

## The North Pacific Fishery Management Council is Evaluating Measures to Limit Chum Salmon Bycatch in the Bering Sea Pollock Fishery

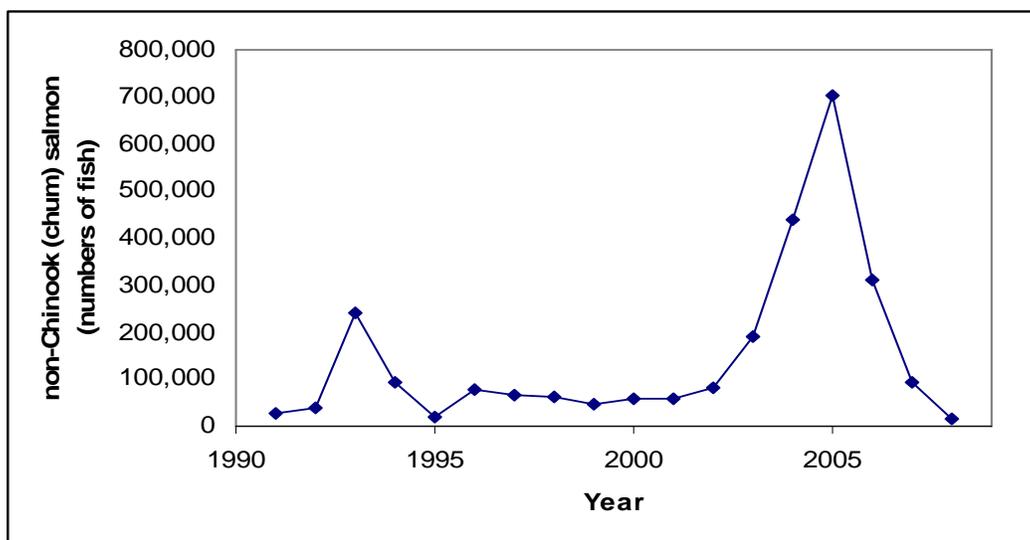


Salmon and pollock are both important fisheries for Alaska. Salmon support large and critically important subsistence, commercial, and recreational fisheries throughout Alaska and elsewhere, and are the basis of a cultural tradition in many parts of the state. At the same time, the commercial pollock fishery produces significant revenue for participants in the fishery, the State of Alaska, and other states. In addition, participation in the fishery (through royalties and employment) is important for the western Alaska Community Development Quota communities.

Salmon are caught unintentionally in the Bering Sea pollock trawl fishery, and may not be kept by regulation. Despite bycatch control measures implemented in the pollock fishery since the mid-1990s, chum (non-Chinook) salmon bycatch reached a historic high of 704,590 in 2005 (see figure below). Levels since that time have been much lower, about 30,000 to date in 2009. Current fishery regulations attempt to control bycatch through a cap of 42,000 chum salmon that, when reached, closes areas where chum salmon bycatch has been high historically. In addition, current regulations include an exemption to these fixed area closures for vessels that participate in a program that requires more frequently adjusted closures for vessels with high bycatch rates. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) is required by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act to balance minimizing salmon bycatch, to the extent practicable, with allowing full harvest of the pollock total allowable catch.

### Current trends in non-Chinook (chum) salmon bycatch

Salmon bycatch in the groundfish fisheries is grouped as Chinook bycatch and non-Chinook bycatch (comprised of chum, sockeye, pink, and silver salmon species). Over 99% of non-Chinook bycatch is comprised of chum salmon. Chum bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery from 1991 - 2008 is shown below. Chum bycatch is taken almost entirely in the summer/fall ('B') pollock fishery.



### Non-Chinook salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock trawl fishery, 1991 - 2008

Note: 1991 - 1993 values do not include CDQ fisheries.

## NOTICE: *Chum Salmon Bycatch in the Bering Sea Pollock Fishery*

### The Council is considering whether new measures are needed to limit Chum salmon bycatch

The Council is beginning the process of considering modifying management measures to limit chum salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock trawl fishery. The current range of alternatives is on the Council website: [http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc/current\\_issues/bycatch/Chumbycatch709.pdf](http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc/current_issues/bycatch/Chumbycatch709.pdf).

Measures currently under consideration include:

- caps on the amount of chum salmon bycatch allowed in the pollock fisheries, that when reached, would prevent further harvest of pollock
  - limits under consideration range from annual caps of 58,000 to 488,000 chum salmon (overall for the pollock fishery or divided by processing sector with options for transferable bycatch allocations among sectors or components of sectors).
- closure of areas where high chum salmon bycatch has historically occurred

### Next steps

The Council will review a discussion paper in December 2009, which will include current bycatch trends, draft alternatives under consideration, modifications to the current alternative of sector-specific caps based on historical average bycatch amounts, and other information to develop alternatives for a future analysis of proposed management measures. The Council is expected to review and revise alternatives, as well as establish a timeline for the analysis, at its December 2009 meeting.

The Council's Salmon Bycatch Workgroup, a standing Council committee, will convene on October 29 at the Hawthorne Suites in Anchorage to review the staff discussion paper and provide recommendations for consideration at the December 2009 Council meeting. Additional meeting details and the staff discussion paper will be posted on the Council website prior to October 29.

The Council's Rural Community Outreach Committee identified this action as an important project for outreach efforts to rural communities. Pending Council direction in December, it is likely that an outreach plan will be developed for this proposed action. The outreach plan may include regional outreach meetings in rural Alaska, in order to explain the proposed action, provide preliminary analysis, and receive feedback from rural communities. In order to align with preliminary analysis of the alternatives, it is likely that outreach meetings would be scheduled no earlier than summer 2010.

### HOW TO PROVIDE PUBLIC INPUT

**Write a letter to the Council.** Send letters by mail or fax to:

North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 W 4<sup>th</sup> Ave Suite 306  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
Fax: (907) 271-2817

**Testify at a Council meeting** when the Council will discuss this action. The Council will discuss the chum salmon bycatch alternatives at the December Council meeting, December 9 - 15, 2009, at the Hilton Hotel, in Anchorage. The agenda will be posted on the Council website in mid-November. You may also send a letter by mail or fax to the Council for the December meeting, to the address listed above. In order for the letter to be circulated to Council members, it must be received by 5 pm, December 2, 2009.

This action will also be on future Council agendas in 2010. Check the Council website below, or contact us, to find out about upcoming agenda items in February, April, June, October, and December 2010.

Council website: <http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc>