



Bycatch Management in North Pacific Groundfish Fisheries

David Witherell (Executive Director), North Pacific Fishery Management Council

November 2021

The Guiding Law for U.S. Marine Fisheries

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act – Adopted 1976



200-mile limit

Established the 3-200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone



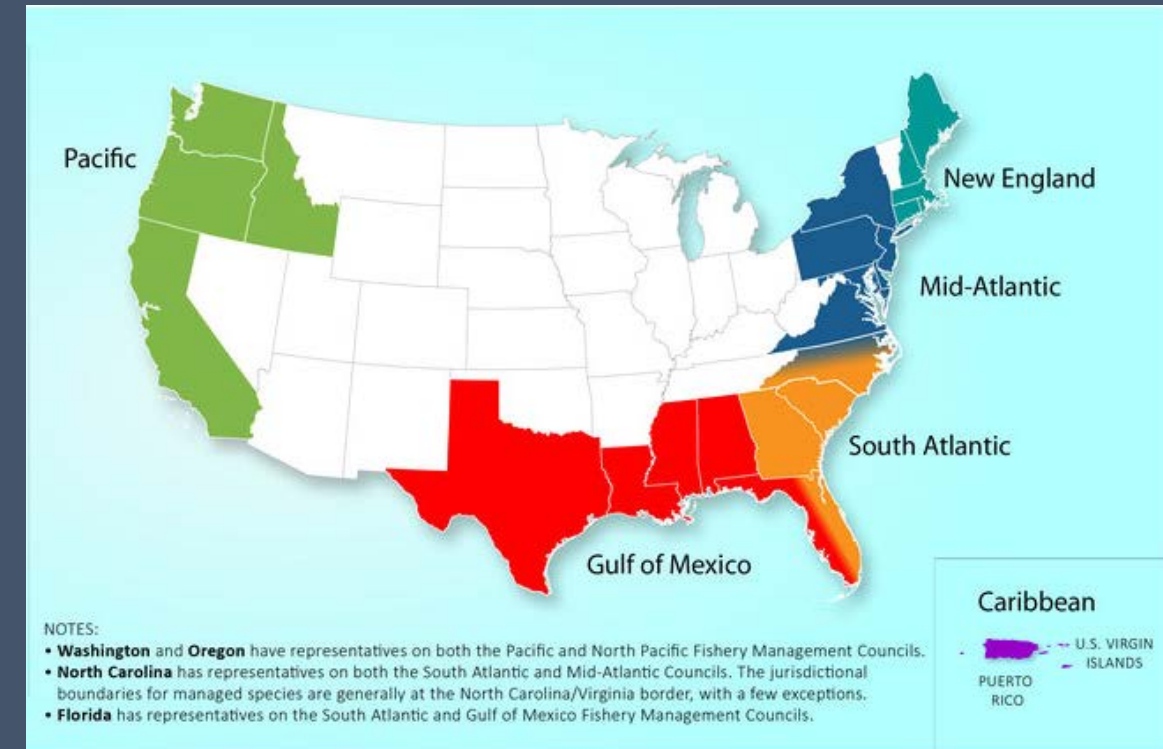
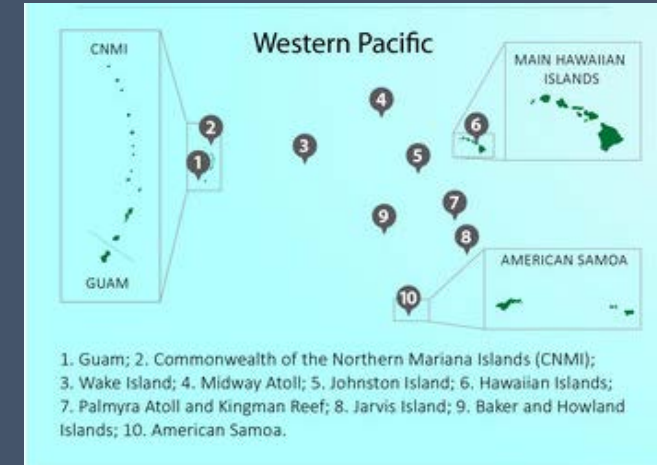
National Standards

Established National Standards and other requirements for conservation and management of resources.



8 Councils

Established a system of 8 Regional Councils, composed of fishermen and gov't representatives, to develop fishery regulations for their specific area.



Magnuson-Stevens Act - National Standards

1. Prevent overfishing and achieve optimum yield
2. Use best scientific information
3. Manage stocks as a unit throughout its range when practicable
4. No discrimination between residents of different states
5. Promote efficiency in fishery resource utilization
6. Take into account variations in fisheries, fish stocks & catches
7. Minimize costs and avoid duplication
8. Take into account importance to fishing communities
9. Minimize bycatch and bycatch mortality
10. Promote safety at sea

North Pacific Council Membership



Karla Bush
ADF&G alternate



Rachel Baker
ADF&G



David Witherell
Executive Director



Simon Kinneen
Chairman



Bill Tweit
WA DF&G



Dave Hanson
PSMFC



Steve Marx
OR DFW



Nicole Kimball



Andy Mezirow



Anne Vanderhoeven



John Jensen

US Dept of
State
David Moore

USFWS
Holly Carroll

11 voting members

AK (6), WA (3), OR (1), NMFS (1)

- 7 appointed
- 4 agency representatives

4 non-voting members

- US Fish & Wildlife
- US Coast Guard
- PSFMC
- US State Dept.

1 Council staff (non-member)

- Executive Director



Cora Campbell



Kenny Down

US Coast Guard
CAPT Brennell



Jim Balsiger
NMFS Regional Dir

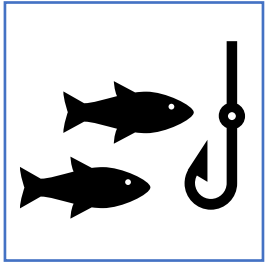


Glenn Merrill
NMFS alternate

NOAA
General
Counsel
(non-
member)

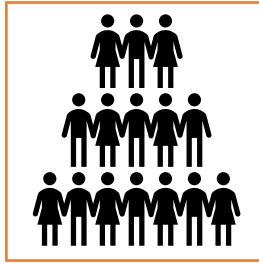
Council Meetings

Virtual since June 2020



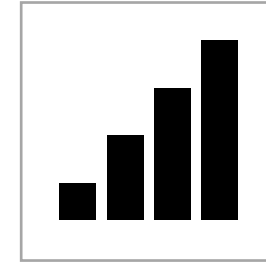
5 Meetings Annually

3 in Anchorage
1 in local fishing community
1 in Seattle or Portland



Access

All meetings are open to the public



SSC & AP

AP and SSC provide input to Council at each meeting.



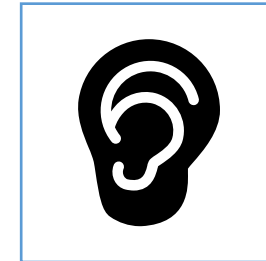
Public Testimony

Public testimony is taken for each agenda item at the SSC, AP, and Council.



Agenda & Schedule

Meeting agendas and schedules are published online.



Listen Live

Audio is available to listen to the Council meetings online in real-time.

Who Manages What Fisheries off Alaska?

	North Pacific Fishery Management Council	National Marine Fisheries Service	Alaska Board of Fisheries/ Alaska Dept. Fish & Game	International Pacific Halibut Commission
Groundfish (pollock, cod, flatfish, etc.)	Allocation & conservation	Implements Federal regulations	Some state fisheries (0-3)	
Crabs (king, snow, Tanner crabs)	Bering Sea fisheries – joint management	Bering Sea fisheries - regulations	State & Jointly managed fisheries	
Scallops	License limits	License regulations	Fishery mgmt.	
Halibut	Allocation	Allocation regulations		Conservation
Herring			Fishery mgmt.	
Salmon			Fishery mgmt.	
Others (shrimp, urchins, etc.)			Fishery mgmt.	

What is bycatch?

Magnuson-Stevens Act definition:

The term "bycatch" means fish which are harvested in a fishery, but which are not sold or kept for personal use, and includes economic discards and regulatory discards. Such term does not include fish released alive under a recreational catch and release fishery management program.

In other words:

Bycatch = Discarded fish

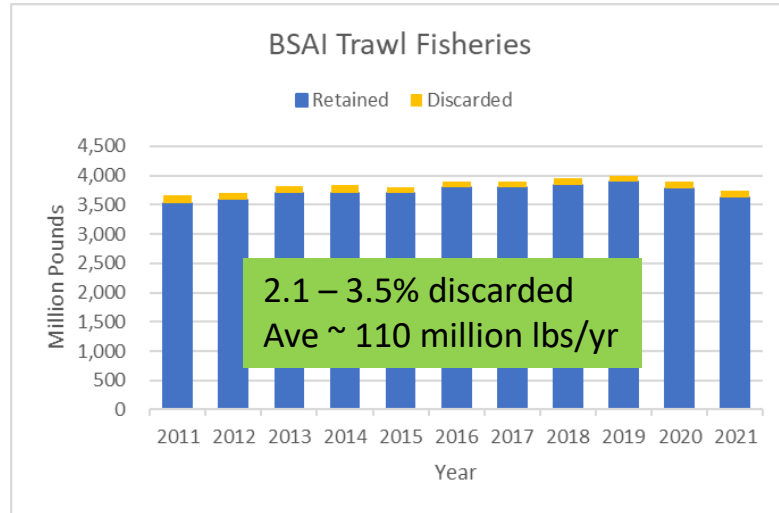
Economic discards: fish harvested which could be legally retained, but are of insufficient value to retain (e.g., sculpins, grenadiers, brittle stars)

Regulatory discards: fish harvested which are required by regulation to be discarded whenever caught, or are required by regulation to be retained but not sold

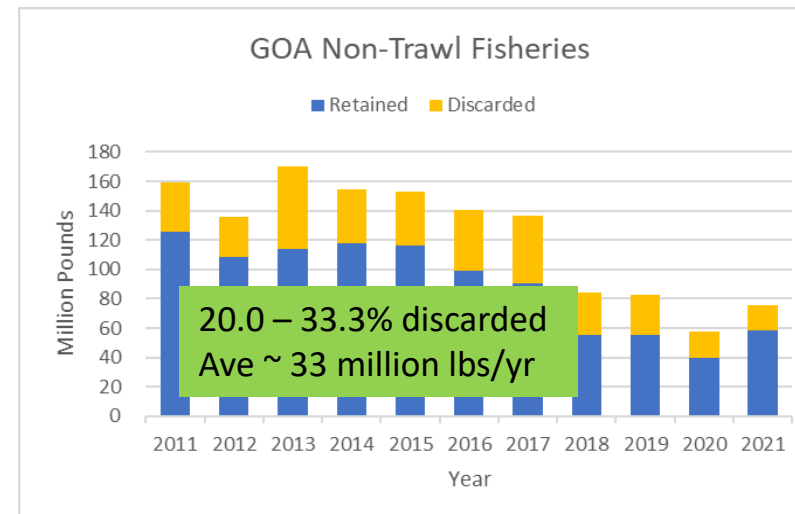
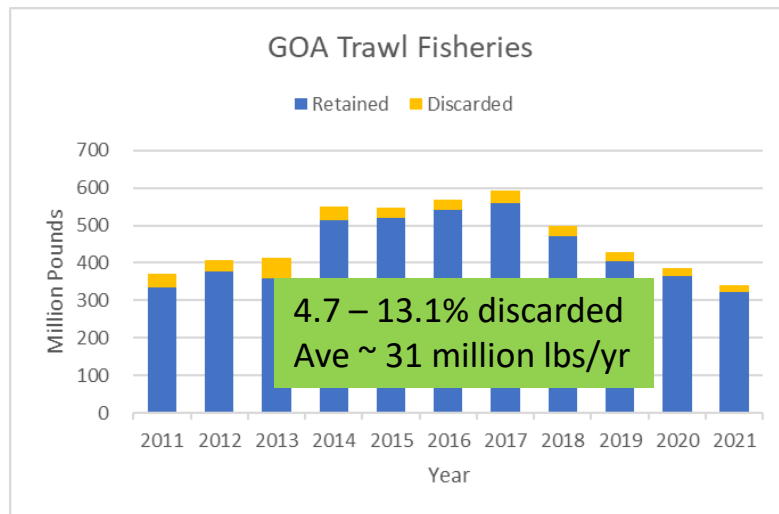
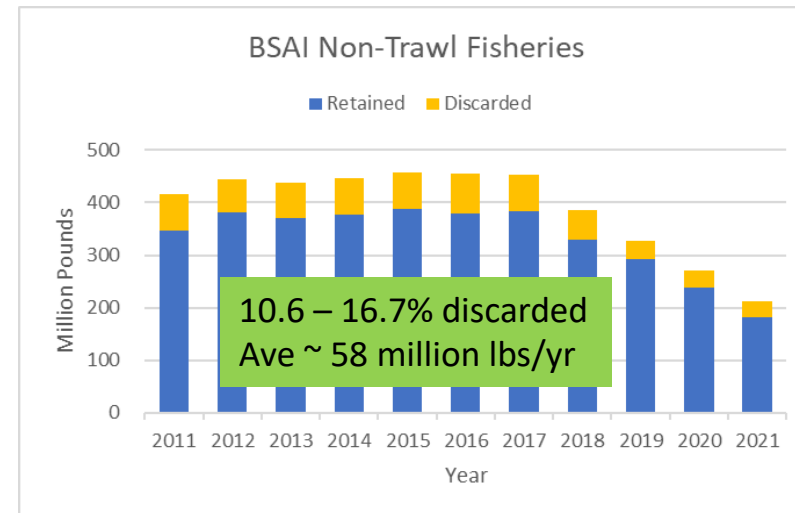
- Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) : A special type of regulatory discard. Fish caught that must be returned to sea with a minimum of injury = Pacific halibut, Pacific herring, Pacific salmon, steelhead, king crab, bairdi, opilio crab.

Total Bycatch by Gear Type in the Groundfish Fisheries

Trawl Gear



Longline and Pot Gear



PSC Limits and Catch

	Gear Type	Overall Limit	2021 Catch Thru 10/23/21	Apportionment
Halibut				
BSAI	trawl	2,805 mt	1,233	Am 80, TLAS,CDQ
	hook and line	710 mt	80	CV/CP, seasonal
GOA	trawl	1,706 mt	306	seasonal & species depth
	hook and line	257 mt	56	seasonal and DSR
Chinook Salmon				
BSAI	pollock trawl	47,591 fish	13,488	cooperatives
GOA	pollock trawl	25,000 fish	9,257	Western & Central GOA
	non-pollock trawl	9,690 fish	5,488	CVs, CPs, rockfish CVs
Herring				
BSAI	trawl	2,723 mt	1,877	
Crab				
King	bottom trawl	97,000 crab	15,224	Zone 1
Tanner	bottom trawl	3,071,678 crab	506,803	Zones 1 and 2
Opilio	bottom trawl	5,990,225 crab	224,549	COBLZ

Measures to Minimize Salmon PSC in the BSAI

Note: Only Chinook and Chum salmon are caught in any numbers in BSAI and GOA groundfish fisheries.

Regulatory measures

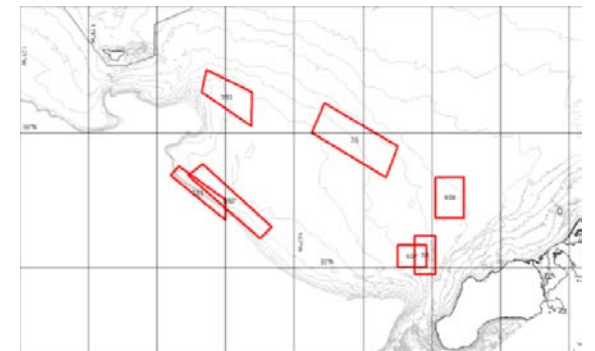
• Chinook Salmon PSC Limits

<u>Amendment 91</u>	<u>Amendment 110</u>
Performance Standard 47,591 Each pollock sector (<u>shoreside</u> , at-sea, mothership, CDQ) gets relative share of total for year. Incentive – If a sector exceeds its share in 2 or 7 years, it is limited to the performance share thereafter. Overall PSC Limit 60,000 The entire pollock fishery is shut down if this limit is hit.	If Western AK 3-river system index > 250,00 then Performance standard = 47,591 and Overall PSC Limit = 60,000 If Western AK 3-river system index < 250,00 then Performance standard = 33,318 and Overall PSC Limit = 45,000 Western AK 3-river system index: Each year, ADF&G provides a Chinook salmon abundance using the 3-System Index for western Alaska based on the post-season in-river Chinook salmon run size for the Kuskokwim, <u>Unalakleet</u>, and Upper Yukon aggregate stock grouping

• Incentive Plan Agreements (IPA) Requirements

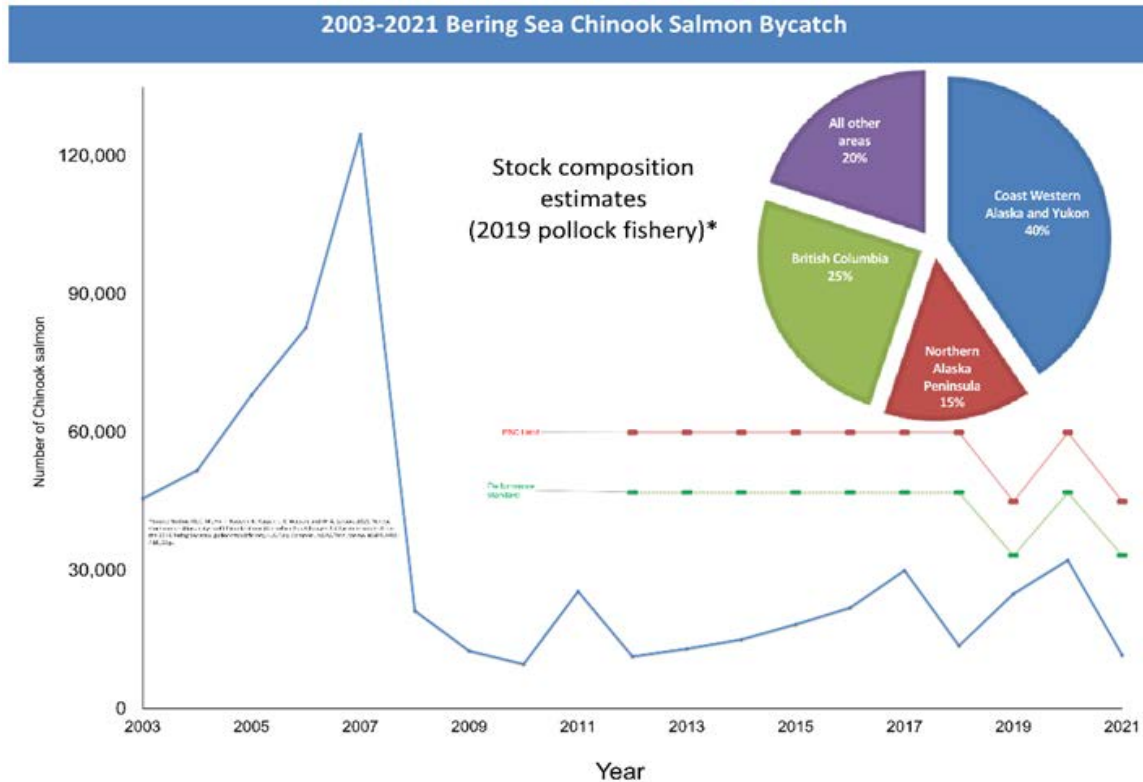
Voluntary measures

- Pollock fishery cooperative IPAs: incentives for captains to avoid Chinook salmon and chum salmon bycatch under any condition of pollock and Chinook salmon abundance in all years; rewards for avoiding Chinook salmon, and penalties for failure to avoid Chinook salmon at the vessel level.
- Hotspot reporting and closures
- Salmon escape panels
- Donation to foodbanks



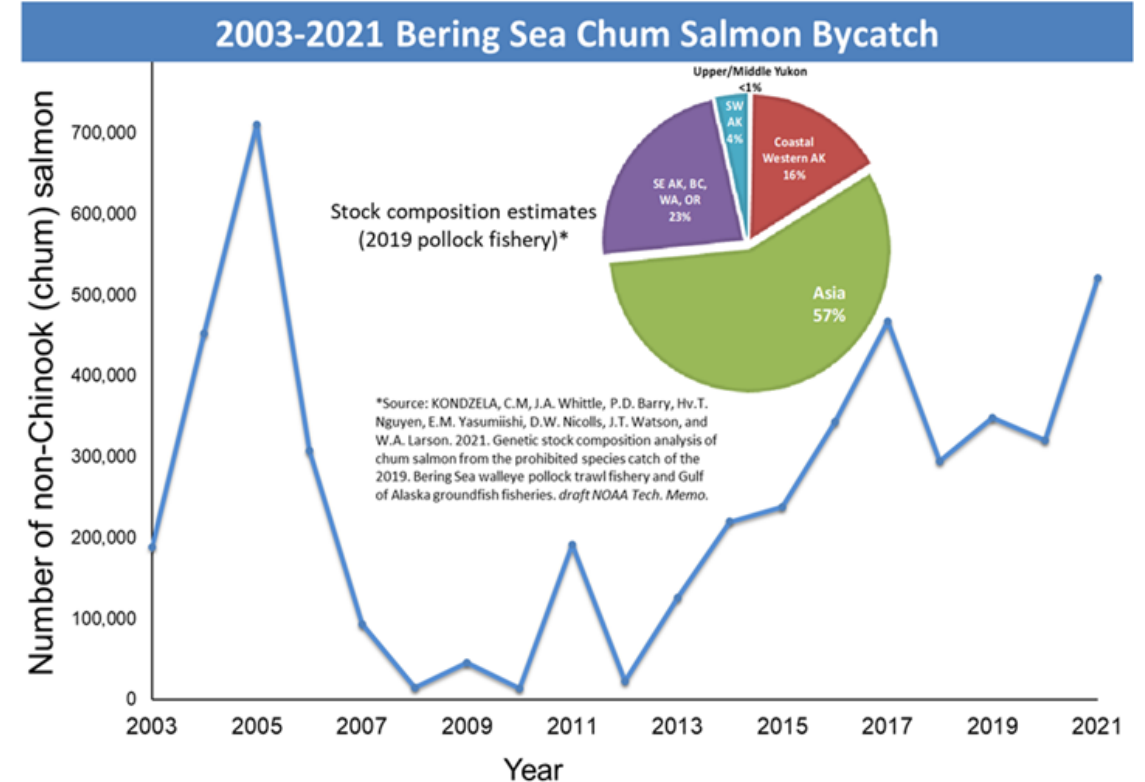
Bering Sea Salmon PSC trends and genetic breakouts

Chinook Salmon



2019 Chinook salmon bycatch: 39% from western coastal Alaska and <1% from Upper/Middle Yukon

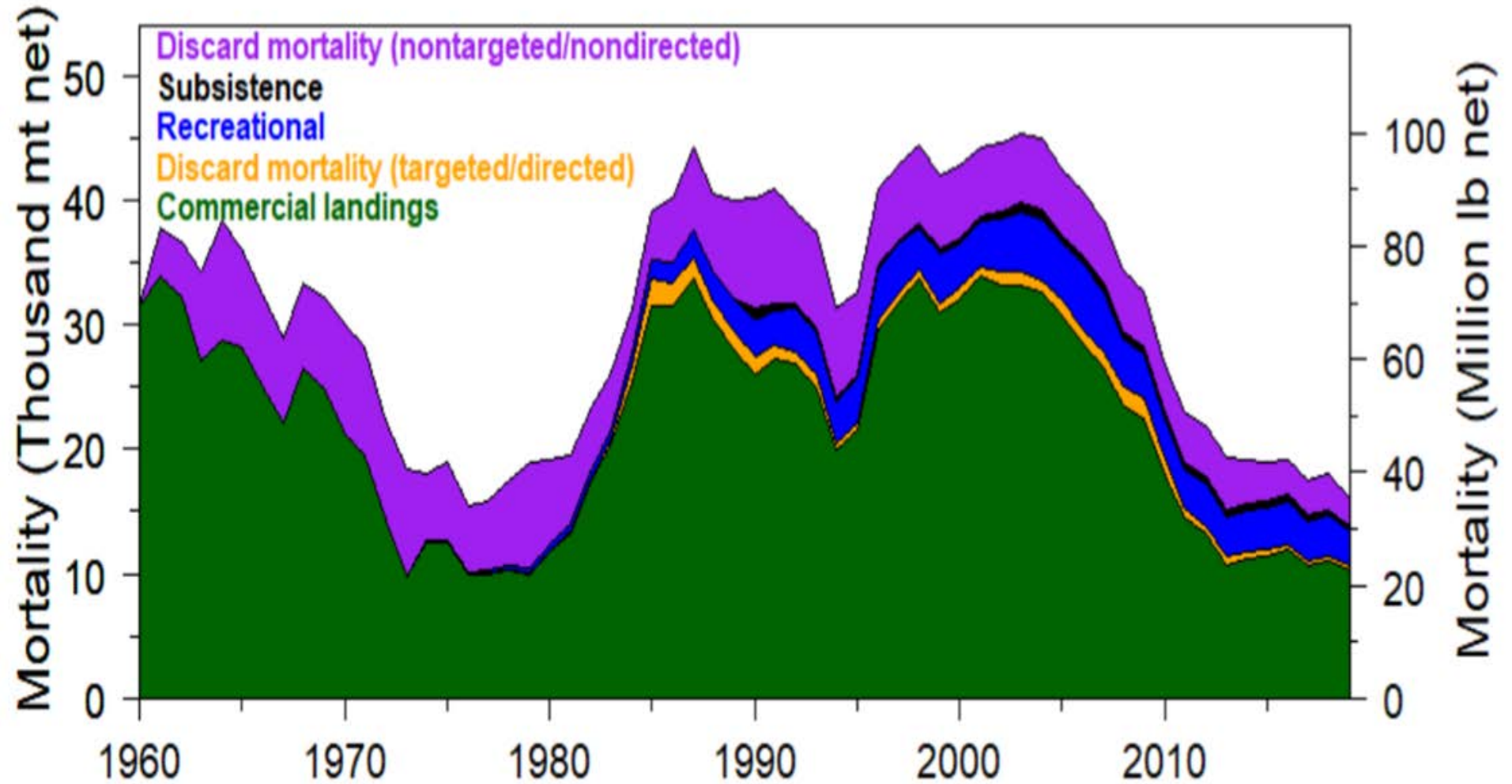
Chum Salmon



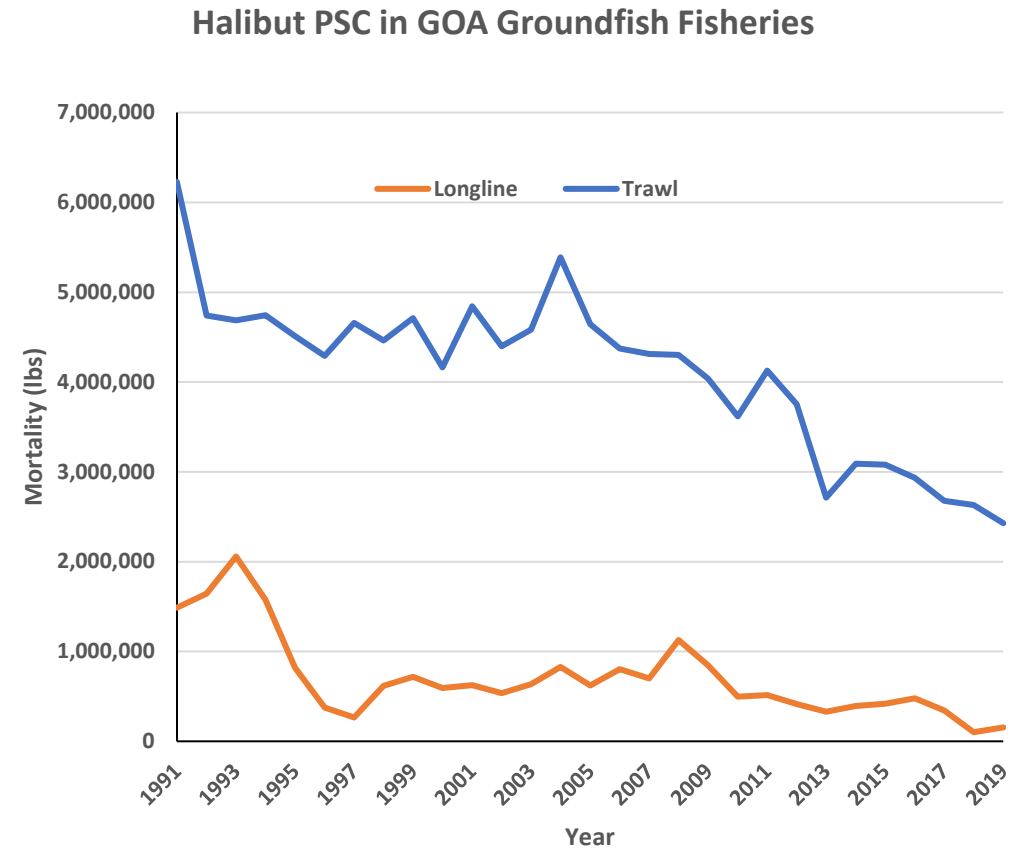
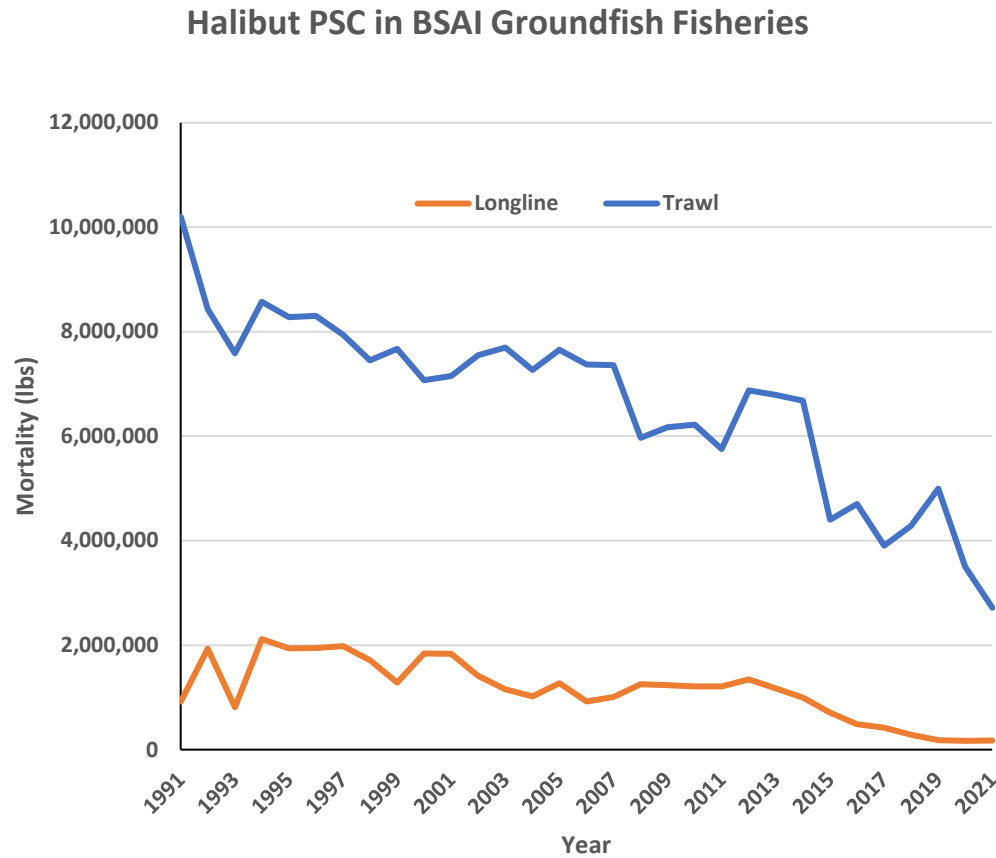
2019 chum salmon bycatch: 16% from coastal western Alaska and 0.3% from Upper/Middle Yukon

Last impact assessment (2017) showed <2.5% impact on aggregate WAK and <1% on Yukon Chinook salmon runs.

Halibut Mortality - Coastwide



Halibut PSC Trends by Area and Gear Type



Catch data through 10/23/2021

Measures to minimize halibut PSC

Regulatory measures

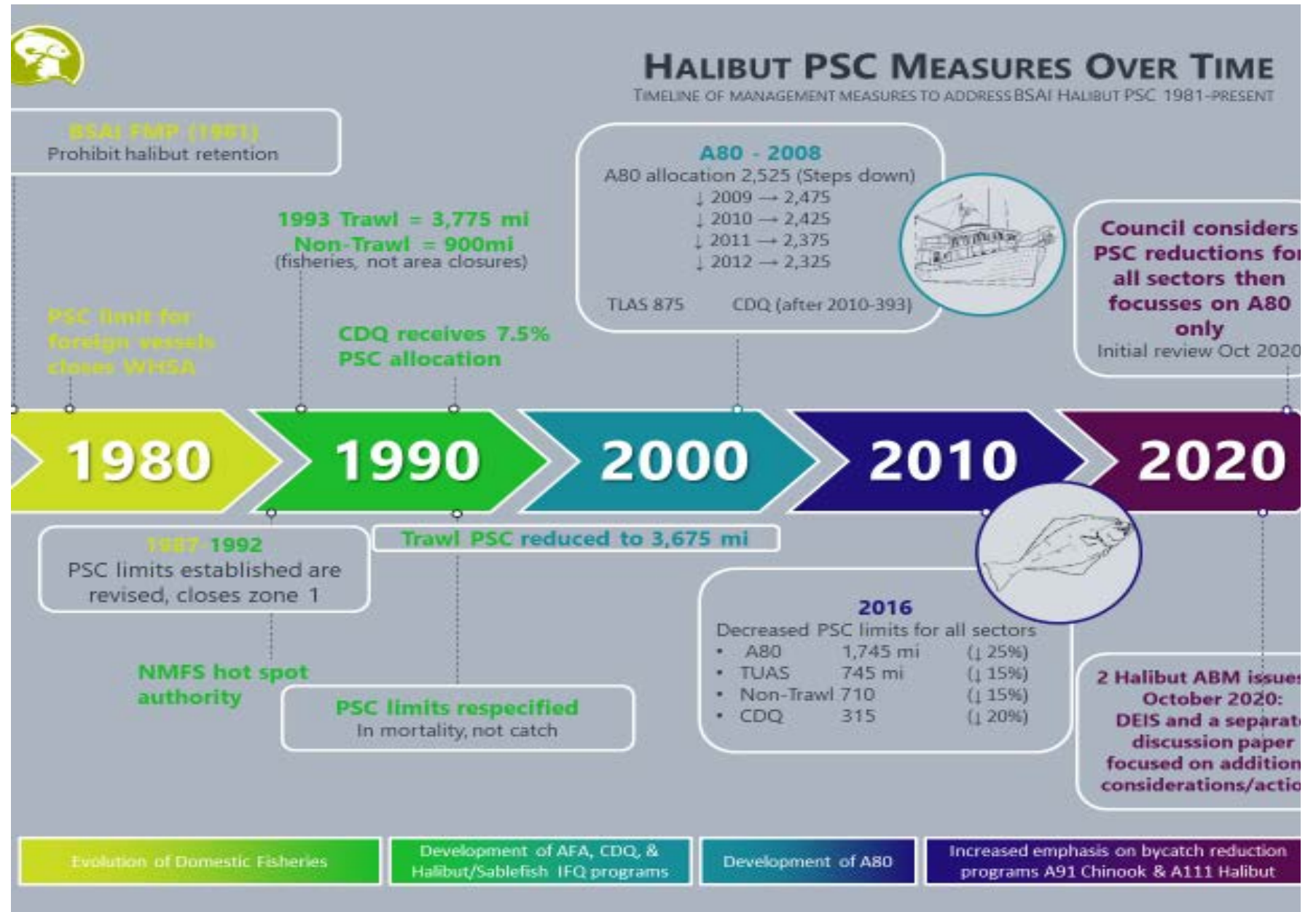
- Strict PSC Limits: Fishery stops if reached
- Deck sorting regulations
- Careful release requirements for longliners



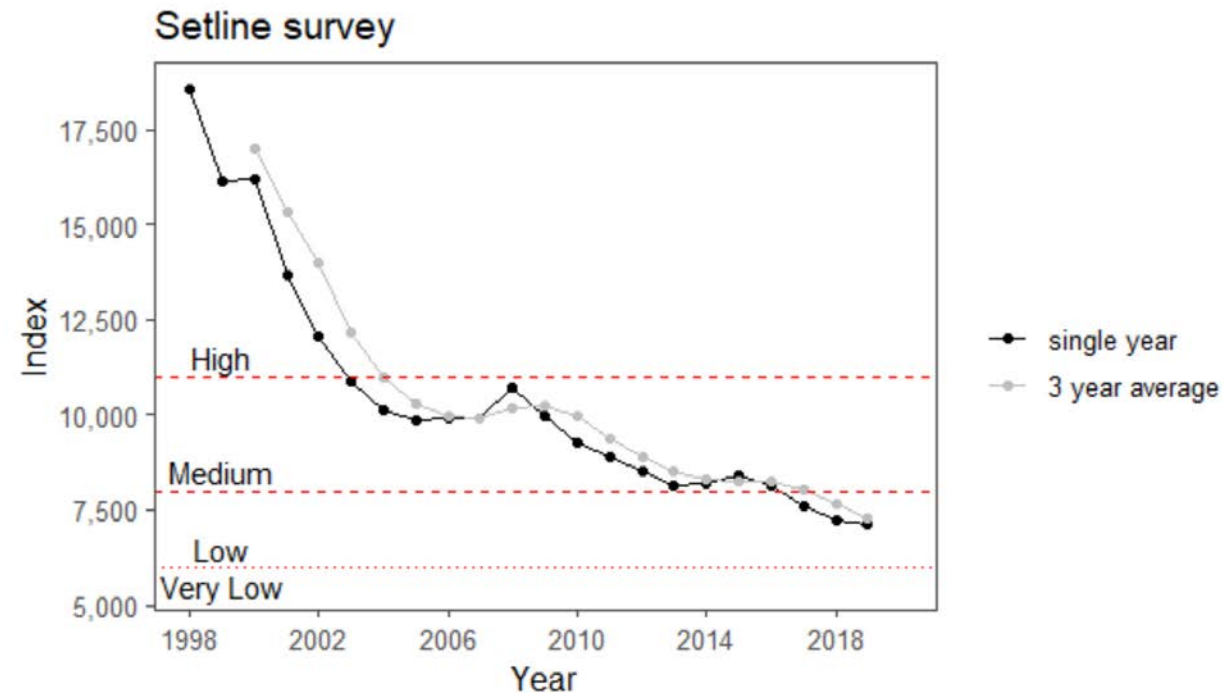
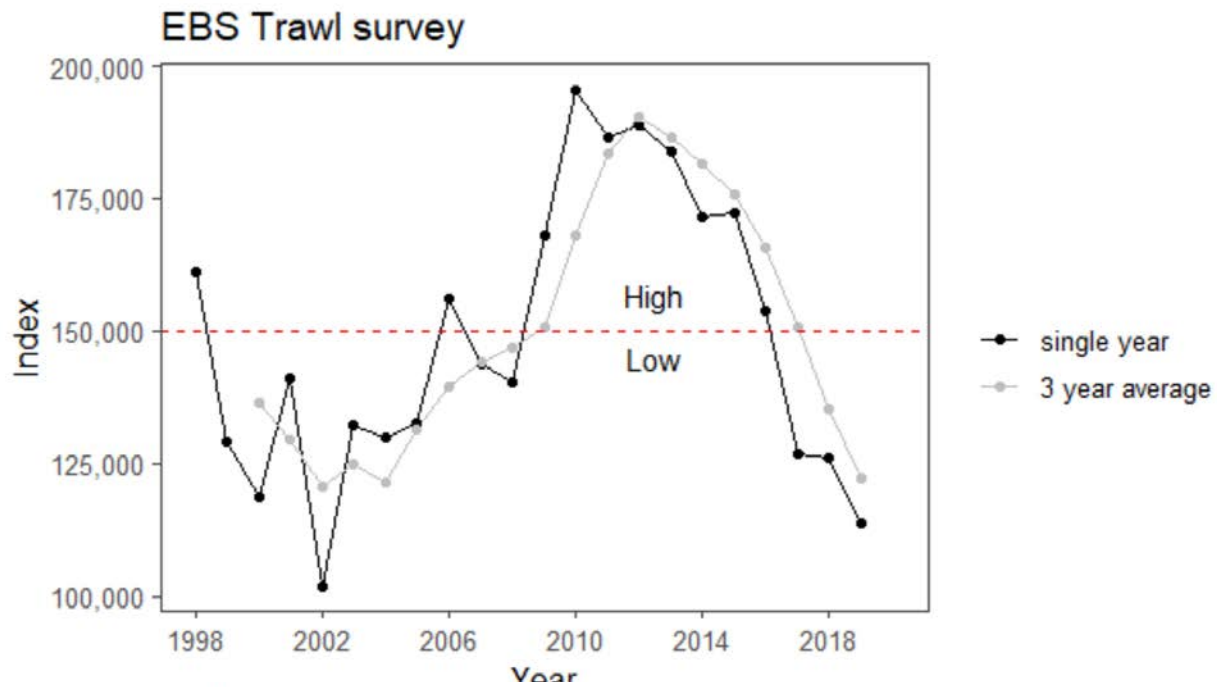
Voluntary measures

- Deck sorting of halibut to get fish released alive
- Halibut Avoidance Incentive Program: data shared across BSAI fleet, testing and use of halibut excluder panels, limitations on trawling at night, etc.
- Annual report to the Council from the Amendment 80 fleet on bycatch performance and avoidance program
- Donation to foodbanks

History of BSAI halibut PSC management



Halibut PSC Alternatives



		EBS shelf trawl survey index (t)	
		Low < 150,000	High ≥ 150,000
IPHC setline survey index in Area 4ABCDE (WPUE)	High ≥ 11,000	1,571 mt (10% below current)	1,745 mt (current limit)
	Medium 8,000 – 10,999	1,483 mt (15% below current)	1,571 mt (10% below current)
	Low < 8,000	1,396 mt (20% below current)	1,483 mt (15% below current)

		EBS shelf trawl survey index (t)	
		Low < 150,000	High ≥ 150,000
IPHC setline survey index in Area 4ABCDE (WPUE)	High ≥ 11,000	1,745 mt (current limit)	2,007 mt (15% above current)
	Medium 8,000 – 10,999	1,396 mt (20% below current)	1,745 mt (current limit)
	Low 6,000-7,999	1,309 mt (25% below current)	1,396 mt (20% below current)
	Very Low < 6,000	1,222 mt (30% below current)	1,309 mt (25% below current)

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		Low < 150,000	High ≥ 150,000
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	Medium 8,000 – 10,999	1,222 mt (30% below current)	1,396 mt (20% below current)
	Low 6,000-7,999	1,047 mt (40% below current)	1,222 mt (30% below current)
	Very Low < 6,000	960 mt (45% below current)	1,047 mt (40% below current)

Council addresses PSC/bycatch minimization at most meetings

Some examples in the past few years:

2015

- Reduced BSAI halibut PSC by 21% overall
- Reviewed AM 80 halibut avoidance program

2016

- Started evaluation of abundance-based halibut PSC
- Initial analysis of GOA Trawl Bycatch Mgmt program

2017

- Evaluated Bristol Bay red king crab PSC limits
- Evaluated GOA Tanner crab protection measures
- Recommended EFP for Chinook salmon excluders
- Set separate MREs for skate species

2018

- Evaluated Chinook salmon PSC limits for non-pollock fisheries
- Authorized retention of halibut in pot gear

2019

- Evaluated release of small sablefish
- Required full retention of rockfish on fixed gear CVs
- Reviewed analysis of snow crab bycatch measures

2020

- Deck sorting of halibut on BSAI bottom trawl CPs authorized
- Evaluated herring PSC management
- Allowed processing of squid and sculpins

2021

- Established standardized bycatch reporting methodology
- Evaluated overages of sablefish in trawl fishery
- Established LAPP program for BSAI Pacific cod trawl CVs, and reduced PSC limits for this sector (-25% halibut, -35% crab)
- Reviewed salmon genetics and avoidance plans
- BSAI abundance-based halibut PSC limits (Dec.)

How to Participate in the Process

Meet

Get to know your Council representative, committee members and/or staff

Serve

Join a workgroup or committee

Attend a meeting

All meetings are open to the public. Visit www.npfmc.org for meeting schedule

Join a group

Find a group that represents your interests. If you can't find a group, create one

Speak-up

Provide a written comment and/or testify in person at a meeting

Learn

- Visit the Council website
- Research the issue
- Talk to an expert

Navigating the Council Website: npfmc.org

North Pacific Fishery Management Council is one of eight regional councils established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act in 1976 to manage fisheries in the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone. [Learn More →](#)

Spotlights



December 2021 Meeting

The Council will meet the first two and a half weeks of December via webconference [Agenda](#). SSC and AP: Dec 2-3, 6-9, Council Dec 8-10 and 13-16. [Schedule](#) [Learn More →](#)



Groundfish Plan Team Meetings

The BSAI and GOA Groundfish Plan Teams will be meeting November 15-19, 2021 via webconference. For more information view the [AGENDA](#) and [SCHEDULE](#). [Learn More →](#)



Charter Halibut Committee

The Committee's [agenda](#) will review an analysis on 2022 charter management measures and make final recommendations to the Council. [Learn More →](#)

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Monday, November 15

8:00am Joint Groundfish Plan

Tuesday, November 16

8:00am BSAI Groundfish Plan

8:00am GOA Groundfish Plan

Wednesday, November 17

BSAI Groundfish Plan Team

GOA Groundfish Plan Teams

Thursday, November 18

BSAI Groundfish Plan Team

GOA Groundfish Plan Teams

Friday, November 19

[+ Google Calendar](#)

[View Calendar →](#)

RECENT UPDATES

- [Current \(or next\) Council Meeting](#)
- [Archive of Council Meetings](#)
- [Future Council Meetings](#)
- [Charter Halibut Management](#)

Items for upcoming meetings appear on the homepage

How to be Heard

Testimony at the Meeting

- **You can testify on any agenda item to all three bodies: the SSC, the AP, and the Council**
- You need to sign up to testify before the staff reports for your issue are completed.
- Before the Council, individuals or businesses get 3 minutes to testify, and persons representing organizations or associations get 6 minutes

Written Comments

- **You can also provide written comments on any or all agenda items**
- The Council accepts comments online via the Agenda
- Comments must be for an item on the agenda, must include the submitter's name and affiliation, and must be submitted before the deadline [e.g., Nov. 15-30 for December 2021 meeting]

C. MAJOR ISSUES / FINAL ACTION ITEMS

C1	 0 Comments	C1 Charter halibut - 2022 annual management measures, <u>Attachments:</u> Oct. Charter Halibut eAgenda -Uploaded: 11/03/2021 09:51 AM AKDT C1 Charter Halibut Management Committee Report -Uploaded: 11/03/2021 09:51 AM AKDT
C2	 0 Comments	C2 BSAI Halibut abundance-based management (ABM) <u>Attachments:</u> C2 Halibut ABM DEIS 0921 -Uploaded: 10/29/2021 02:05 PM AKDT Comments submitted on DEIS (link) -Uploaded: 10/29/2021 02:06 PM AKDT
C3	 0 Comments	C3 BSAI Groundfish - Final harvest specifications, Joint a
C4	 0 Comments	C4 GOA Groundfish - Final harvest specifications, GOA P

D. OTHER ISSUES

D1	 0 Comments	D1 Red King Crab Savings Area Extension - Consideratio
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Additional Resources:

North Pacific Fishery Management Council:

<https://www.npfmc.org/>

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/region/alaska>

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Alaska Fisheries Science Center:

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/region/alaska>

Alaska Department of Fish and Game:

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishing.main>

U.S. Regional Fishery Management Councils:

www.fisherycouncils.org

International Pacific Halibut Commission:

<https://www.iphc.int/>

Questions?

David.Witherell@noaa.gov



North Pacific Fishery Management Council
1007 West Third, Suite 400
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
Phone: (907) 271-2809