

NOAA FISHERIES Alaska Region

Alaska State Legislature House Fisheries Committee

Presentation: Bycatch

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What Is Bycatch?

Bycatch is defined under the Magnuson-Stevens Act

"...fish which are harvested in a fishery, but are not sold or kept for personal use, and includes economic discards and regulatory discards..."



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Why Does Bycatch Occur ?

Bycatch occurs in all fisheries regardless of gear type, area fished, or time of harvest, but the amount and type of bycatch varies.

Some bycatch are economic discards – fish are poor quality, no market exists, or other reasons

Most bycatch are regulatory discards –

only a specific type of gear is allowed, the fish is caught out-of-season, the fish is too small, or due to other regulations.

What Do We Consider When Managing Bycatch ?

Benefits and costs on fishermen Impacts on stocks

Reducing bycatch can increase harvest for some & reduce stock impacts **But...** bycatch management can limit harvests for others & may not improve stocks substantially

The Magnuson-Stevens Act requires balancing...

Minimizing bycatch & bycatch mortality "to the extent practicable"... "achieving ... the optimum yield from each fishery"... "fair and equitable" allocation... "sustained participation of communities"... and other factors



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What Are The Main Types of Bycatch?

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Groundfish Bycatch

Everything but halibut, salmon, herring, and shellfish

Halibut Bycatch

Salmon Bycatch – Chinook salmon in particular

2016 Groundfish Catch by Gear in Federal Fisheries Off Alaska



2003 - 2016 Halibut Bycatch Off Alaska



2016 Halibut Bycatch as a Percentage of All Halibut Catch



Chinook Salmon Genetic Composition Areas



Templin et al., 2011

2003 - 2016 Gulf of Alaska Chinook Salmon Bycatch





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More Detail on Gulf of Alaska Chinook Salmon Bycatch...

Less than 5% of bycatch from Kodiak & Cook Inlet Rivers

Nearly 80% of bycatch from Canada or Lower 48

2003 - 2016 Bering Sea Chinook Salmon Bycatch









Chum salmon bycatch is less than 1 % of the total returns to Western Alaska Rivers

How Do We Control Halibut & Salmon Bycatch Now?

• Bycatch Caps that close or modify fisheries

Closure Areas

- Limits on the use of specific gear in some fisheries
- Catch share management that allows fleets to avoid a "race for fish", share information, and adopt better fishing practices
 - Link Chinook bycatch caps to Western Alaska returns
- Experimental Fishing Permits that allow "deck sorting" of catch to get halibut back in the sea quickly and reduce mortality
 - Constant communication with the fleets to help them avoid bycatch "hot spots" and manage effort
- Industry efforts that include voluntary cooperatives, use of special gear, and "stand downs"



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What Will We Be Doing in the Future?

• Link halibut bycatch caps to abundance

 Regulations for "deck sorting" of halibut in all waters off Alaska

 Improve communication with the fleets on bycatch "hot spots"

 Encourage more industry efforts -- voluntary cooperatives, and "stand downs"

> Facilitate catch share programs when supported by Council

> > <u>Constantly review</u> <u>performance !</u>

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More Information & Contacts

NOAA Fisheries Alaska Region • www.noaa.alaskafisheries.gov North Pacific Fishery Management Council www.npfmc.org State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game www.adfg.Alaska.gov International Pacific Halibut Commission • www.iphc.int



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