

# Gulf of Alaska Best Use Cooperative

## 2015 Coop Report

Prepared for the North Pacific Fishery Management Council

March 22, 2016

**Introduction:**

Section 802 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-199) required the Secretary of Commerce, in consultation with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC), to establish a Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Pilot Program. The Council adopted the Program on June 6, 2005, and it was implemented by Final Rule on November 20, 2006. The Pilot Program expired at the end of 2011. The Council adopted a new Rockfish Program, Amendment 88 to the Gulf of Alaska Fisheries Management Plan, at its June 2010 meeting. On December 27, 2011, NMFS published final regulations implementing the new Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Program.

Under the new Rockfish Program (RP), eligible trawl catcher/processors (CPs) can either opt-out of the RP or opt-in. If a CP opts-in to the program, the vessel must participate in a cooperative in order to receive quota share. There is no CP limited access fishery in the new program.

NMFS issues quota shares (QS) for three primary rockfish species- Pacific Ocean Perch, Northern rockfish and Dusky rockfish- and for four secondary species- Sablefish, Shortraker rockfish, Rougheyeye rockfish and Thornyhead rockfish. Each cooperative also receives a quota share of Halibut PSC mortality. The quota shares are then distributed among the participating vessels. All primary and secondary quota share species are managed as hard caps with 100% mandatory retention. This coop operates as a pass through, with each LLP receiving its pro-rate share of the quotas based on historic participation.

The GOA BUC coop membership is comprised of the following vessels and licenses:

**Membership of the Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Best Use Cooperative**

Vessel Owner	Vessel Name	LLP	ADF&G No.
U.S. Fishing, LLC	U.S. Intrepid	3662	54392
North Pacific Fishing, Inc.	American No. 1	2028	36202
M/V Savage, Inc.	Seafisher	2014	56964
Unimak Vessel, LLC	Unimak	3957	57211
Alaska Legacy, LLC	Legacy	1802	48183
Alaska Alliance, LLC	Alliance	2905	55045
Ocean Alaska, LLC	Ocean Alaska	4360	41219
American Seafoods Co., LLC		3838	

**Monitoring the Fishing Plan and Catch:**

On March 1<sup>st</sup>, coops submit their membership agreement to NMFS. NMFS then establishes coop quota shares. The coop manager notifies each owner of their LLP quota shares and sideboard amounts. Coop assignments per LLP are vetted through NMFS In-Season management to ensure correct tonnages. Owners forward the individual quota share to the Captains. Captains are also informed of their sideboard allowances for the month of July, in keeping with the sideboard rules of the RP.

NMFS, the Alaska Seafood Cooperative (as back-up managers), and Seastate are notified in advance of the vessels which will fish the RP quota, and which will fish the sideboards. Vessels fishing CGOA rockfish quota share are mandated to have two observers on board for the RP or while the vessel has RP fish on board. NMFS must have the opportunity to brief the rockfish observers in advance.

Each vessel has one of two catch monitoring programs on board, either “eHarvest” or “CatchPoint”. Observer sampling information is downloaded to the onboard monitoring program after the observers sample the hauls. The onboard programs use the same extrapolation methodology as the NMFS AK Region for determining official catch. In this way, the vessels have real time QS catch data on board.

When the observers send their files to NMFS, the Observer Program performs data checks and then sends data for extrapolation at the AK Region in Juneau. The data is then available to the NMFS In-season managers and also to third party data managers such as the Alaska Seafood Cooperative and Seastate. The official NMFS data can take several days to show up on the NMFS’s Coop Account Balance. The onboard monitoring program information is available immediately and enables real time quota monitoring. Seastate sends daily to weekly information to the owners and vessels in the coop, depending on whether they are fishing sideboard or quota share. The coop bases its official total catch, however, on the NMFS account balance.

Vessel Captains update the home offices daily with the onboard tow data. The office quota share managers compare the onboard monitoring program catch and QS balances with Seastate and with the NMFS region’s Account Balance for the coop. If any of these databases do not match, tow by tow comparisons are made between the onboard program tow information and the Seastate data (Seastate data is obtained directly from NMFS after extrapolation and we can look at it on the individual tow level). We may also confer with the NMFS AK Region on haul information if discrepancies cannot be solved by looking into the Seastate data. Since the inception of the Rockfish Program in 2007, NMFS In-Season managers have been extremely helpful to industry from a regulatory and data perspective. Alaska Seafood Cooperative managers are also available for additional assistance in verifying or corroborating numbers if requested.

The vessel Captains communicate directly with one another on the grounds and with the quota share managers, and they have the ability to communicate directly with the third party data managers when necessary. The quota share managers of the participating vessels maintained contact throughout the fishery.

### **Retained and Discarded Primary and Secondary QS:**

Full retention of the three primary rockfish and four secondary quota share species is required under the program. Very close to 100% of the target rockfish were harvested in 2015 and most of the secondary rockfish and sablefish quota was taken. Where there was an amount of secondary species quota remaining, it was due to minimizing the risk of taking incidental quota share species that are too close to their limits. There were no discards of the quota share species.

**Halibut PSQ:**

28.712 mt of the halibut mortality was used or 73.79% of the quota. Basing a rate on the total harvest of the 3 target and 4 secondary quota share species, 4555.244 mt, this represents a 0.63 of one percent halibut bycatch rate (mt halibut mortality/mt QS harvest).

**Chinook Salmon in Rockfish:**

A total of 53 extrapolated chinook were caught in the Central Gulf, West Yakutat and Western Gulf rockfish fisheries by coop vessels. Basing a rate on the total harvest of primary and secondary species in the Central Gulf (quota share), in West Yakutat (sideboards) and in the Western Gulf (sideboards), the rate was 0.008675 chinook/mt groundfish.

**Sideboards:**

Rockfish eligible vessels which have history in other Gulf fisheries in the month of July can fish up to a sideboard level equivalent to their historic average catch in those fisheries. The coop fish plan details the timing of the prosecution of the sideboard fisheries, in addition to the timing of the harvest of the CGOA rockfish QS.

The sideboard WYAK Pacific Ocean Perch was 72.40% harvested and 0.08% of the WYAK dusky rockfish fishery was harvested.

NMFS opened the WGOA Pacific Ocean Perch fishery in 2015 during the month of July and therefore there was some sideboard POP in the WGOA taken in directed fishing mode. 48.78% of sideboard WGOA POP was harvested, 11.23% of sideboard WGOA Dusky and no WGOA northern rockfish sideboard was harvested.

Vessels fished deep water flatfish, using a total of 36.22% of the DW halibut sideboard or 12.4 mt of halibut mortality. No SW halibut mortality was taken. With only 1.759 mt SW halibut sideboard, there is not enough for a viable SW flatfish fishery.

**Trades/overages/underages:**

5 trades were made among the cooperative members, in addition to minor trades out of the coop to other inshore and offshore coops. There were no overages.