

**C-5 GOA Chinook salmon bycatch
FINAL Council motion**

The Council adopts the following problem statement and moves the following alternatives for initial review.

Problem statement:

Chinook salmon bycatch taken incidentally in GOA groundfish fisheries is a concern, and no salmon bycatch control measures have been implemented to date. Current observer coverage levels and protocols in some GOA groundfish trawl fisheries raise concerns about bycatch estimates and may limit sampling opportunities. Limited information is available on the origin of Chinook salmon taken as bycatch in the GOA; it is thought that the harvests include stocks from Asia, Alaska, British Columbia, and lower-48 origin. Despite management actions by the State of Alaska to reduce Chinook salmon mortality in sport, commercial, and subsistence fisheries, minimum Chinook salmon escapement goals in some river systems have not been achieved in recent years. In addition, the level of GOA Chinook salmon bycatch in 2010 has exceeded the incidental take amount in the Biological Opinion for ESA-listed Chinook salmon stocks. The sharp increase in 2010 Chinook bycatch levels in the GOA fisheries require implementing short-term and long-term management measures to reduce salmon bycatch to the extent practicable under National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. In the short term, measures focused on the GOA pollock fisheries are expected to provide the greatest savings. In the long term, comprehensive salmon bycatch management in the GOA is needed.

Alternatives for expedited review and rule making:

The below alternatives apply to directed pollock trawl fisheries in the Central and Western GOA.

Alternative 1: Status quo.

Alternative 2: Chinook salmon PSC limit and increased monitoring.

Component 1: 15,000, 22,500, or 30,000 Chinook salmon PSC limit (hard cap).

Option: Apportion limit between Central and Western GOA

- a) proportional to the pollock TAC.
- b) proportional to historic average bycatch rate of Chinook salmon (5 or 10-year average).
- c) proportional to historic average bycatch number of Chinook salmon (5 or 10-year average).

Component 2: Expanded observer coverage.

Extend existing 30% observer coverage requirements for vessels 60'-125' to trawl vessels less than 60' directed fishing for pollock in the Central or Western GOA.

Alternative 3: Mandatory salmon bycatch control cooperative membership.

In order to fish in the Central or Western GOA pollock fisheries a vessel must be a member of a salmon bycatch control cooperative for the area where they are participating. Cooperative formation will be annual with a minimum threshold (number of licenses).

Cooperative contractual agreements would include a requirement for vessels to retain all salmon bycatch until vessel or plant observers have an opportunity to determine the number of salmon and collect any scientific data or biological samples. Cooperative contractual agreements would also include measures to control Chinook salmon bycatch, ensure compliance with the contractual full retention requirement, promote gear innovation, salmon hotspot reporting, and monitoring individual vessel bycatch performance.

Annual cooperative reports to the Council would include the contractual agreements and successes and failures for salmon bycatch controls by season and calendar year.

The Council requests staff explore options related to the following aspects of mandatory cooperative formation:

- Minimum number of licenses required to promote meaningful exchange of information and cooperation to avoid bycatch under the current directed fishery management structure. (Minimum threshold for cooperative formation should be set to ensure all eligible licenses have a reasonable opportunity to participate).
- Evaluate the costs and benefits of minimum thresholds of cooperative membership that would allow for no more than 1 or 2 cooperatives in each region.
- Options to ensure participants outside of a bycatch control cooperative would be subject to regulatory bycatch controls if it is determined mandatory cooperative membership is not possible.
- Appropriate contract elements and reporting requirements.

Alternatives for regular review and rule making track:

The below alternatives apply to non-pollock trawl fisheries in the Central and Western GOA.

Alternative 1: Status quo.

Alternative 2: 5,000, 7,500, or 10,000 Chinook salmon PSC limit (hard cap).

Option 1: Apportion limit between Central and Western GOA.

Option 2: Apportion limit by directed fishery.

Applies to both options: Apportion proportional to historic average bycatch of Chinook salmon (5 or 10-year average).

Alternative 3: Mandatory salmon bycatch control cooperative membership.

In order to fish in the Central or Western GOA trawl fisheries a vessel must be a member of a salmon bycatch control cooperative for the area where they are participating. Cooperative formation will be annual with a minimum threshold (number of licenses).

Cooperative contractual agreements would include measures to control Chinook salmon bycatch, promote gear innovation, salmon hotspot reporting, and monitoring individual vessel bycatch performance. Annual cooperative reports to the Council would include the contractual agreements and successes and failures for salmon bycatch controls by season and calendar year.

The below alternatives applies to all trawl fisheries in the Central and Western GOA.

Alternative 4: Full retention of salmon.

Vessels will retain all salmon bycatch until the number of salmon has been determined by the vessel or plant observer and the observer's collection of any scientific data or biological samples from the salmon has been completed.

Option: Deploy electronic monitoring or observers to monitor for discards in order to validate salmon census data for use in catch accounting.

The Council also requests staff to provide the following:

- Chinook salmon bycatch rate data for each GOA groundfish fishery by month and area.
- Correlation between bycatch rates and time of day (based on observer data or anecdotal information).
- Correlation between bycatch rates and time of year (based on observer data or anecdotal information).
- Information on the flexibility under Steller sea lion measures to adjust season dates.
- Current trip limit management and implications of lowering GOA pollock trip limits.
- Information on current excluder use, effectiveness of salmon excluders, and deployment of excluders on smaller trawl vessels.
- A discussion of potential benefits, with respect to available bycatch measures and salmon savings, of a cooperative management structure for the GOA pollock fisheries. The discussion should assume a cooperative program for the Central and Western GOA directed pollock catcher vessels. Licenses qualifying for the program would annually form cooperatives that would receive allocations based on the catch histories of members. Catcher vessel cooperatives would be required to associate with a shore-based processor in the GOA, but members may change cooperatives and cooperatives may change processor associations annually without penalty.
- Analysis of management alternatives should include potential impacts of those actions on subsistence users.