DE): <https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/615053300>

The successful applicant will have the opportunity to review and edit draft regulations and associated decision documents, provide guidance to staff about the required format and content of documents and analyses to ensure conformance with technical writing standards, and create content that is made widely available to improve outreach and understanding of specific Alaska region fisheries management processes and programs.

### Restricted Access Management

**Brian L. Brown** is now the Restricted Access Management (RAM) Supervisory Program Analyst. Brian has previous work experience at the Alaska Region with RAM, as the eLandings Coordinator, and with the Information Services Division. He looks forward to continuing RAM program improvements, facilitating new technologies and processes, and working with stakeholders.

**Suja Hall** has moved into a Project Manager/Business Analyst role on the Integrated Fisheries Application (IFA) project. The IFA will utilize digital technologies to improve upon existing RAM business processes, permitting workflows, and customer experiences so that it meets expanding regulatory changes, creates organizational efficiencies, and effectively supports Alaska's fisheries management throughout their seasonal lifecycles. The IFA requirements team is already working with internal stakeholders such as Sustainable Fisheries, In-season Management, the regional Fee Coordinator, and NOAA Law Enforcement so that we can gather their business needs for the new system. The IFA team will also be reaching out to fishing industry stakeholders so that we can

gather feedback on how to improve the user interface for the public facing permit portal. This will enable NMFS to provide necessary tools for permit holders to easily access and manage their accounts.

**Samantha (Sam) Irsik** joined RAM as a Permit Assistant in August 2021. Sam graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy and subsequently served in the Navy until 2019. She has also worked as both an Office Assistant and Natural Resource Assistant with the State of Alaska. Sam is a great addition to RAM, and we're happy to have her on the team.

### Attachment 1 -- Status of Regulatory Actions

Changes since June 2021 are noted in **Bold Red** EOC = End of Comment Period

Action Status	Lead Council and SF Staff	Date of Council Final Action	Start Regional Review	Received by GCAK	Transmittal Date of Action to NMFS HQ for Review	Notice of Availability (FMP) Published in <i>Federal Register</i>	Proposed Rule Published in <i>Federal Register</i>	Final Rule or Notice of Approval Published in <i>Federal Register</i>
<b>FMP Amendments</b>								
Amendment 14 (Salmon) Cook Inlet  <b>Approved: August 12, 2021</b>	Armstrong Duncan	December 2020	PR: 3/05/21 <b>FR: 08/18/21</b>	PR: 3/05/21 <b>FR: 08/20/21</b>	PR: 5/12/21	May 18, 2021 86 FR 26888 EOC:7/19/21	June 4, 2021 86 FR 29977 EOC: 7/6/21	
Amendment 51 (KTC), Amendment 17 (Scallop), and Amendment 15 (Salmon) Standardized Bycatch Reporting Methodology <b>Approved: Sept 13, 2021</b>	Cleaver Mackey	February 2021	NOA: 4/28/21	NOA:4/29/21	<b>NOA: 06/07/21</b>	<b>NOA: June 14, 2021 86 FR 31474 EOC: 08/13/21</b>	N/A	<b>NOD: Sept 17, 2021 86 FR 51833</b>
<b>Regulatory Amendments</b>								
Remove GOA sablefish IFQ pot tag and notary requirements	Miller	N/A	<b>PR: 8/31/21</b>	<b>PR: 8/31/21</b>	<b>PR: 9/17/21</b>	N/A		
<b>Other <i>Federal Register</i> Notices</b>								
Cost Recovery Fee Notice for the Crab Rationalization Program 2021/2022	Jahn	N/A	<b>06/28/21</b>	<b>06/27/21</b>	<b>07/01/21</b>	N/A	N/A	<b>Jul 7, 2021 86 FR 35756 Effective: 07/07/21</b>

Notice of availability of a draft environmental impact statement for the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands halibut abundance-based management of the Amendment 80 prohibited species catch limit	Krieger	N/A	<b>08/16/21</b>	<b>08/15/21</b>	<b>09/02/21</b>	N/A	N/A	<b>Sep 10, 2021 86 FR 50714 EOC: 10/25/21</b>
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## **Attachment 2 -- Inseason Management Report**

Catch during 2021 is through September 25, 2021 and is compared to catch during 2020 through September 26, 2020. 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 2021 Bering Sea pollock TAC is 1,375,000 mt compared to 1,425,000 mt in 2020. For 2021, NMFS reallocated 1,900 mt of CDQ pollock TAC and 12,600 mt of Aleut Corporation TAC from the Aleutian Islands to respective CDQ and non-CDQ pollock TACs in the Bering Sea. In 2021, no directed fishing for pollock has occurred in the Aleutian Islands.

The 2021 Bering Sea directed fishing allowance (DFA) is 49,449 mt lower than the 2020 DFA. The 2021 B season pollock fishery had higher catch rates than the 2020 B season catch rates.

Currently, the 2021 B season catch is 127,865 mt higher than the 2020 B season; however the 2021 fishery has about 33,000 mt remaining to catch. For 2021, the CP, CDQ, and mothership sectors finished their pollock fisheries the week ending September 25, 2021. At the current weekly rate, the projected finish for the inshore sector is the end of October. In 2020, all sectors fished until October 31, 2020.

Bering Sea	2021 annual allocation <sup>1</sup>	2021 annual catch	Percent taken
Inshore	600,300	567,461	95%
CP	480,240	479,890	100%
Mothership	120,060	120,002	100%
CDQ	139,400	139,330	100%
Incidental catch	49,500	34,270	69%
Total	1,389,500	1,340,953	97%

<sup>1</sup>Includes reallocations described above.

## Salmon in the Bering Sea Pollock Fisheries

The 2021 Chinook salmon PSC limit is 45,000 Chinook salmon, and further allocated to each sector as specified in 50 CFR 679.21(f)(3)(iii)(A). In 2021 relative to 2020, total Chinook salmon PSC and rates are lower, and total non-Chinook salmon PSC and rates are higher. At the April 2022 Council meeting there will be more information the genetic information for the 2021 salmon PSC.

Species	Chinook				Non-Chinook			
	2021		2020		2021		2020	
Year	#	Rate <sup>1</sup>	#	Rate <sup>1</sup>	#	Rate <sup>1</sup>	#	Rate <sup>1</sup>
CDQ	1,177	0.008	2,001	0.017	55,677	0.397	7,184	0.061
AFA	11,207	0.009	20,617	0.019	471,764	0.399	247,421	0.223
Total	12,384	0.009	22,618	0.018	527,441	0.399	254,605	0.207

<sup>1</sup>Rate is number of salmon per metric tons of groundfish.

## Herring in the BSAI

In 2021, total BSAI herring PSC is 69% of the 2021 limit (2,723 mt) relative to 2020 when the herring limit was exceeded. As of September 25, 2021, the pollock fishery reported 69% of the BSAI PSC limit. Earlier in 2021, herring PSC also accrued the rock sole/flathead sole/other flatfish fisheries and the yellowfin sole fishery, and those PSC limits have not been reached.

## BSAI Pacific cod by Sector

The 2021 Pacific cod TAC is 111,830 mt in the Bering Sea and 13,796 mt in the Aleutian Islands compared to the 2020 Bering Sea TAC of 141,799 mt and Aleutian Islands TAC of 13,796 mt. The number of vessels participating in 2021 has decreased mostly due to the decrease in the TACs. In 2021, prior to the closure of the non-CDQ sectors in the Bering Sea, 28% of the Aleutian Islands non-CDQ TAC has been reported relative to 35% in 2020. In 2021, 96% and in 2020, 99.6% the Bering Sea non-CDQ TAC had been reported when directed fishing closed for non-CDQ sectors in the Bering Sea. The 2021 Bering Sea and Pacific cod non-CDQ catch may be viewed [here](#).

## Pacific cod - AFA CPs

In 2021, NMFS closed directed fishing for Pacific cod for the AFA CP sector on January 20, and prohibited retention on March 15, 2021 when the annual allocation was reached. NMFS will take the sector's overage into consideration before Pacific cod reallocations to other sectors.

## Pacific cod directed fishing - trawl CVs

The trawl CV sector voluntarily stood down from Pacific cod directed fishing from January 20 to February 12, 2021. The stand down helped decrease halibut PSC relative to 2020. Also for the A season, the trawl CV sector operated in a voluntary catch share agreement which decreased the A season Pacific cod catch rates relative to 2020. The B season opened April 1, to April 23, 2021, and the trawl CV sector operated in a voluntary catch share agreement. In 2021, the number of CVs participating in Pacific cod directed fishing were 51 CVs for the A season and 26 CVs for the B season. Seventy-two CV reported 1,635 mt for the C season.

BSAI Sector <sup>2</sup>	2021				2020			
	Annual allocation <sup>1</sup>	Catch Sept 25	Closed	# of vessels Sept 25	Annual allocation <sup>1</sup>	Catch Sept 26	Closed	# of vessels Sept 26
CDQ	13,395	7,355	n/a	39	16,648	13,224	n/a	43
Hook-and-line CP	54,118	49,646	n/a	17	67,346	49,440	n/a	20
Pot CP	1,667	1,118	n/a	3	2,074	2,059		5
Pot CV >= 60 ft	9,334	7,137	n/a	23	11,616	11,000		39
Hook-and-line CV >= 60 ft	0	0	n/a	0	3	3	n/a	<3
Hook-and-line/Pot CVs < 60 ft	3,944	3,907		27	4,967	4,824		44
Jig	65	0	n/a	0	18	10	n/a	3
Trawl CV	24,704	21,020	Nov 1	93	29,693	29,468	Nov 1	98
AFA CP <sup>3</sup>	2,571	5,122	Mar 15	15	4,210	4,137	May 4	15
Amendment 80 CP	14,979	11,116	n/a	18	18,619	14,984	n/a	19
HAL/Pot ICA	400	244	n/a	80	400	168	n/a	93
Total	125,177	106,665		213	138,946	129,317		265

<sup>1</sup>In 2021, NMFS reallocated 1,722 mt from jig and hook-and-line/pot CVs >= 60 ft to hook-and-line/pot CVs < 60 ft, and in 2020 reallocations may be found [here](#).

<sup>2</sup>Vessels may be in multiple sectors.

<sup>3</sup>AFA closure dates are for prohibited retention.

### BSAI Flatfish (includes CDQ)

In 2021 relative to 2020, all BSAI flatfish catch is lower except flathead sole. The species with the largest decrease in catch in 2021 are yellowfin sole (-19,732 mt), rock sole (-11,331 mt), and Alaska plaice (3,913 mt). The decreases are mostly due to poor market conditions. The lower Alaska plaice catch is due to lower incidental catch in the yellowfin sole and rock sole fisheries.

Species	2021			2020		
	Catch	TAC	% Taken	Catch	TAC	% Taken
Alaska plaice	15,056	24,500	61%	18,969	20,050	95%
Arrowtooth flounder	7,256	15,000	48%	9,023	10,000	90%
Flathead sole	9,124	25,000	36%	7,711	16,655	46%
Greenland turbot	1,581	6,025	26%	2,302	5,300	43%
Kamchatka flounder	6,457	8,982	72%	7,187	6,580	109%
Other flatfish	2,399	6,500	37%	3,932	4,121	95%
Rock sole	13,656	54,500	25%	24,987	42,128	59%
Yellowfin sole	89,276	200,000	45%	109,008	158,518	69%
Total	144,805	340,507	42%	183,119	263,352	70%

Note: No Flatfish Exchanges so far in 2021. 2020 TACs are the final amount after revised by nonspecified reserve reallocations and Flatfish Exchanges.

### BSAI Atka mackerel, Pacific ocean perch (includes CDQ), and Non-CDQ Trawl Sablefish

The 2021 catch of Atka mackerel and POP is similar to 2020. The 2021 non-CDQ trawl sablefish catch is lower in the Bering Sea and similar in the Aleutian Islands to 2020. Retention was prohibited for the non-CDQ trawl sablefish fisheries on July 17, 2021 in the Bering Sea, July 1, 2020 in the Bering Sea, and July 14, 2020 in the Aleutian Islands.

Species	2021			2020		
	Catch	TAC	% Taken	Catch	TAC	% Taken
Atka mackerel	49,531	62,257	80%	48,751	59,305	82%
Pacific ocean perch	24,860	35,899	69%	31,644	42,875	74%
BS non-CDQ trawl sablefish	2,233	1,570	142%	3,406	861	396%
AI non-CDQ trawl sablefish	596	1,091	55%	594	471	126%

### IFQ Sablefish in the Sablefish target in the BSAI

In the BSAI, in 2021 16 vessels targeted IFQ sablefish compared to 12 in 2020. In 2021, most vessels are using pot gear and reporting 842 mt of sablefish total catch. In 2020, most vessels used pot gear and reported 419 mt total catch for the same time period.

## Blackspotted and Rougheye Rockfish

For 2021, the maximum species specific catch recommended in the Western Aleutian Islands is 31 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. NMFS prohibited retention of blackspotted/rougheye in the WAI/CAI August 2, 2021.

## Gulf of Alaska

### Pollock

The B season fisheries opened on September 1, 2021. Area 610 started with high catch rates, but catch rates have decreased due to bad weather, poor fishing, and most trawl CVs have left the fishery. Area 620 started slow with CVs fishing in other areas or fisheries. Area 630 started slow and catch rates started to increase in late September. Area 640 closed on March 9, 2021. A small amount of the directed fishing allowance remained and the fishery opened from April 1 to 6, 2021.

2021	610	620	630	640
Annual allocation	18,447	54,870	24,320	5,412 (annual)
Annual catch	14,213	44,320	13,648	5,145
Annual closure	n/a	n/a	n/a	March 9 Reopened April 1- 6

### Pacific cod

In 2021, some sectors were closed for the year or for the B season on September 1 because Pacific cod allocations were needed to support incidental catch in other fisheries:

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

Central GOA – Hook-and-line  $\geq$ 50 ft CV, Trawl CV, Trawl CP

In 2020, Pacific cod directed fishing in the GOA was closed for all sectors because the spawning biomass in the GOA was below 20 percent of the projected unfished spawning biomass.

### Pacific cod - Western GOA

The B season fisheries had a slow start, but more effort is expected.

Sector	2021				2020			
	Annual TAC	Catch Sept 25	Closed	# of vessels Sept 25	Annual TAC	Catch Sept 26	Closed	# of vessels Sept 26
Hook-and-line CP	1,068	591	n/a	<3	396	2	Jan 1	<3
Hook-and-line CV	76	47	Jan 1	57	28	52	Jan 1	62
Jig	195	26	n/a	<3	73	0	Jan 1	0
Pot CV/CP	2,050	1,121	n/a	14	761	0	Jan 1	0
Trawl CV	2,071	1,651	Sept 1	29	769	56	Jan 20	24
Trawl CP	129	93	Jan 20	4	48	40	Jan 20	5
Total	5,589	3,530		108	2,075	150		92

### Pacific cod - Central GOA

Sector	2021				2020			
	Annual TAC	Catch Sept 25	Closed	# of vessels Sept 25	Annual TAC	Catch Sept 26	Closed	# of vessels Sept 26
Hook-and-line CP	517	283	n/a	<3	12	4	Jan 1	<3
Hook-and-line CV <50 ft	1,481	1,214	n/a	129	90	50	Jan 1	104
Hook-and-line CV >=50 ft	680	678	Sept 1	70	152	101	Jan 1	76
Jig	102	26	n/a	11	38	0	Jan 1	0
Pot CV/CP	2,819	1,580	n/a	25	8	4	Jan 1	15
Trawl CV	3,826	2,509	Jan 20	44	2,521	2,278	Jan 20	49
Trawl CP	426	934	Jan 20	6	838	490	Jan 20	7
Rockfish Program CV	390	89	n/a	19	145	24	Jan 1	20
Total	10,241	7,313		311	3,804	2,951		273

### IFQ Sablefish in the Sablefish target in the GOA

The use and catch of sablefish using pot gear is increasing relative to 2020. In 2021, 131 vessels used pot gear compared to 83 vessels in 2020. In 2021, 64 vessels have reported using both pot and hook-and-line gear. In 2020, 43 vessels have reported using both gear types.

Gear	2021 Catch	2021 # of Vessels	2020 Catch	2020 # of Vessels
Hook-and-line	2,816	147	4,010	175
Pot	7,186	131	3,001	83
Total	10,002	214	7,011	215

### GOA IFQ Sablefish Total Catch by Area and Percent by Gear and Area

	2021		2021	2020		2020
Area	Hook-and-line	Pot	Catch	Hook-and-line	Pot	Catch
610	11%	89%	1,098	16%	84%	877
620	11%	89%	929	28%	72%	788
630	7%	93%	3,514	46%	54%	1,733
640	26%	74%	1,729	69%	31%	1,332
650	69%	31%	2,731	84%	16%	2,279
Total	28%	72%	10,002	57%	43%	7,011

The percent of the estimated discards is 3% in 2021 relative to 6% in 2020. In 2021 pot gear has 62% of the estimated discards relative to 27% in 2020.

### Chinook Salmon PSC Limits in the GOA

Total 2021 Chinook salmon PSC and rate is higher relative to 2020. However, groundfish catch and Chinook salmon PSC rates vary substantially between these two years. The 2021 non-pollock trawl CV Chinook salmon PSC rate is high and exceeded the 2021 Chinook salmon PSC limit of 3,060 salmon. Therefore the 2022 limit for this sector will decrease to 2,700 salmon in 2021. NMFS closed directed fishing by trawl CVs for groundfish, other than pollock, in the Western and Central GOA from March 25, 2021 to August 24, 2021. NMFS reallocated 1,350 Chinook PSC limit from the Central GOA pollock PSC limit and reopened the fishery on August 24, 2021 for non-pollock trawl CV fisheries. No Chinook salmon PSC has been reported in this sector since the reopening. The current 2021 Western/Central trawl CV non-pollock PSC limit is 4,410 salmon and the Central GOA pollock PSC limit is 16,966 salmon.

Chinook Salmon	2021 Limit	2021 PSC (Rate <sup>1</sup> )	2020 PSC (Rate <sup>1</sup> )
Total	n/a	12,216 (0.09)	9,876 (0.07)
Western GOA pollock	6,684	1,676 (0.15)	1,042 (0.07)
Central GOA pollock <sup>2</sup>	16,966	5,174 (0.08)	7,998 (0.13)
Western/Central trawl CV <sup>2</sup>	4,410	3,827 (0.53)	1 (0.00)
Central Rockfish Program CV	1,200	231 (0.02)	24 (0.00)
Western/Central trawl C/P <sup>2</sup>	4,080	1,308 (0.04)	812 (0.03)

<sup>1</sup>Rate is number of salmon per metric tons of groundfish.

<sup>2</sup>Includes incentive buffer for 2021 Western/Central trawl C/P limit (480 Chinook) and Western/Central trawl CV (360 Chinook), and reallocation from Central pollock to Western/Central trawl CV.

### Non-Chinook Salmon PSC in the GOA

Non-Chinook Salmon	2021 PSC (Rate)	2020 PSC (Rate)
Total All Sectors	1,909 (0.015)	996 (0.007)

### Halibut Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) Data

In the BSAI and GOA, the 2021 halibut PSC use and rates are lower relative to 2020. In the BSAI, the decrease in 2021 halibut PSC is mostly from the trawl CP rock sole target (-172 mt) because of lower effort, trawl CV Pacific cod target (-83 mt) because of the delayed start to February 12, 2021 and slower pace of the fishery. Also there is decrease in the CV yellowfin sole target (-65 mt) from lower effort. In the GOA, most of the decrease in PSC use in 2021 is because of limited flatfish fishing due to poor market conditions and closure of non-pollock fisheries in March when the Chinook salmon limit was reached. NMFS has since reallocated some Chinook salmon PSC to the non-pollock sector consistent with reapportionment regulations, but effort is relatively low and halibut PSC remains at historically low levels.

Area, Gear, and Sector	2021			2020		
	Halibut PSC	Groundfish	Rate	Halibut PSC	Groundfish	Rate
<b>BSAI Total</b>	<b>1,205</b>	<b>1,681,882</b>	<b>0.07%</b>	<b>1,433</b>	<b>1,657,851</b>	<b>0.09%</b>
Amendment 80	784	221,764	0.35%	931	261,733	0.36%
BSAI trawl limited access	290	1,232,052	0.02%	356	1,176,550	0.03%
Non-trawl Pacific cod	69	64,140	0.11%	50	64,780	0.08%
Non-trawl Other	0	0	0	0	0	0
CDQ	62	163,926	0.04%	96	154,788	0.06%
<b>GOA Total</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>130,779</b>	<b>0.25%</b>	<b>706</b>	<b>138,442</b>	<b>0.51%</b>
Trawl, Deep-water	136	14,318	0.95%	514	29,694	1.73%
Trawl, Shallow-water	94	83,346	0.11%	164	85,808	0.19%
Trawl, Rockfish Program	52	30,058	0.17%	28	22,940	0.12%
Hook-and-line	48	3,057	1.57%	0	0	0



## Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Pacific cod Allocations

Starting in 2020, the Bering Sea non-CDQ TAC has been reached and directed fishing by all non-CDQ sectors closed on November 18, 2020, and on September 17, 2021. The discussion below explains the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands non-CDQ Pacific cod allocations and issues associated with the directed fishing closure of Bering Sea Pacific cod for all non-CDQ sectors.

### History of Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands TAC split

In 2014, the BSAI Pacific cod TAC was separated to the Bering Sea (BS) subarea TAC and the Aleutian Islands (AI) subarea TAC. The allocations of the BS and AI Pacific cod TACs follow these steps.

1. CDQ allocation (10.7%) is deducted from each subarea (BS and AI) TAC (as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act)
2. After CDQ is deducted, the remaining BS and AI subarea non-CDQ TACs are combined for the BSAI Pacific cod non-CDQ TAC
3. The BSAI Pacific cod non-CDQ TAC is allocated to the non-CDQ sectors, see 50 CFR 679.20(a)(7)(ii)(A)

### Decreasing Pacific cod Bering Sea TAC

The following discussions is for the Pacific cod non-CDQ TAC only. As shown in Table 1, the BS Pacific cod TAC as a percentage of the BSAI combined TAC has been decreasing in recent years (fourth column). As the BS TAC decreases, the amount of BSAI Pacific cod TAC reallocated to other sectors also decreases since most sector allocations are fully reached when TACs are lower (see last two columns).

**Table 1 – 2014 to 2021 Aleutian Islands (AI) Non-CDQ TAC, Bering Sea (BS) Non-CDQ TAC, BS TAC as Percent of BSAI Non-CDQ TAC, Amount Reallocated, and Percent of Amount Reallocated.**

Year	AI Pacific cod Non-CDQ TAC	BS Pacific cod Non-CDQ TAC	BS TAC as Percent of BSAI TAC	Amount Reallocated	Percent of Amount Reallocated
2014	6,248	220,479	97%	15,000	7%
2015	8,414	220,479	96%	21,112	9%
2016	11,465	213,141	95%	16,048	7%
2017	14,016	199,768	93%	10,694	5%
2018	14,016	168,005	92%	5,121	3%
2019	12,693	166,475	93%	6,921	4%
2020	12,320	126,627	91%	3,215	2%
2021	12,320	99,464	89%	1,722	2%

Note: 2021 reallocation as of September 30, 2021.

The catch between the BS and AI becomes an issue as the BS TAC decreases. Lower TAC in the BS increases the likelihood that the overall BS Pacific cod TAC will be reached prior to sectors reaching their combined BSAI annual allocations. Section 679.20(d)(i) requires that if a TAC is projected to be reached, then NMFS must calculate the directed fishing allowance after considering the amount that will be taken as incidental catch in directed fishing for other species. When the directed fishing allowance has been or will be reached NMFS will close directed fishing. Closing directed fishing in the BS leaves the AI as the only area where directed fishing can occur. Closing directed fishing in the BS in the fall may impact sectors differently.

Directed fishing for Pacific cod in the AI is different than in the BS. The sectors that have historically participated the most in AI Pacific cod directed fishing are the trawl CV and hook-and-line CP sectors. Some sectors have more LLPs with AI endorsements than others. Three pot CVs  $\geq 60$  ft have AI Pacific cod endorsements, five pot CPs have AI Pacific cod endorsements, however not all of these have fished BSAI CP pot cod in recent years, 26 hook-and-line CPs have AI endorsements, but some of these have not fished hook-and-line Pacific cod in recent years. The hook-and-line/pot CVs  $<60$  ft do not need a Pacific cod endorsement to participate in the BS or the AI. These vessels only need an LLP with a nontrawl endorsement. There are 21  $< 60$  ft CVs who have a nontrawl endorsement in the AI and would therefore be eligible to fish the Pacific cod hook-and-line/pot CV  $<60$  ft sector in the AI. However, some of these CVs may not participate in Pacific cod and may retain this endorsement for sablefish or other groundfish fisheries.

### **Ability of the Pacific cod sectors to react to decreasing Pacific cod BS TAC**

Sectors have different seasonal allocations, which may allow them to fish earlier or prevent them from fishing later in the BS. Sectors that may be allowed to increase their Pacific cod catch rates to avoid an early BS Pacific cod directed fishing closure are the trawl sectors, the hook-and-line CP sector, and the jig sector as shown in Table 2. These sectors' final season opens June 10. Sectors that receive their final allocation in June 10 can fish almost 3 months before the pot sectors can start to fish on September 1.

The sectors that may be prevented from fishing in the BS later if directed fishing is close early in the fall are the pot CV  $\geq 60$  ft and the pot CP sectors. There has been no directed fishing for Pacific cod by hook-and-line CV  $\geq 60$  ft, so this sector is not expected to be impacted. The pot CV  $\geq 60$  ft and the pot CP sectors final season opens on September 1 (Table 2), so these sectors have less time to catch their final allocation if the BS closes early in the fall.

**Table 2 BSAI Pacific cod Non-CDQ Sector Seasonal Allowances and Season Dates**

Sector	Seasonal Allowances		
	A season	B season	C season
Trawl CV	74%	11%	15%
	Jan 20 - Mar 31	Apr 1 - Jun 10	Jun 10 - Nov 1
Trawl CP	75%	25%	0% - any rollover
	Jan 20 - Mar 31	Apr 1 - Jun 10	Jun 10 - Nov 1
Hook-and-line CP	51%	49%	no C season
	Jan 1 - Jun 10	Jun 10 - Dec 31	
Hook-and-line CV $\geq$ 60 ft	51%	49%	no C season
	Jan 1 - Jun 10	Sep 1 - Dec 31	
Pot vessels $\geq$ 60 ft	51%	49%	no C season
	Jan 1 - Jun 10	Sep 1 - Dec 31	
Jig vessels	60%	20%	20%
	Jan 1 - Mar 31	Apr 1 - Jun 10	Jun 10 - Dec 31
All other nontrawl vessels	no seasonal allowance	no seasonal allowance	no seasonal allowance

The BSAI trawl limited access sector and the hook-and-line sectors halibut PSC limits for Pacific cod may be allocated seasonally, see 50 CFR 679.21(b)(2). Prior to 2011, the hook-and-line sectors were not apportioned halibut PSC limit in their second season and any remaining halibut PSC limit from the first season rolled over to the third season, so directed fishing for Pacific cod was closed from June 10 to September 1. With the formation of the BSAI Pacific cod hook-and-line CP voluntary cooperative the Council apportioned halibut PSC to the second season so the sector could fish all year. The BSAI trawl limited access sector has not had seasonal apportionment of the halibut PSC limit for Pacific cod. However, the trawl CV and trawl AFA Pacific cod C season allocations and fishing are low after June 10 (see Table 2), so limiting trawl Pacific cod fishing by halibut PSC limit apportionment may not effectively change the trawl sector's Pacific cod fishing rates.

50 CFR 679.21(b) (2) *Seasonal apportionments of BSAI halibut PSC allowances -*

- (i) **General.** NMFS, after consultation with the Council, may apportion a halibut PSC allowance on a seasonal basis.
- (ii) **Factors to be considered.** NMFS will base any seasonal apportionment of a PSC allowance on the following types of information:
  - (A) Seasonal distribution of prohibited species;
  - (B) Seasonal distribution of target groundfish species relative to prohibited species distribution;

(C) Expected PSC needs on a seasonal basis relevant to change in prohibited species biomass and expected catches of target groundfish species;

(D) Expected variations in PSC rates throughout the fishing year;

(E) Expected changes in directed groundfish fishing seasons;

(F) Expected start of fishing effort; or

(G) Economic effects of establishing seasonal prohibited species apportionments on segments of the target groundfish industry.

(iii) ***Seasonal trawl fishery PSC allowances*** -

(A) ***Unused seasonal apportionments.*** Unused seasonal apportionments of trawl fishery PSC allowances made under [paragraph \(b\)\(2\)](#) of this section will be added to its respective fishery PSC allowance for the next season during a current fishing year.

(B) ***Seasonal apportionment exceeded.*** If a seasonal apportionment of a trawl fishery PSC allowance made under [paragraph \(b\)\(2\)](#) of this section is exceeded, the amount by which the seasonal apportionment is exceeded will be deducted from its respective apportionment for the next season during a current fishing year.

(iv) ***Seasonal non-trawl fishery PSC allowances*** -

(A) ***Unused seasonal apportionments.*** Any unused portion of a seasonal non-trawl fishery PSC allowance made under [paragraph \(b\)\(2\)](#) of this section will be reapportioned to the fishery's remaining seasonal PSC allowances during a current fishing year in a manner determined by NMFS, after consultation with the Council, based on the types of information listed under [paragraph \(b\)\(2\)\(ii\)](#) of this section.

(B) ***Seasonal apportionment exceeded.*** If a seasonal apportionment of a non-trawl fishery PSC allowance made under [paragraph \(b\)\(2\)](#) of this section is exceeded, the amount by which the seasonal apportionment is exceeded will be deducted from the fishery's remaining seasonal PSC allowances during a current fishing year in a manner determined by NMFS, after consultation with the Council, based on the types of information listed under [paragraph \(b\)\(2\)\(ii\)](#) of this section.