

Kodiak Trawlers – Bycatch Minimization Efforts



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Kodiak shoreside trawl fleet

- Fishing fleet consists of 38-40 vessels, mostly in the 80 foot range
 - Many family-owned vessels that employ locally based crew
- Most of the fleet has cooperative fishing experience
 - Bering Sea Pollock program (AFA), West Coast Whiting program, and Central GOA Rockfish Program
- Deliver to six Kodiak shoreside processors; comprising about 60% of the total Kodiak port landings



Our trawl fisheries are sustainable and well managed:

- Pollock, cod, rockfish, flatfish – all federally managed and regulated through the NPFMC
- Pollock, cod and flatfish carry ecolabels –MSC and RFM certificates
- High volume, low value, nearly year-round fisheries



Our economic impact to Kodiak*

- The port of Kodiak is #3 in the nation by value and #2 by volume.
- Groundfish harvesting and processing accounts for almost 20% of all employment in Kodiak.
- Groundfish fishing and processing accounts for more jobs, more income, and more impact on the Kodiak economy than any other fishery:
 - 2,000 Kodiak jobs
 - \$111 million in labor income
 - \$187 million in total seafood output for the Kodiak economy
- Year-round fisheries create year-round resident jobs
 - About 50% of processing workers are year-round Kodiak residents (1,390 people).
 - Kodiak has more year-round fisheries than any other community in Alaska, more shore-based processors, and employs the highest percentage of local residents of any major production region in the entire state.

** Economic Impact of the Seafood Industry on the Kodiak Island Borough, Prepared for Kodiak Island Borough & City of Kodiak, McDowell Group, May 2016.*

Trawl Fishery Management Structure: Race vs. Co-ops

- Ability to manage bycatch and achieve total allowable catch depends directly on the fishery management system in place.
- Gulf trawl management: Fishing vessels race against each other for access to the target fish (pollock, cod) while subject to constraining fleet-wide bycatch caps (halibut, Chinook). No individual vessel accountability for bycatch and no incentives to slow the fishery and work together.
- Bering Sea trawl management: Both target species and bycatch are annually allocated to co-ops so no one is racing for catch. Co-ops have formal agreements and penalties to control behavior and include incentives for all participants to collaborate to minimize bycatch.

Bycatch Restrictions

Bycatch limits for both Chinook salmon and halibut exist for the Gulf trawl industry but without formal cooperative management. If limits are reached, the fisheries close for all participants. These closures can be seasonal or for the entire year.

Recent bycatch regulations affecting trawlers in the GOA:

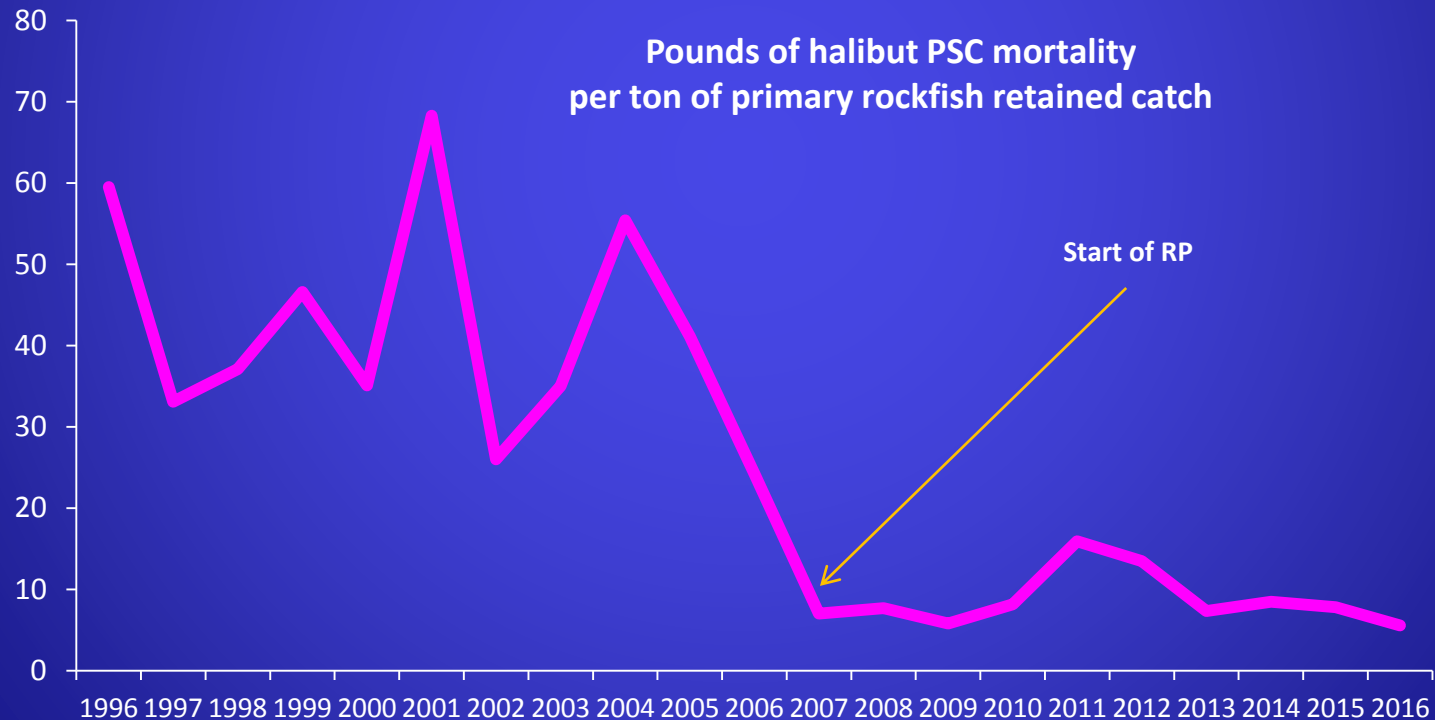
- Chinook salmon bycatch limit for the pollock fisheries (2012).
- Chinook salmon bycatch limit for the non-pollock fisheries (2015).
- Reduction of the halibut bycatch limit by 15% implemented over a three-year period (2014 - 2016).

Kodiak trawlers efforts to tackle bycatch

- Advocated for the Central Gulf Rockfish Co-op management program (2007 – 2021) which was designed within the NPFMC process to meet multiple objectives including minimizing bycatch, fishery stability and increased community benefits.
- Advocated for a similar program at the NPFMC with bycatch objectives for the trawl cod, pollock and flatfish fisheries. The effort started in 2012 and died in 2016.

Rockfish Program Results

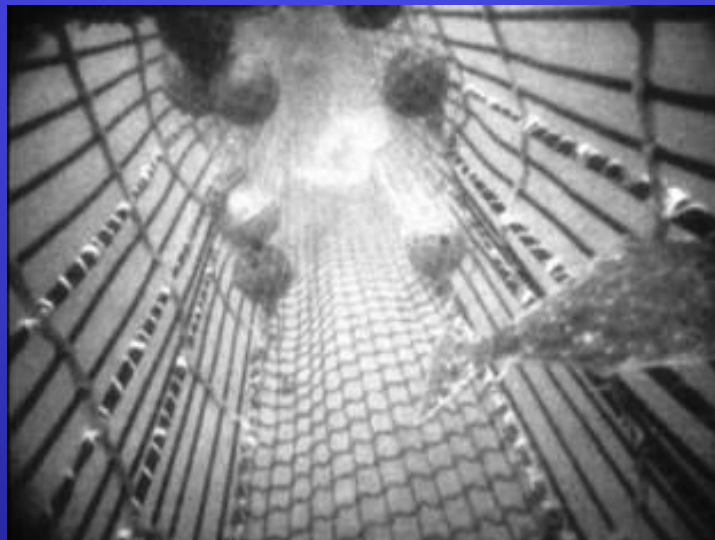
Halibut bycatch much reduced.



Kodiak trawlers efforts to tackle bycatch

Industry efforts on halibut excluders in the cod trawl fishery

- Uses fish morphology to separate catches – flatfishes & halibut escape thru the narrow slots
- EFP showed 57% reduction in halibut bycatch
- Now widely used in the Gulf and Bering Sea trawl cod fisheries



Kodiak trawlers efforts to tackle bycatch

Industry efforts on a salmon excluder for the pollock fishery

- Tested on two boats over four seasons during 2013-2014
- Salmon escapement = 33-54%



Kodiak trawlers efforts to tackle bycatch

Fleet purchased two loaner video systems to look at excluder shape and fish behavior.

- Skippers trying out new ideas like lights
- Video observations of salmon excluder devices in the cod/flatfish fishery



Kodiak trawlers efforts to tackle bycatch

Voluntary co-op management and voluntary hot spot reporting and alerts for the pollock fisheries:

- Voluntary efforts to replicate what the Bering Sea fleets have in regulation.
- Ad hoc process to allocate both pollock and Chinook salmon to participating vessels to stop the race for fish.
- These allocations are aggregated at the processor level to create co-ops.
- Voluntary agreements include bycatch reporting requirements and individual vessel performance standards.
- Requires multiple fleet meetings and can be extremely contentious and time consuming.
- 100% consensus by fishery participants is required and not always achieved since it may be in a vessel's best interest to race for higher catches even though the fishery may close earlier due to bycatch.
- These agreements are tenuous and uncertain as a long-term fishery management structure and do not cover all groundfish fisheries.

Consequences of fishery closures due to bycatch

- In 2015, the cod and flatfish fisheries closed May 3 for the rest of year due to reaching the Chinook bycatch limit.
 - Only through an *Emergency Rule* were the fisheries reopened (on August 10).
 - The potential foregone revenue from lost harvest was ~\$4.6 million in ex-vessel value and \$11.3 million in first wholesale value.
- In 2016, the arrowtooth fisheries were closed for 120 days due to halibut bycatch limits (a third of the fishing year). This fish has a lot of potential in the marketplace but the industry product supply is too unpredictable to really make a go of it.

2017 Bycatch Issues

- Central Gulf pollock Chinook bycatch: 47% of the Chinook limit has been taken while only 32% of the CGOA pollock quota has been caught. Three pollock seasons remain to be harvested. When the cap is hit, the fishery is closed for the year.
- Gulf cod/flatfish Chinook bycatch: 55% of the Chinook limit has been taken so far - all in the Western Gulf cod fishery. 45% of the Chinook limit remains which may not be enough to support the Central Gulf trawl fishery's needs for the Pacific cod fishery and year-round flatfish fisheries.
- Early closures means the trawl fisheries do not reach total allowable catches resulting in impacts to harvesters, processors, coastal communities, and the State of Alaska (foregone tax revenue).

Conclusion

The limited access system (“race for fish”) fails to reward conscientious fishermen and favors the fishermen that catch the most amount of fish in the shortest amount of time, regardless of bycatch performance.

A lot of frustration exists within the fleet dependent on Gulf trawl fisheries, all of whom have experienced the benefits of cooperative management in the Bering Sea trawl fisheries and Central Gulf Rockfish Program: “Co-op Envy”

Participants continue to do the best they can based on the cards they have been dealt.

This is a solvable problem.