

Western Aleutian Islands Management of Blackspotted/Rougheye Rockfish

From the management perspective, the Maximum Sub-area Species Catch (MSSC) has merits over a Western Aleutian Islands (WAI) subarea ABC/TAC for blackspotted/rougheye rockfish (BS/RE).

1. Under 2016 and 2017 MSSC management BS/RE catch has decreased.
2. The amount of management and monitoring work involved is about the same.
 - a. ABC/TAC – harvest specification
 - b. MSSC – information bulletin
3. The fleet can react more quickly than NMFS:
 - a. track catch in weekly cooperative reports
 - b. identify hauls with high BS/RE catch
 - c. avoid hot spots
 - d. move when encounter BS/RE
 - e. watch fishing depth
4. The number of vessels is limited. Since 2014, 18 vessels reported BS/RE. Of those, 7 vessels reported less than 1 metric ton a year.
5. ABC/TAC has potential for regulatory discards when retention is prohibited.
6. BS/RE is closed for directed fishing and catch is incidental, so a WAI ABC/TAC does not limit catch more than the MSSC.
7. No other viable management alternatives identified.

Current inseason management actions at 50 CFR 679.20

1. Open directed fishing – full retention allowed
2. Close directed fishing – retention up to the maximum retainable amount (MRA).

In the WAI, the primary basis species and rockfish MRAs are:

Atka mackerel	5% aggregate rockfish
Pacific cod	5 % aggregate rockfish
Pacific ocean perch (POP)	15 % aggregate rockfish

3. Prohibit retention when TAC is reached
4. If catch approaches an OFL, then NMFS may prohibit directed fishing for species in the area or part thereof, or may limit time, area, or gear types

Current Western AI ABC and TAC specifications

1. Since 2011, BS/RE ABC/TAC are specified by Bering Sea/Eastern AI and Central AI/WAI.
2. Main WAI directed fisheries provide some limit on BS/RE incidental catch.
 - a. Separate WAI ABC and TAC for Atka mackerel and POP.
 - b. WAI Atka mackerel TAC limited to 65% of the ABC.

- c. WAI Pacific cod catch limit is based on the Pacific cod abundance in the WAI established in the stock assessment (2017 is 25.6% or 4,018 mt).
3. Since 2011, BS/RE CAI/WAI catch has not reached TAC.

Alternative management

1. MSSC – The SSC recommended estimation of a MSSC amount to guide the public regarding the level of catch needed to alleviate concern regarding the catch amount.
 - a. Through the stock assessment and harvest specification process the MSSC is determined.
 - b. The SSC includes the amount in their December meeting minutes.
 - c. NMFS issues Information Bulletin regarding MSSC in January. It is posted on the Alaska Region website and emailed.
<https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/node/56475>
 - d. NMFS posts catch report updated weekly on the Alaska Region website.
https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/reports/car112_rougheye_rockfish_catch2017.pdf
 - e. The industry avoids the species and retention is allowed up to the MRA.
2. Allocate TAC by gear type. Since BS/RE is not open for directed fishing and most of the catch is by trawl gear this would not be effective in reducing catch. The 2015 through 2017 average catch for hook-and-line gear is 5 mt and for trawl gear is 41 mt.

History of BS/RE catch and MSSC by fishing year

- 2014 Pre-MSSC, one Amendment 80 (A80) cooperative asked for a WAI amount to avoid reaching.
- 2015 1st year of MSSC, two A80 cooperatives notified, MSSC weekly catch report created, new SSL measures for Atka mackerel and Pacific cod.
- 2016 2nd year of MSSC, all sectors notified by Information bulletin, 2nd year of weekly catch report.
- 2017 3rd year of MSSC, all sectors notified by Information bulletin, 3rd year of weekly catch report.

Other management details

In 2011 through 2014, all BS/RE catch was in the Pacific ocean perch target, since Steller sea lion protection measure prohibited retention of WAI Atka mackerel and Pacific cod.

BS/RE retention ranges from a low of 81% in 2008 to a high of 97% in 2014 for a 10 year average of 83%.

BS/RE Western Aleutian Islands catch

Year	BS/RE catch	MSSC amount	Amount remaining	Groundfish catch	Percent total catch	Percent of POP catch	Management changes
2008	58	n/a	n/a	33,316	0.17%	0.78%	A80 starts
2009	67	n/a	n/a	33,203	0.20%	1.05%	
2010	85	n/a	n/a	36,589	0.23%	1.37%	
2011	46	n/a	n/a	9,422	0.49%	0.56%	No Atka/Pcod retention
2012	65	n/a	n/a	9,609	0.68%	0.79%	No Atka/Pcod retention
2013	84	n/a	n/a	11,822	0.71%	0.84%	No Atka/Pcod retention
2014	57	n/a	n/a	10,530	0.54%	0.60%	No Atka/Pcod retention
2015	67	46	(21)	26,522	0.25%	0.76%	
2016	38	58	20	24,298	0.16%	0.43%	
2017 ¹	33	29	(4)	26,296	0.13%	0.40%	
10 year average	60	n/a	n/a	22,161	0.36%	0.76%	
3 year average	46	44	(2)	25,705	0.18%	0.53%	

¹The 2017 catch is through September 6, 2017.