



Alaska Seafood Cooperative  
Report to the North Pacific  
Fishery Management Council  
for the 2023 Fishery

March 2024

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## Introduction

On September 14, 2007, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published a final rule implementing Amendment 80 to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). Amendment 80 provides specific groundfish, and prohibited species catch (PSC) allocations to the non-American Fisheries Act (AFA) trawl catcher processor sector and allows the formation of cooperatives. Sector allocations and the formation of cooperatives were intended to assist in improving groundfish retention.

On January 20, 2008, the Alaska Seafood Cooperative (AKSC) began fishing Amendment 80 allocations. Previous annual reports described AKSC co-op management/harvest strategies and catch monitoring protocols. Catch monitoring protocols are implemented through regulation and, except for halibut deck sorting protocols, remain largely unchanged since program inception. These sections were removed from this report to improve readability.

This report summarizes AKSC and its catch for the 2023 fishing year. Harvest and management strategies continue to be reviewed periodically by cooperative members and are adapted to address changes to fishing conditions and information needs.

## AKSC membership

During 2023, AKSC was comprised of the following five member companies, consisting of 17 non-AFA trawl catcher processors and 1 non-AFA trawl catcher vessel.

<b>Company</b>	<b>Vessel</b>	<b>Length Overall</b>
Fishermen's Finest, Inc.	American No. 1	160
	U.S. Intrepid	185
	America's Finest	262
North Star Fishing Company, LLC	Arica	186
	Unimak	185
	North Star	261
Ocean Peace, Inc	Seafisher	230
	Ocean Peace	219
	Alaska Warrior	215
	Alaska Victory	227
O'Hara Corporation	Bering Hope	151
	Constellation	166
	Defender	123
United States Seafoods, LLC	Enterprise	120
	Alaska Spirit	221
	Araho	194
United States Seafoods, LLC	Seafreeze Alaska	295
	Seafreeze America	208

## 2023 AKSC Catch

The following tables provide AKSC catch. All data is rounded to the nearest whole number for simplicity. It is important to understand that fishing behavior and catch amounts under any given year of cooperative operations may not reflect those of other years.

AKSC initially apportions its annual NMFS-issued allocation to individual companies or vessels. Subsequently, AKSC companies can engage in transfers with other AKSC companies or vessels to maximize harvesting efficiencies. Because allocations are managed under hard caps, a portion of each of AKSC's allocations will be left unharvested to serve as a buffer prior to reaching allocation amounts.

### *Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands AKSC Allocated Quota and Catch Amounts*

<b>Species</b>	<b>AKSC A80 Allocation (mt)</b>	<b>AKSC Catch (mt)</b>
Cod	17,654	16,014
Yellowfin Sole	155,892	90,284
Rock Sole	52,938	21,777
Flathead Sole	28,702	7,264
POP 541	6,462	6,400
POP 542	4,485	4,402
POP 543	10,492	10,439
Mackerel BS/541	21,783	20,196
Mackerel 542	13,877	13,830
Mackerel 543	22,011	21,960

### *Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands AKSC PSC Limits and Catch Amounts*

<b>Species</b>	<b>AKSC A80 Allocation (mt)</b>	<b>AKSC Catch</b>
Halibut Mortality (mt)	1,745	1,331
King Crab Z1 (#)	14,282	2,512
Bairdi Z1 (#)	312,115	12,163
Bairdi Z2 (#)	532,660	355,112
COBLZ Opilio (#)	1,909,256	643,888

Notes: Crab are reported as individuals.

## Retention Compliance Standard

Amendment 79, also known as the Groundfish Retention Standard or GRS, was implemented simultaneously with Amendment 80 in 2008. The GRS required the cooperative to annually improve groundfish retention over the course of several years from 65% in 2008 to 85% in 2011 and beyond.

Soon after the adoption of the GRS, the Council repealed the GRS because of problems of enforceability and a mismatch between the analysis used to establish the GRS and the metrics used to estimate retention under the GRS. Simultaneously, at the request of the Council, AKSC substituted an internal monitoring system known as the Retention Compliance Standard (RCS) for the GRS program.

The RCS is implemented through a contract with substantial non-compliance fines, and an annual third-party audit report. The RCS agreement, including the calculation methodology, and the third part audit are appended to this report.

Since 2008, AKSC has exceeded Council retention expectations, and annual RCS-measured retention has consistently exceeded 90%. ***The RCS required a 2023 groundfish retention of 85 percent; AKSC achieved a groundfish retention of 92.0%.***

### **GOA sideboard management**

Regulations limit Amendment 80 vessels to historic catch levels by establishing sideboard amounts for several species. To help manage GOA sideboard fisheries, AKSC established a GOA fishing plan. The 2023 GOA fishing plan includes cooperative management measures to limit individual vessels and the cooperative to halibut PSC sideboard amounts.

### **Summary**

The Council has designed, and NMFS has implemented, a well-designed program that provides AKSC with the necessary tools to effectively manage Amendment 80 fisheries, minimize bycatch to the extent practicable, and increase retention. AKSC and its member companies are working hard to achieve the goals of Amendment 80 by implementing internal data management and quality control measures that enable companies and vessel captains to maximize allocations. For 2023, AKSC target catch amounts for this complex multi-species fishery were well utilized, PSC limits were below regulatory limits, and the groundfish retention goals exceed

Attachment 1



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January 12, 2024

Re: Audit of the Alaska Seafood Cooperative's groundfish retention for 2023.

This letter details the methods and results for an audit of the Alaska Seafood Cooperative's groundfish retention for 2023.

Methods:

Observer data for cooperative vessels were supplied to Sea State Inc. via the North Pacific Observer Program's password-protected web site. Logon credentials were supplied by all members of the Alaska Seafood Cooperative. Production data were obtained from the NMFS Alaska Region e-Landings system using login credentials supplied by member companies.

Unsampled hauls in the observer data were extrapolated using standard methods documented by NMFS Alaska Region to produce total groundfish catch estimates in accord with those in the Alaska Region Catch Accounting System. Retained product data were expanded to round weight equivalents (RWE) using published Product Recovery Rates.

Groundfish retention is given by:

*Retained percentage = Retained catch (retained product RWE) / Total Catch (CAS).*

For 2023, three groundfish categories transitioned to Prohibited Species Catch (PSC): AI Other Rockfish (August 12), Blackspotted/rougheye (July 10), and BS Sablefish (June 27). The retained percentage calculation does not include these species after the transition date.

Results:

For 2023, the Alaska Seafood Cooperative's Total Catch of FMP species was 386,997 mt. The round-weight- equivalent (RWE) from this catch was 313,129 mt. The annual retention rate for the Alaska Seafood Cooperative was 82.7%

Sincerely,

Steve Martell  
Sea State Inc.