

Trawling: A Reference for Alaska Policy Makers

Compiled by PSPA staff

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What is trawling?

Trawling is a broad category of commercial fishing that uses a net towed behind the boat. Several different types of trawl gear are used depending upon the species being targeted, and the gear operates differently in the water. The following trawl fisheries historically and currently occur off Alaska, at these approximate annual harvest levels (volume) and number of vessels.

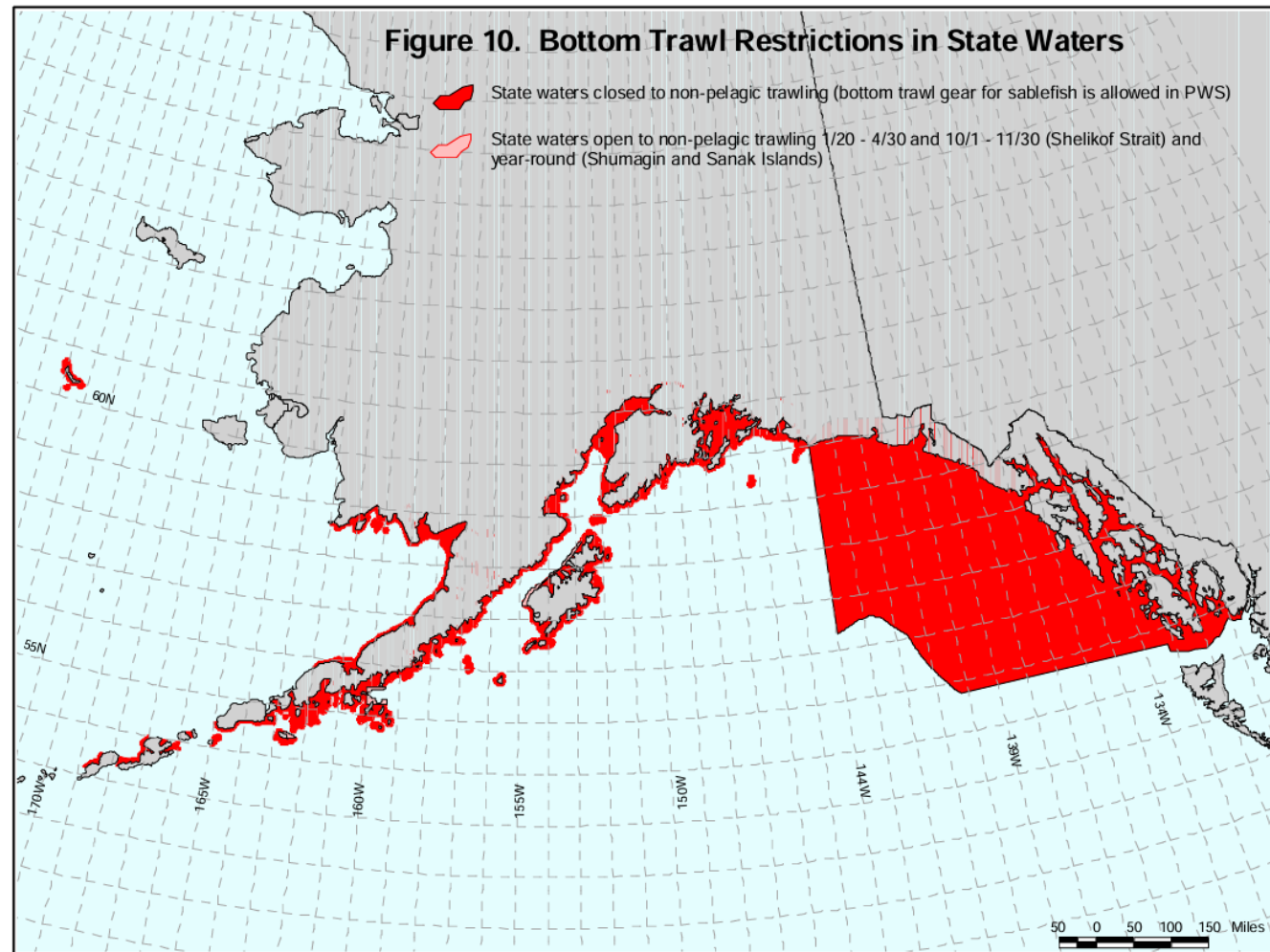
- **Beam trawl (shrimp)** – State waters, SE Alaska – 100,000 lbs to 1.3 M lbs – ~10 vessels
- **Dredge (scallop)** – Federal and state waters, Gulf of Alaska, BSAI – 200,000 to 400,000 lbs – 4 vessels
- **Bottom or non-pelagic trawl (Pacific cod, flatfish, rockfish)** – majority is in federal waters
 - State waters, Aleutian Islands cod fishery – state data are confidential due to low number of participating vessels, but much smaller than federal fishery
 - Federal Gulf of Alaska - ~100 M lbs – 45 vessels (most harvest by catcher vessels that deliver to AK)
 - Federal Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands – ~775 to 800 M lbs – 50 vessels (most harvest by catcher-processor vessels)
- **Pelagic trawl (pollock)** – <1% in state waters
 - State PWS – ~5 to 9 M lbs – 8 to 20 vessels
 - Federal Gulf of Alaska - ~300 M lbs – ~40 to 60 vessels (most harvest by local catcher vessels)
 - Federal Bering Sea – ~2.8 to 3 billion lbs - 85 vessels

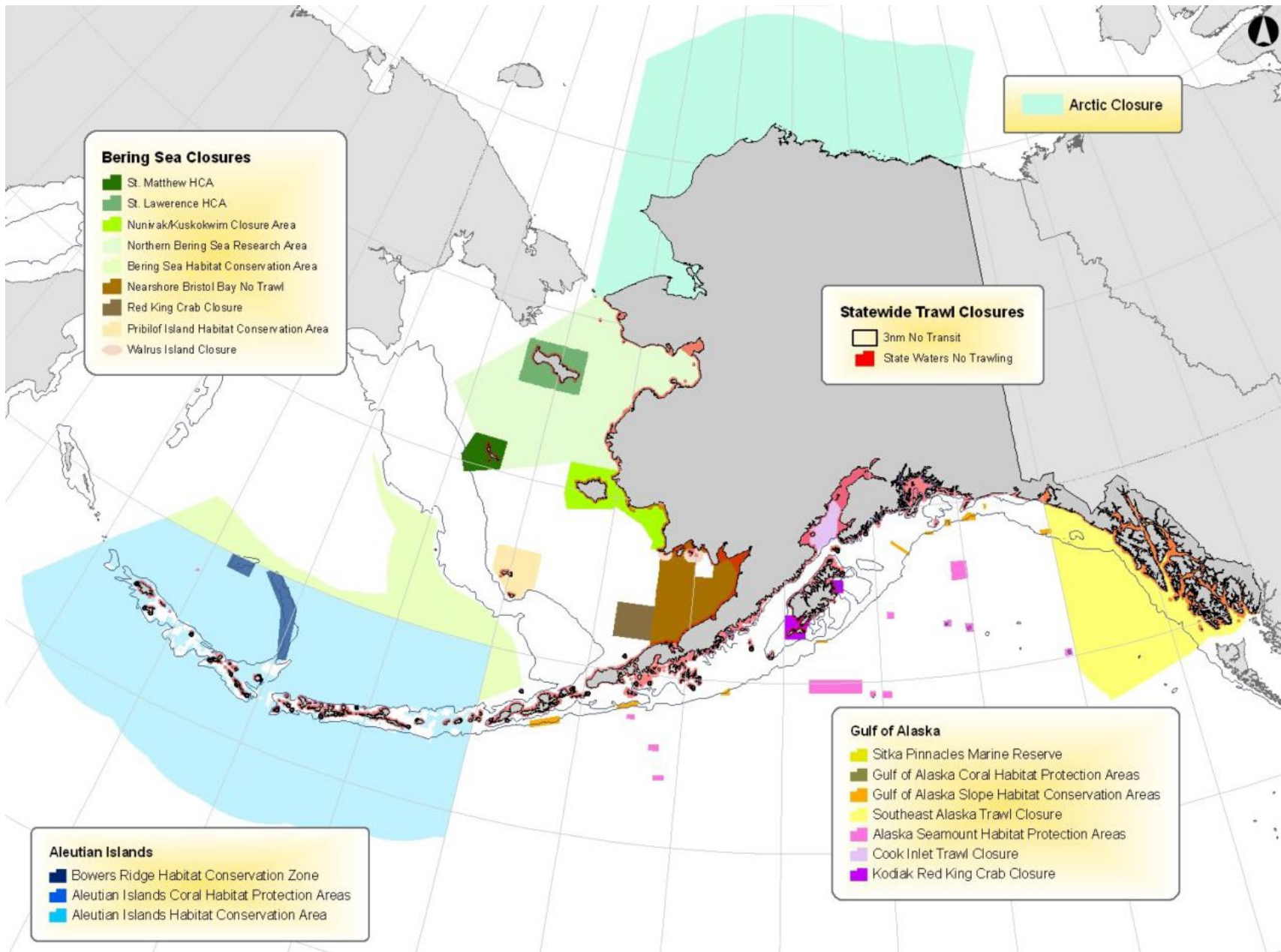
Note: If you have concerns about salmon bycatch, focus on the pelagic trawl fisheries (pollock), which have extremely low halibut and crab bycatch. If you have concerns about halibut or crab bycatch, focus on the bottom trawl fisheries (flatfish, rockfish or cod), which have low salmon bycatch. This difference is a reflection of how the gear works and which species is intercepted when fishing for the target species.



Where is trawling allowed?

Similar to other fisheries, trawling is managed by ADFG and NMFS, working with the Board of Fisheries (BOF) and North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) depending on whether it is a state or federal fishery, respectively. These regulatory bodies determine the times and areas and harvest amounts for trawl fisheries. **Most waters (~60%) off Alaska (both state and federal) are closed to all trawling gear types** ([see more info a NPFMC website](#), image on pg. 3 from 2009, colored areas are closed waters to bottom trawling or all trawling). Note in addition to the 100% of the Arctic which is closed to any commercial gear type, 95% of the Aleutian Islands is closed to bottom trawling, and 100% of Southeast is closed to all trawling (except a very small shrimp beam trawl fishery near Wrangell), and almost all of State waters (in red, image pg. 2).





Managing Bycatch

Most trawling off Alaska occurs in Federal waters - not state waters - and federal management has more tools to manage, monitor, and count bycatch and discards of all gear types. In addition to managing time and areas, NMFS and NPFMC also manage impacts of trawling, such as bycatch and impacts to essential fish habitat due to bottom contact. Because all fisheries (commercial, sport, personal use, and subsistence) have bycatch, these regulatory bodies have developed management tools to track and reduce bycatch, which are continuously being improved upon. Some of the federal tools are listed below.

- **Vessel Monitoring System**

Vessels participating in federal trawl fisheries are required to use Automatic Identification System (AIS) – a tracking system used in maritime navigation – to document where vessels are fishing. This is required by regulation, and allows vessels to match fishing areas to bycatch counts and move away from areas of high bycatch.

- **Monitoring (Counting Bycatch)**

Observers and electronic monitoring (EM) are required both on vessels at sea and at processing plants to count and document all bycatch in federal trawl fisheries.

- 92% of the pelagic trawl catch (pollock) in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska (GOA) is fully observed.
 - 100% of the Bering Sea pelagic trawl (pollock) catch is fully observed and monitored every trip.
 - In 2024, 34% of the GOA pollock catch was observed either by a human observer at-sea or at the shoreside plant. However, the fleet is currently transitioning to using EM cameras as well which is increasing the rate of monitoring closer to 90% in the GOA at-sea and onshore, so every salmon is accounted for.
 - In the GOA Rockfish Program, which is required to be delivered in Kodiak, 100% of trips are monitored by an at-sea observer.
 - In Federal bottom trawl fisheries, 96% of the catch is fully observed, and 4% of the catch is partially observed.¹

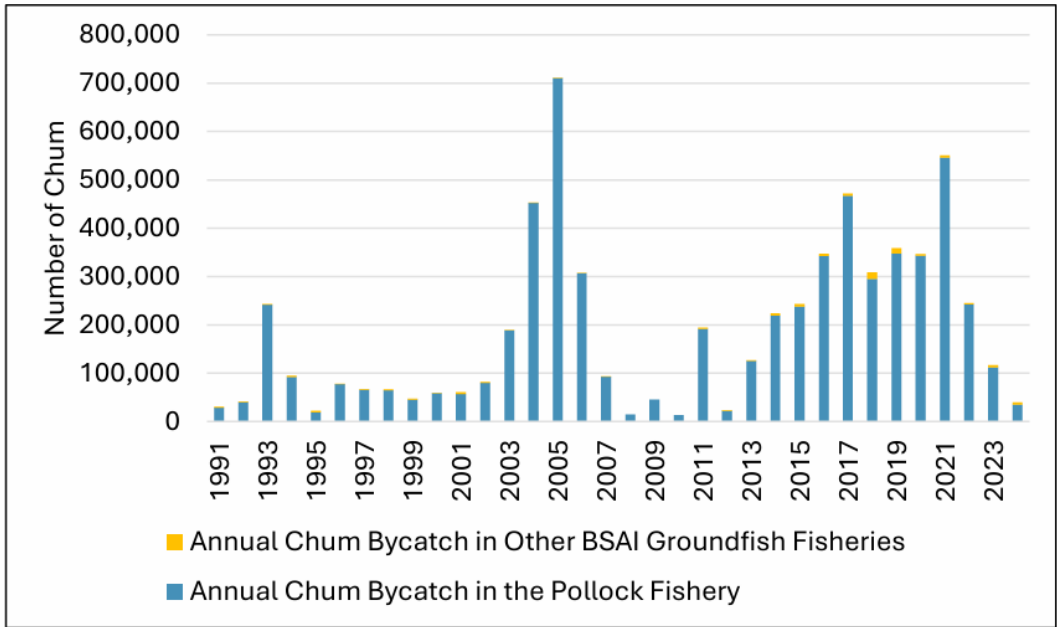
¹ These are 2024 statistics from the federal [Observer Program Annual Report](#). This report is updated annually.

- **Incentive Plan Agreements for Chinook salmon avoidance**

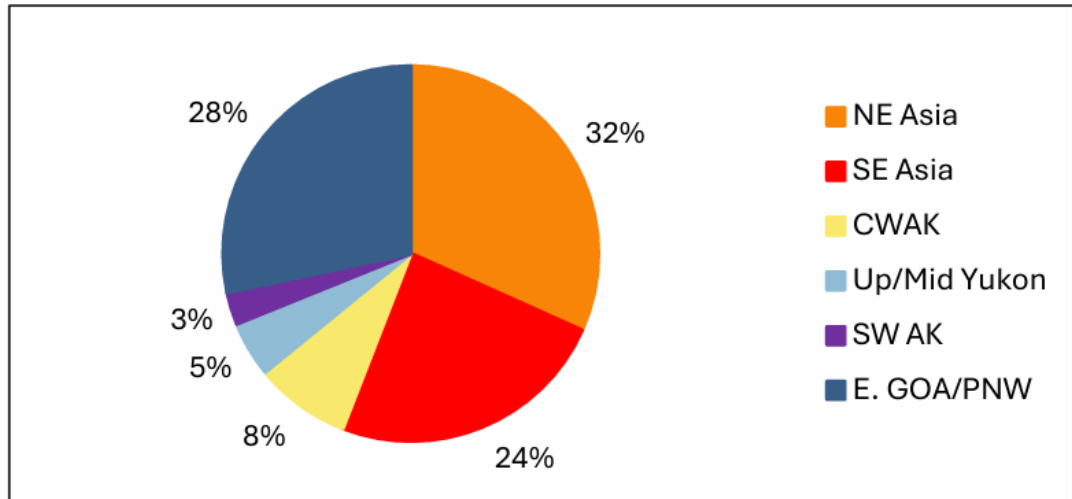
Incentive plan agreements required by federal regulation in the Bering Sea pollock fishery further keep fishermen below the regulatory limits by requiring fishing cooperatives to share bycatch information in real-time so that closures can be put in place (by a third party) throughout the pollock season to move the fleet away from areas of high bycatch and towards areas of cleaner fishing. This is the key piece of the bycatch management program to keep bycatch well below the hard caps. In the GOA, because management systems are somewhat different, participants have a voluntary Chinook avoidance agreement in place each year.

- **Genetics Analysis**

A federal genetics sampling program is completed each year for Chinook and chum salmon bycatch to understand the origin and impacts to various Chinook and chum salmon runs, as not all salmon in the bycatch are from Alaska. The NOAA genetic sampling allows the North Pacific Council to estimate the impacts to western AK Chinook and chum salmon in the aggregate, post-season. In 2024, [Bristol Bay Science & Research Institute \(BBSRI\) set up a mobile genetics lab in Unalaska and began reporting weekly chum salmon genetics](#) to NMFS and industry during the summer Bering Sea pollock fishery (B season) in an effort to get more timely genetics data to improve in-season avoidance of Western Alaska chum.

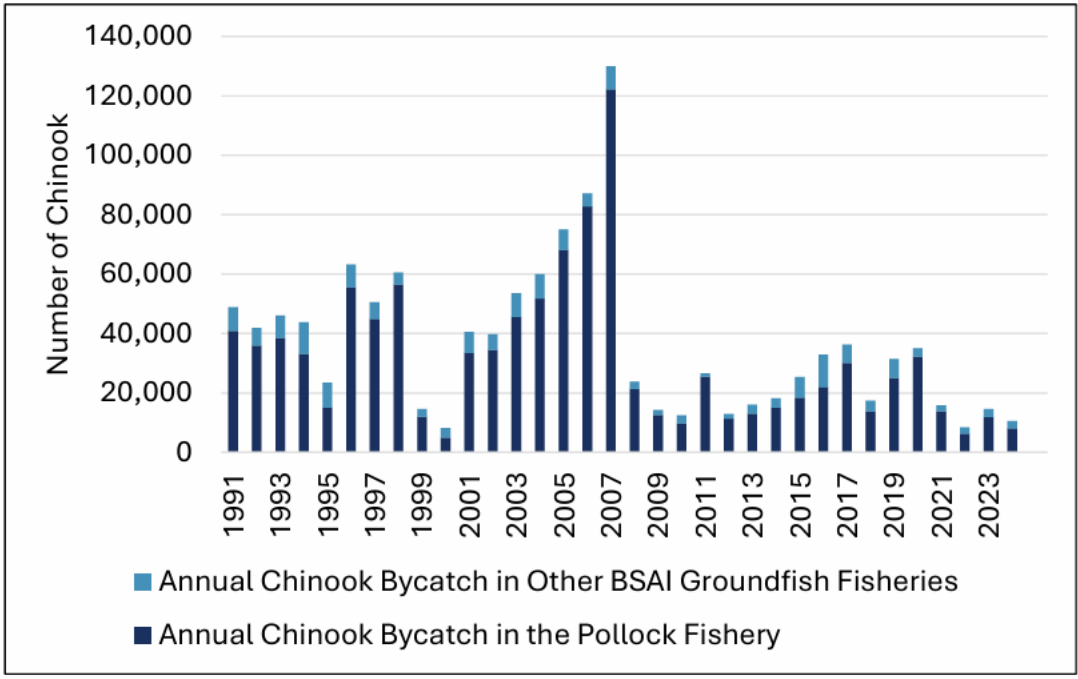


Notes: Chum salmon bycatch (number of fish) in all Bering Sea Aleutian Islands (BSAI) groundfish fisheries compared to Bering Sea pollock fishery, 1991-2024

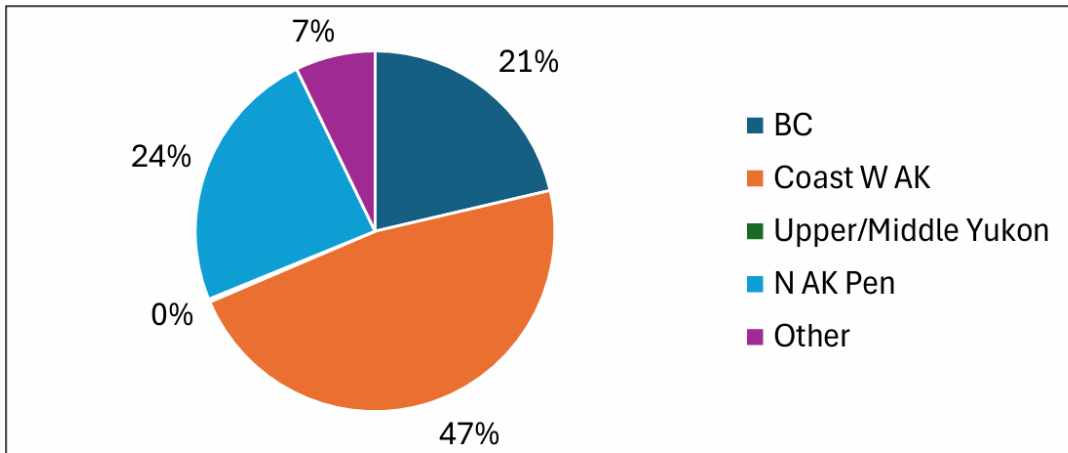


Notes: Genetic stock composition of chum bycatch in the 2024 pollock fishery





Notes: Chinook salmon bycatch (number of fish) in all Bering Sea Aleutian Islands (BSAI) groundfish fisheries compared to Bering Sea pollock fishery, 1991-2024



Notes: Genetic stock composition of Chinook salmon bycatch in the 2023 pollock fishery

Pelagic Trawl Impact on Salmon

Is bycatch in the Alaska pollock trawl fishery responsible for the collapse of Western Alaska (WAK) salmon? How much of the salmon are Alaska salmon?

No, the science shows bycatch is not a driver of Western AK salmon declines. The level of salmon bycatch in the trawl fleet is too low to have this level of impact. Several times in the past decade scientific analyses were done to evaluate the *impact of Chinook and chum bycatch on aggregate WAK runs*. The most recent estimates are <2% for Chinook and <1% for chum, as detailed below. Genetic sampling shows Western Alaska salmon are not caught in the Gulf of Alaska pollock fisheries.

In 2023, Bering Sea pollock fishermen caught 11,855 Chinook. Not all of these fish are from Alaska, and genetic sampling confirmed 5,627 (47%) were from WAK. This is a fairly consistent proportion across more than a decade. 2024 genetics are not yet available.

In 2023, Bering Sea pollock fishermen caught 111,698 chum. 2023 chum genetics are completed and show 10.6% (22,500) were from Western Alaska (all systems from Unalakleet to Bristol Bay and including the Yukon River). 69% (76,825) were from Asia and Russia. These proportions are consistent across time, where 9 – 20% of the chum bycatch are from western Alaska and most are from Russia/Asia.

Additionally, coho – which do not show up in trawl bycatch – experienced declines simultaneously with other WAK salmon species, which points strongly to ecosystem drivers as the cause of the collapse.

State and federal fishery scientists believe that Western Alaska salmon populations are declining due to several factors working in combination as a result of warm water temperatures (i.e. multi-year nearshore marine heatwaves, reduced prey, poor prey quality, heat stress/metabolic changes, poor immune response, disease, [chemical changes in-river due to permafrost melt releasing naturally occurring mineral deposits](#), etc.)².

²<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/whats-behind-chinook-and-chum-salmon-declines-alaska>
[Divergent Responses of Western Alaska Salmon to a Changing Climate - NOAA Arctic](#)
[As salmon in Alaska plummet, scientists home in on a killer | Science | AAAS](#)

Even though the Alaska pollock fishery is not the driver of the WAK salmon declines, there are significant federal regulatory restrictions in place, including caps on Chinook bycatch and a system of dynamic closed areas in response to salmon on the grounds that every pollock boat must adhere to. Caps on chum bycatch are being considered by the regulatory authority (North Pacific Council) in Feb 2026. See above for trends in Chinook and chum salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea and GOA pollock fisheries.

How much salmon would return if bycatch didn't exist?

The pollock fishery only intercepts Chinook and chum salmon (99.9%) not coho, pink, or sockeye. State and federal managers periodically evaluate the impact of the pollock fishery on Chinook and chum returns using observer data on bycatch, including age composition, and genetic sampling. The impact rate of the pollock fishery on the aggregate coastal western AK Chinook is 1.9% and 0.6% for the Upper Yukon stock.³ **This means if the bycatch did not exist, the run strength of coastal western AK stocks (aggregate region) would be 1.9% higher and Upper Yukon would be 0.6% higher.**

Bycatch has ranged from 6,000 – 32,000 Chinook annually (2019 – 2023). Annual genetic reports consistently show about half of the bycatch is comprised of aggregate coastal western AK Chinook and <1% is mid/upper Yukon stocks.

A true impact rate cannot be calculated for chum salmon because the total run size for chum salmon stocks in aggregate coastal western Alaska is unknown (per ADFG). Evaluations based on observer bycatch data, genetic sampling, and run estimates of major coastal Alaska systems resulted in a gross estimated impact rate of <1%.

Chum bycatch in the pollock fishery has ranged from 33,000 – 546,000 chum annually (2019 – 2024). The most recent genetic report (2024) indicates that 8.3% of the 2024 bycatch was comprised of aggregate coastal western AK chum (8.3% x 33,000 chum = **2,739 chum**), and 4.8% of the bycatch was mid/upper Yukon stock (4.8% x 33,000 = 1,584 **chum**). The majority every year are Asia/Russia origin fish.

³ Source: [Update on Chinook salmon mortality and impacts due to bycatch in the EBS pollock fishery NMFS/NPFMC/ADFG, May 2022.](#)

Is bycatch in the Alaska pollock trawl fisheries responsible for Chinook salmon declines in the Kenai and other Gulf of Alaska river systems?

No. Annual genetic sampling is done of Bering Sea Chinook salmon bycatch. The most recent 2023 report shows 0.9% (about 100 fish total) were salmon originating from the NW GOA reporting group (19+ systems in the Northwest Gulf of Alaska including the Kenai). This is consistent over time. Sampling is also done in the Gulf of Alaska pollock fishery, even though it is a fraction of the Bering Sea fishery. Consistently, genetic sampling of the GOA pollock fishery shows 5-7% of the salmon bycatch comes from the whole NW GOA area. In 2023, that was 1,353 Chinook total originating from all systems across the NW GOA. About 75% comes from outside of Alaska (Canada and west coast US, mainly hatchery fish). There are more Kenai kings killed in the catch and release fishery than in the entire pollock fishery.

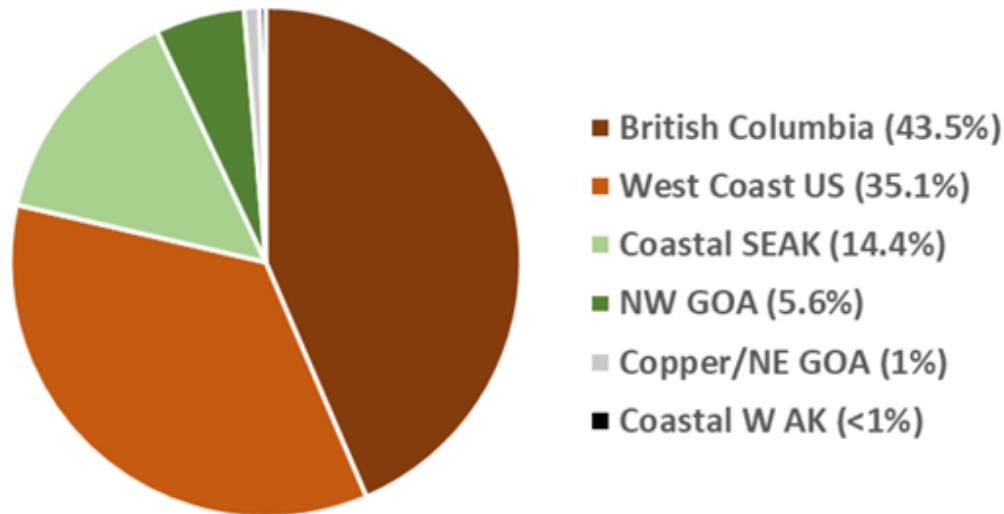


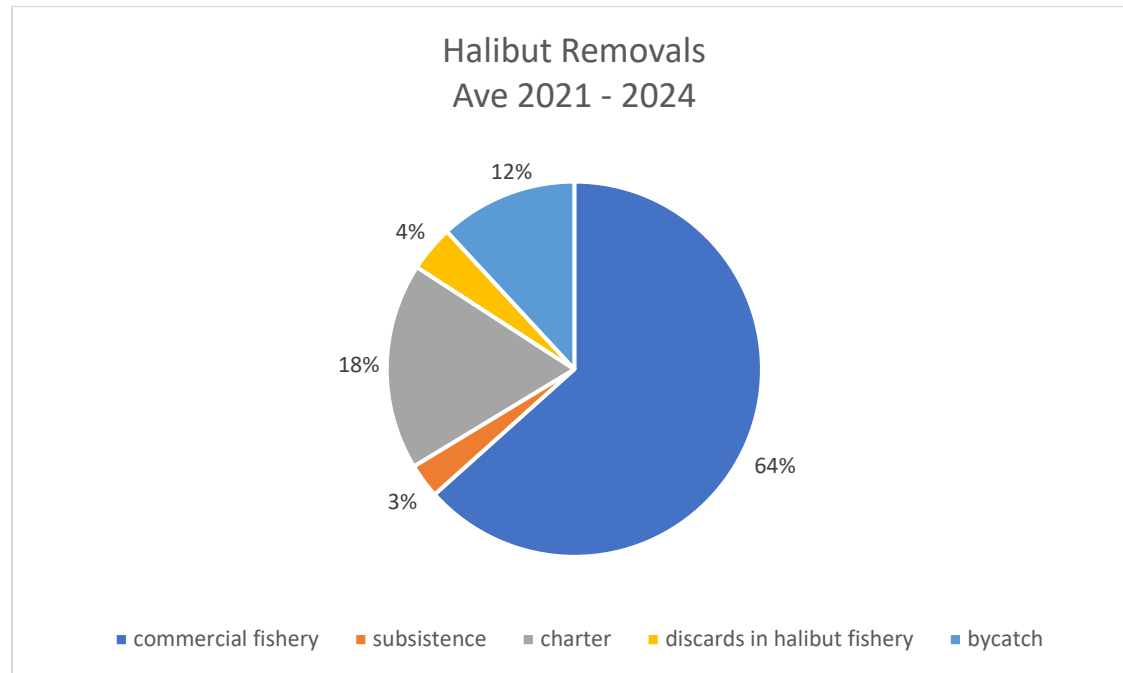
Figure 3. Average genetic stock contribution of Chinook salmon bycatch in GOA pollock fisheries, 2014-2019. Data compiled from NOAA Fisheries Salmon Bycatch reports¹.

Bottom Trawl Bycatch of Halibut & Crab

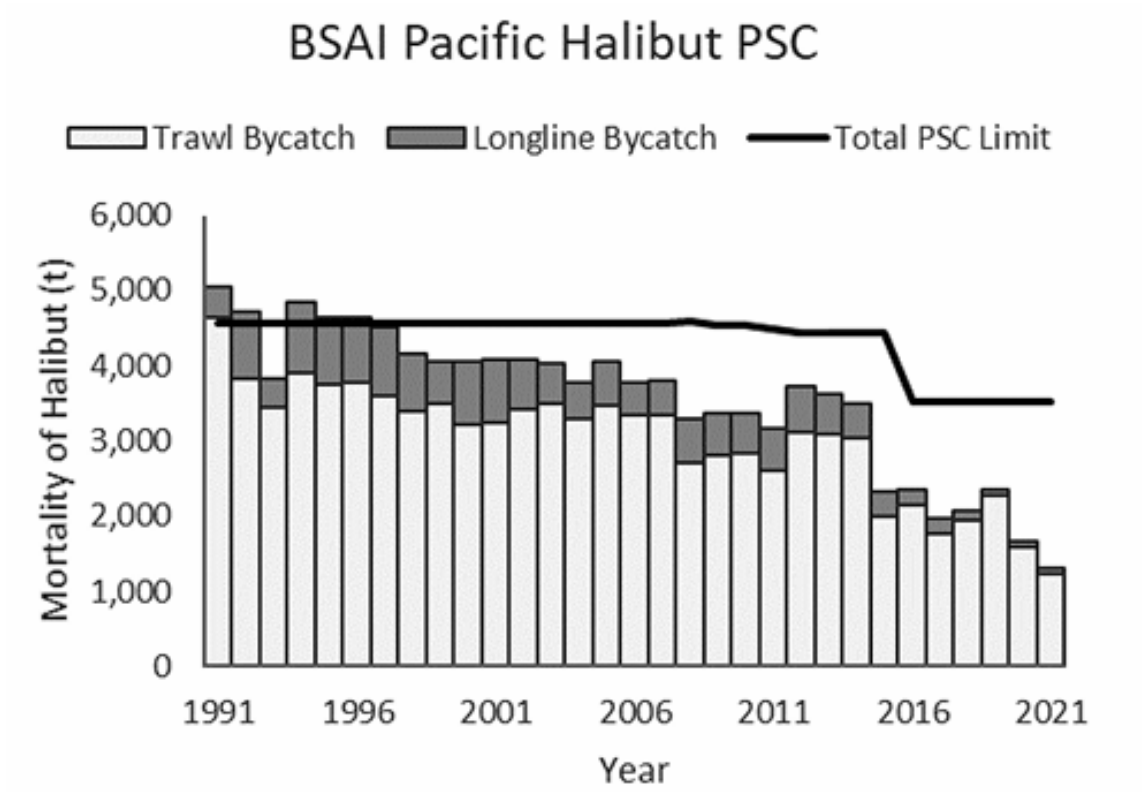
Bottom trawl fisheries (flatfish, Pacific cod, rockfish) are a source of halibut and crab bycatch, which is also managed by the NPFMC, using some of the same tools used to manage salmon bycatch in the pollock fishery. This has led to a reduction in bycatch over the last twenty years.

Pacific Halibut: On average 2021 – 2024, total trawl bycatch was 12% of total halibut removals.

Bycatch averaged 4.3 million lbs and total removals (all commercial, charter, subsistence harvest + bycatch + discards in the directed halibut fishery) averaged 36 million lbs annually.⁴ The pelagic trawl pollock fishery has very minimal halibut bycatch. Nearly all of the trawl bycatch is from the Am 80 Bering Sea bottom trawl fishery for flatfish and rockfish.



⁴ <https://www.iphc.int/data/pacific-halibut-mortality-by-source-1888-present/>

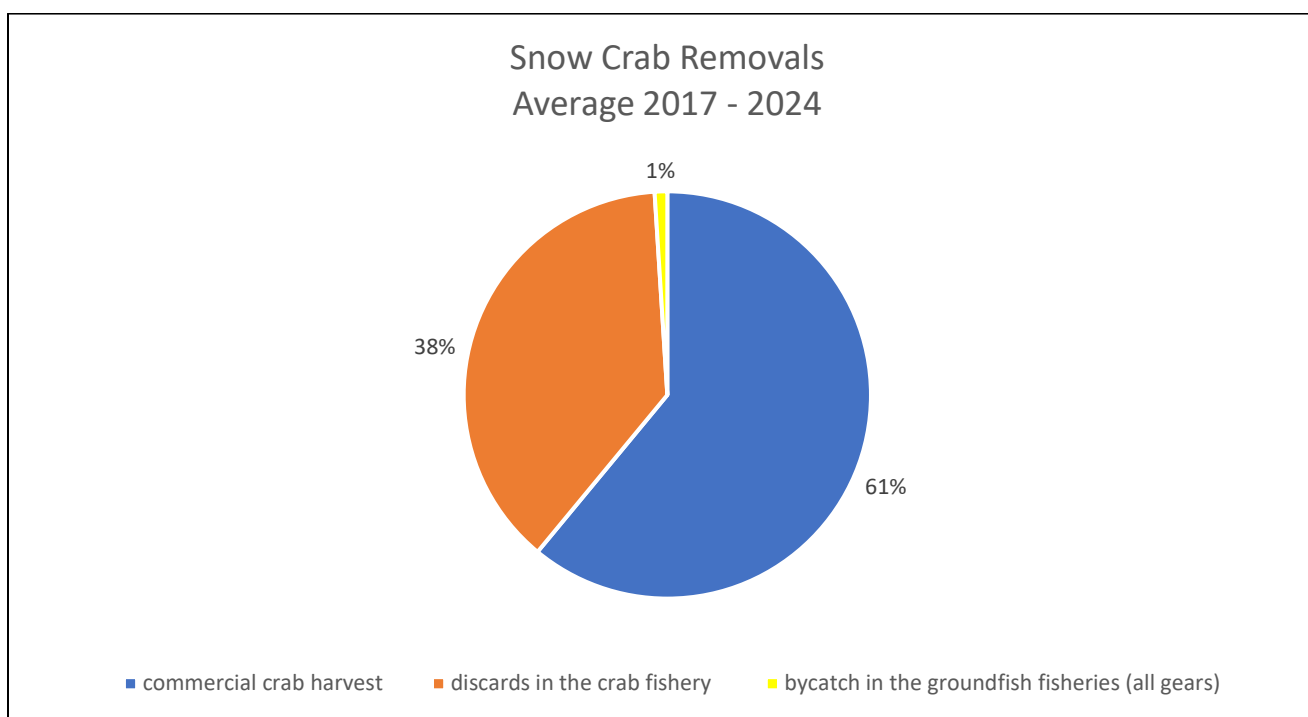


Source: 2023. *Marine Fisheries Review. Fish Bycatch in the North Pacific Halibut, Hippoglossus stenolepis, and Groundfish Fisheries*, by David Witherell and Michael Fey. doi: <https://doi.org/10.7755/MFR.85.1-4.3>

Bering Sea Snow Crab (Opilio): Total trawl bycatch is about 1% (or less) of total removals.

In 2017 – 2024, bycatch from all groundfish gears combined (majority is Am 80) averaged 1% of total removals and ranged from 132,000 lbs to 881,000 lbs annually. In the same time period, bycatch/discards in the commercial crab fishery averaged 38% of total removals and ranged from 1.5 million lbs to 34.4 million lbs.

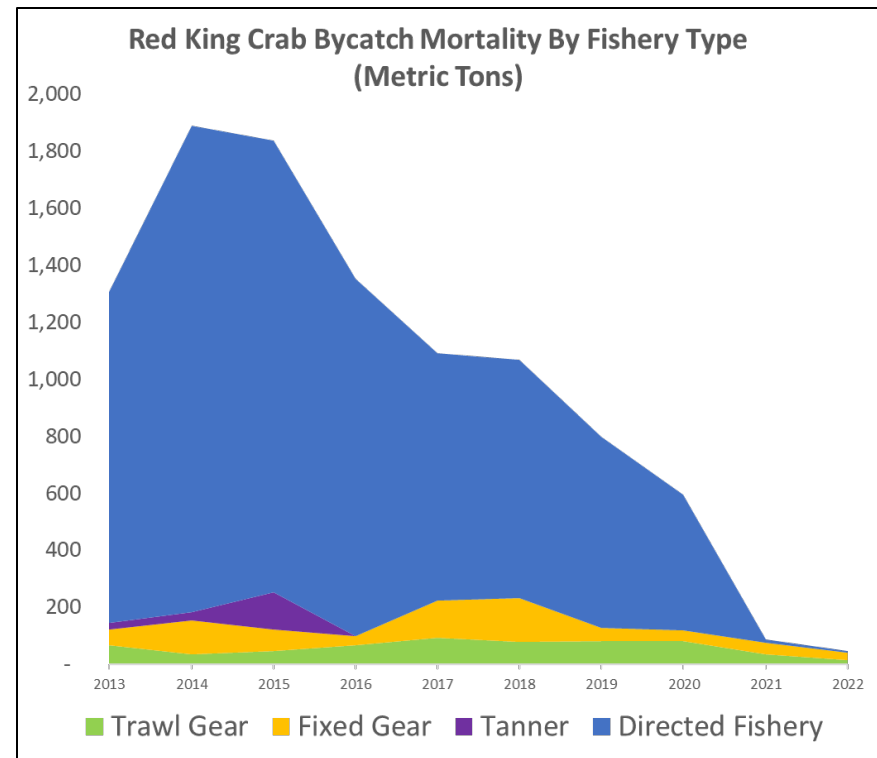
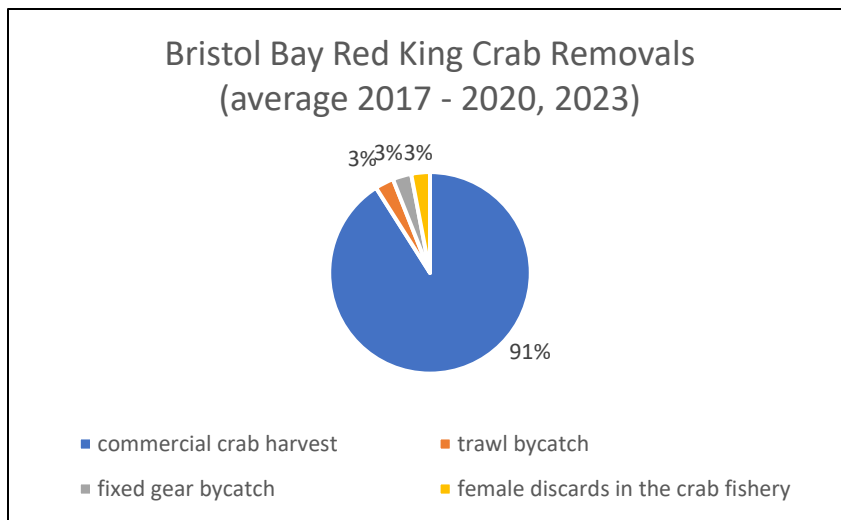
The most recent year (2024/25), the crab fleet caught 4.74 million lbs and discarded 1.46 million lbs of snow crab. Bycatch from all groundfish fisheries combined (pot/longline/trawl) was 198,000 lbs.⁵



⁵ Source: [An Assessment for Bering Sea Snow Crab, Cody Szuwalski and Grant Adams, NOAA, September 1, 2024](#), Table 10.

Bristol Bay Red King Crab: Trawl bycatch is 3% of total removals

The 5-year average (2017-2020 and 2023, most recent years when the fishery is open and data are available) bycatch in the trawl groundfish fisheries is 3% of total removals and ranges from 148,000 to 202,000 lbs. Nearly all of this is from the Am 80 Bering Sea bottom trawl fishery fishing for flatfish and rockfish. During the same time period, bycatch in the pot groundfish fisheries is also 3% of total removals and ranges from 38,000 to 259,000 lbs. The average bycatch/discard of female red king crab in the commercial red king crab fishery is also 3% of total removals.⁶ The commercial crab fishery accounts for 91% of removals.



⁶ Source: [Bristol Bay Red King Crab Stock Assessment 2024, Katie Palof, ADFG, September 2024.](#)

Bottom Contact

Habitat impacts from fishing gear are among the most studied topics in fisheries management. The NPFMC analyzes Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) and impacts to that habitat in each proposed action. Additionally, every five years, an [EFH review](#) is completed to ensure that NOAA Fisheries and the Council incorporate the best available science for EFH management and to understand what level of impacts are more than minimal and temporary, as required by federal law. *The most recent evaluation shows the area disturbed by all fishing gear in federal waters off Alaska is extremely low, at less than 5.2% for the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and 1.3% for the Gulf of Alaska. This includes all commercial fishing gear that contacts the bottom (trawl, longline and pot). The next 5-year review will be in 2028.*

Alaska pollock is harvested using pelagic trawl gear approved by NOAA Fisheries. The gear is fished in mid-water and on or near the bottom where dense schools of pollock are found.

- Seafloor contact with pelagic gear is highly variable, and independent reviews show habitat impacts from pollock fishing are minimal and temporary.
- The efficiency of pollock gear limits the amount of time and area disturbed, reducing ecosystem impacts and minimizing bycatch.
- The pollock industry is conducting gear research currently to improve the understanding of gear performance and the resulting inputs can be used for updating impacts to EFH and to further regulate gear. The pollock industry is also testing modified gear to reduce bottom contact.

Flatfish (and rockfish and cod) is harvested using different trawl gear than pelagic gear. This is gear designed to be on the bottom and is also approved by NOAA Fisheries. In 2012, after years of research and regulation by the NPFMC, vessels modified their on-bottom trawl gear to reduce bottom contact by 90%. This new gear, known as modified trawl sweeps, elevates most of the parts of the trawl that herd fish off the bottom, reduces bottom impacts and bycatch of crab.

What about discards in various fisheries?

Unwanted fish are taken incidentally in almost every U.S. commercial and recreational fishery. Fish are discarded because they are prohibited from being retained by regulation (e.g. for amount, size, sex or species) or are simply not wanted due to the fish being of an unpreferable size or less desirable. Regardless of the reason that fish are discarded, it is all considered bycatch (except for fish released alive under a recreational catch and release fishery management program). Under federal law, bycatch includes regulatory and economic discards. A regulatory discard is a fish harvested in a fishery which fishermen are required by regulation to discard whenever caught, or are required by regulation to retain, but not sell.

A recent paper in *Marine Fisheries Review* compares and contrasts discards in various federal fisheries in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska (GOA).⁷ The data show that discard rates in the Bering Sea trawl fisheries range from 1.4% to 14.4%, and the discard rates for the Bering Sea pot and longline fisheries range from 4.3% to 63.3%. In the GOA, the discard rates for trawl fisheries range from 1.2% to 25.3%, and the discard rates for pot and longline fisheries range from 2.6% to 48.2%. See Figures 2 and 3 and Tables 3-6 below.

⁷Source: 2023. *Marine Fisheries Review. Fish Bycatch in the North Pacific Halibut, Hippoglossus stenolepis, and Groundfish Fisheries*, by David Witherell and Michael Fey. doi: <https://doi.org/10.7755/MFR.85.1-4.3>

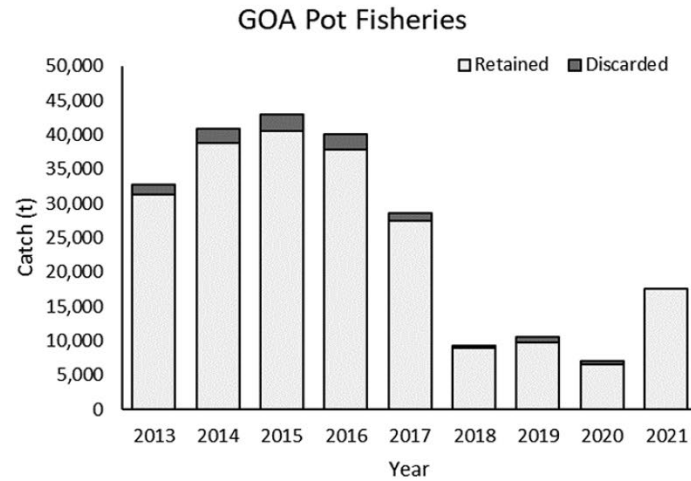
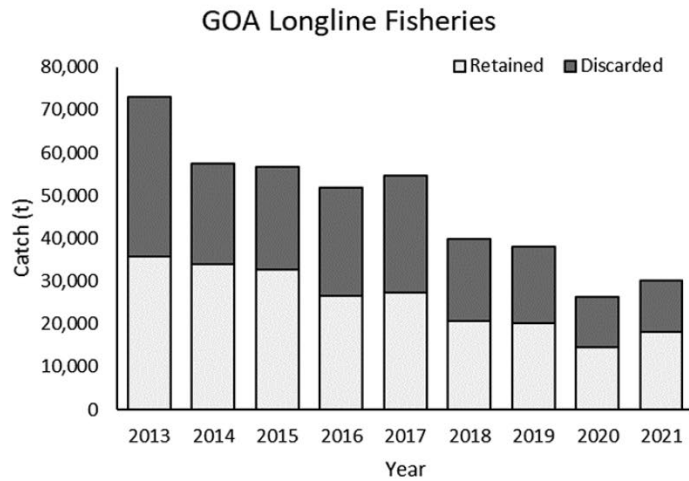
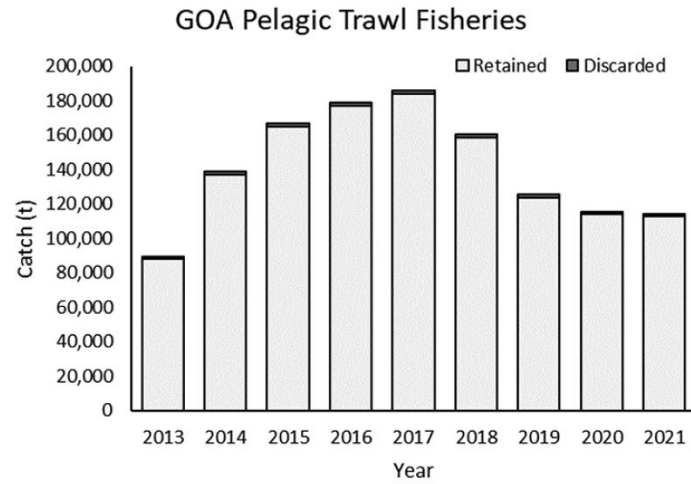
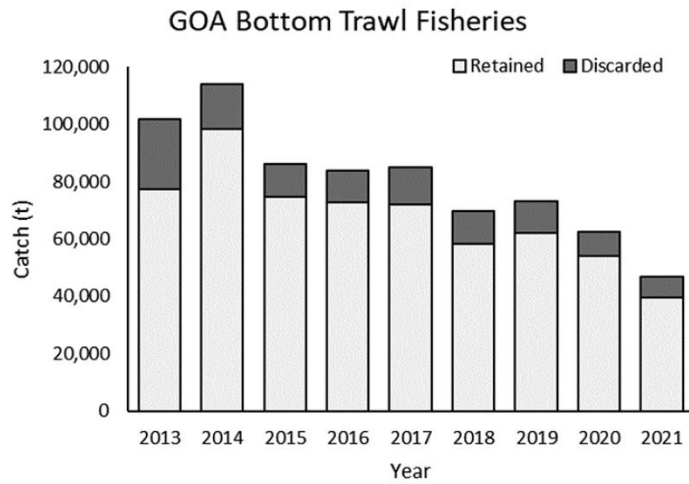


Figure 3.—Retained and discarded catch (t) in the groundfish and halibut fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) management area, by gear type.

Table 4.—Amount (t) and composition of discards in the 2021 GOA trawl fisheries.

Pollock trawl		Flatfish trawl		Rockfish trawl		Pacific cod trawl	
Pollock	583	Arrowtooth fl.	700	Arrowtooth fl.	648	Pollock	249
Squid sp.	226	Pacific cod	596	Giant grenadier	388	Arrowtooth fl.	122
Smelt sp.	218	S.W. flatfish sp.	320	Other rockfish sp.	345	Giant grenadier	78
Other osmerid sp.	89	Pacific halibut	308	Pacific cod	309	Pacific halibut	43
Shark sp.	63	Sablefish	285	Pollock	248	Big skate	22
Grenadier sp.	46	Pacific o. perch	253	Pacific o. perch	242	Sculpin sp.	20
Pacific halibut	40	Pollock	241	Pacific halibut	199	S.W. flatfish sp.	17
Chinook salmon	34	Sculpin sp.	152	Sablefish	175	Chinook salmon	12
Misc. fish sp.	22	Flathead sole	85	Misc. fish sp.	169	Pacific cod	11
Pacific o. perch	21	Misc. fish sp.	81	Atka mackerel	89	Misc. fish sp.	10
Other species	43	Other species	342	Other species	408	Other species	28
Total discard	1,386	Total discard	3,361	Total discard	3,220	Total discard	612
Total catch	114,099	Total catch	16,133	Total catch	28,142	Total catch	2,417
% Discard	1.2	% Discard	20.8	% Discard	11.4	% Discard	25.3

Table 6.—Amount (t) and composition of discards in the 2021 GOA longline and pot fisheries.

Pacific cod longline		Pacific cod pot		Sablefish longline		Sablefish pot		Halibut longline	
Pacific halibut	527	Sculpin sp.	55	Shark sp.	499	Arrowtooth fl.	246	Pacific halibut	3,673
Skate sp.	280	Pacific halibut	45	Giant grenadier	387	Sablefish	186	Shark sp.	1,266
Shark sp.	168	Pacific cod	25	Sablefish	236	Pacific halibut	75	Longnose skate	932
Big skate	141	Tanner crab	15	Grenadier sp.	170	Giant grenadier	64	Sculpin sp.	602
Longnose skate	88	Sea star sp.	15	Longnose skate	134	Rougheye rockf.	11	Skate sp.	473
Sablefish	55	Octopus sp.	13	Pacific halibut	128	Shark sp.	10	Big skate	449
Sculpin sp.	47	Sablefish	9	Shortraker rockf.	112	Grenadier sp.	9	Pacific cod	408
Pacific cod	46	Misc. fish sp.	9	Skate sp.	68	D. W. flatfish sp.	8	Misc. fish sp.	302
Pollock	24	S.W. flatfish sp.	4	Rougheye rockf.	52	S.W. flatfish sp.	6	Sablefish	260
Arrowtooth fl.	24	Other rockfish sp.	3	Arrowtooth fl.	44	Pacific cod	6	Arrowtooth fl.	98
Other species	53	Other species	8	Other species	113	Other species	17	Other species	248
Total discard	1,452	Total discard	204	Total discard	1,943	Total discard	637	Total discard	8,711
Total catch	5,385	Total catch	7,852	Total catch	6,809	Total catch	10,482	Total catch	18,057
% Discard	27.0	% Discard	2.6	% Discard	28.5	% Discard	6.1	% Discard	48.2

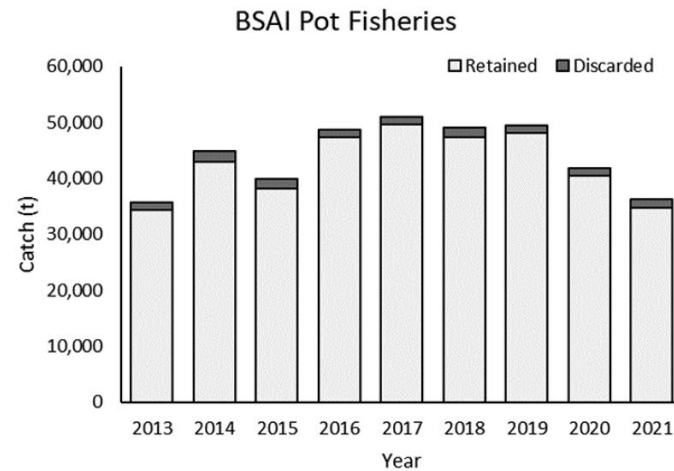
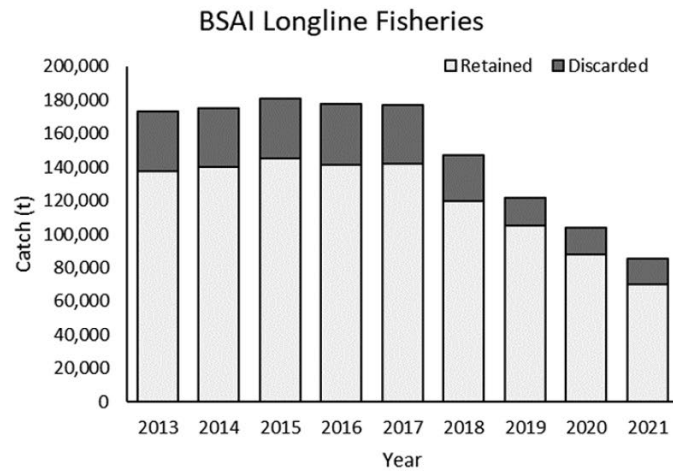
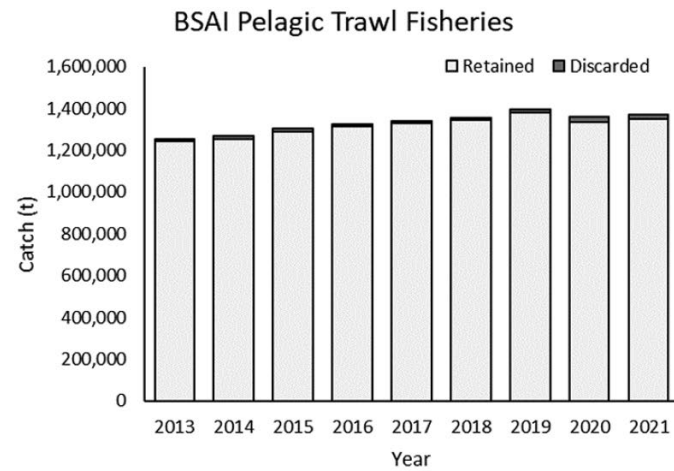
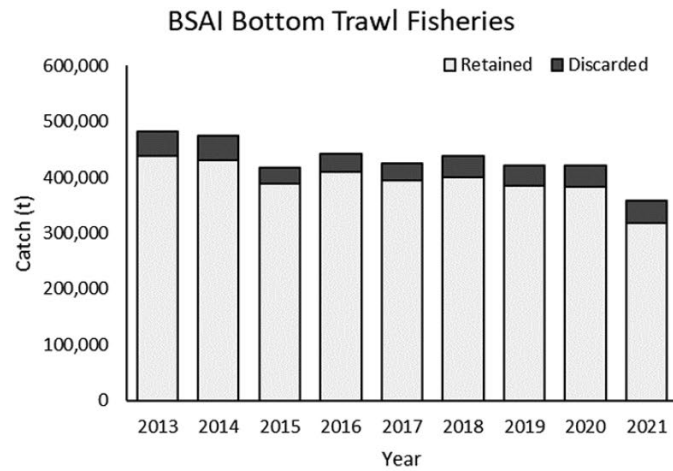


Figure 2.—Retained and discarded catch (t) in the groundfish and halibut fisheries in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) management area, by gear type.

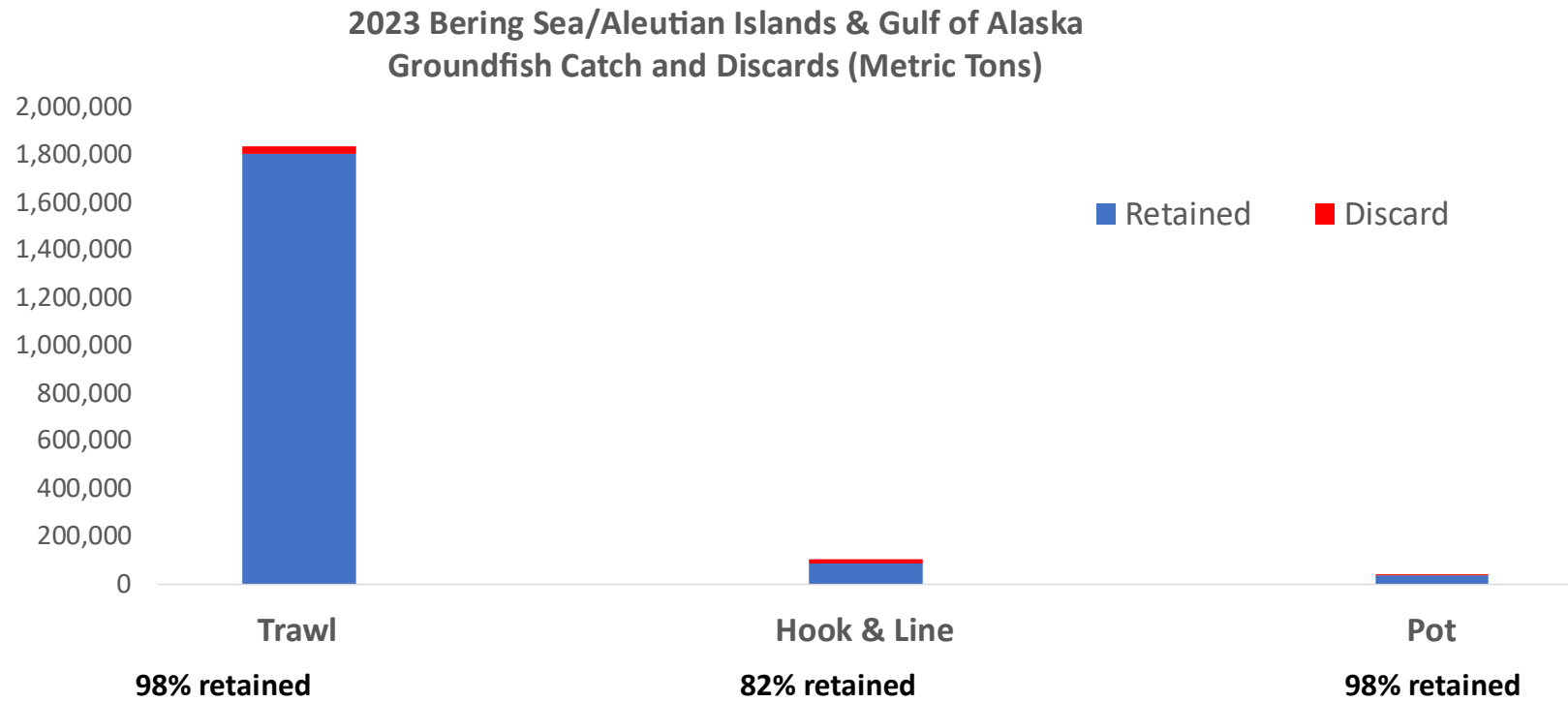
Table 3.—Amount (t) and composition of discards in the 2021 BSAI trawl fisheries.

Pollock trawl		Flatfish trawl		Rockfish/mackerel trawl		Pacific cod trawl	
Scyphozoa jellies	7,817	Pollock	11,944	Pacific o. perch	819	Pollock	289
Squid sp.	3,822	Skate sp.	3,037	Atka mackerel	541	Pacific halibut	125
Pacific herring	1,708	Sculpin sp.	2,453	Northern rockfish	451	Skate sp.	102
Pacific cod	1,477	Sea star sp.	2,151	Pollock	440	Other flatfish sp.	89
Chum salmon	1,212	Giant grenadier	1,977	Sculpin sp.	425	Pacific cod	80
Pollock	968	Pacific halibut	1,862	Giant grenadier	407	Rock sole	63
Sablefish	662	Other flatfish sp.	1,374	Skate sp.	348	Atka mackerel	57
Pacific o. perch	652	Alaska plaice	1,281	Sablefish	309	Sculpin sp.	51
Skate sp.	341	Yellowfin sole	1,249	Other rockfish	252	Scyphozoa jellies	51
Shark sp.	300	Sablefish	874	Misc. fish sp.	174	Arrowtooth fl..	44
Other species	802	Other species	4,490	Other species	1,167	Other species	92
Total discard	19,761	Total discard	32,690	Total discard	5,335	Total discard	1,043
Total catch	1,368,493	Total catch	227,565	Total catch	109,891	Total catch	20,303
% Discard	1.4	% Discard	14.4	% Discard	4.9	% Discard	5.1

Table 5.—Amount (t) and composition of discards in the 2021 BSAI longline and pot fisheries.

Pacific cod longline		Pacific cod pot		Sablefish longline		Sablefish pot		Halibut longline	
Skate sp.	6,557	Sculpin sp.	404	Giant grenadier	226	Arrowtooth fl.	34	Skate sp.	726
Sculpin sp.	2,138	Yellowfin sole	370	Skate sp.	16	Giant grenadier	24	Pacific cod	587
Pacific halibut	1,086	Red king crab	221	Pacific halibut	11	Golden king crab	16	Pacific halibut	333
Pacific cod	897	Octopus sp.	117	Sculpin sp.	1	Pacific halibut	10	Sablefish	236
Pollock	482	Sea star sp.	92	Arrowtooth fl.	1	Sablefish	6	Sculpin sp.	113
Yellowfin sole	358	Snail sp.	51	Sablefish	1	Pacific cod	5	Pollock	34
Flathead sole	241	Sablefish	43	Rougeye rockf.	1	Kamchatka fl.	3	Other rockfish sp.	19
Arrowtooth fl.	203	Pacific cod	36	Other flatfish sp.	1	Misc. crab sp.	2	Sea star sp.	17
Other flatfish sp.	118	Pacific halibut	25	Sea anemone sp.	1	Greenland turbot	2	Giant grenadier	13
Sea star sp.	112	Snow crab	23	Kamchatka fl.	0	Shark sp.	0	Arrowtooth fl.	8
Other species	576	Other species	97	Other species	2	Other species	3	Other species	25
Total discard	12,767	Total discard	1,479	Total discard	260	Total discard	106	Total discard	2,112
Total catch	81,296	Total catch	34,346	Total catch	411	Total catch	1,982	Total catch	3,840
% Discard	15.7	% Discard	4.3	% Discard	63.3	% Discard	5.3	% Discard	55.0

Almost 95% of groundfish catch from Federal waters is from trawl fisheries, and 98% retained



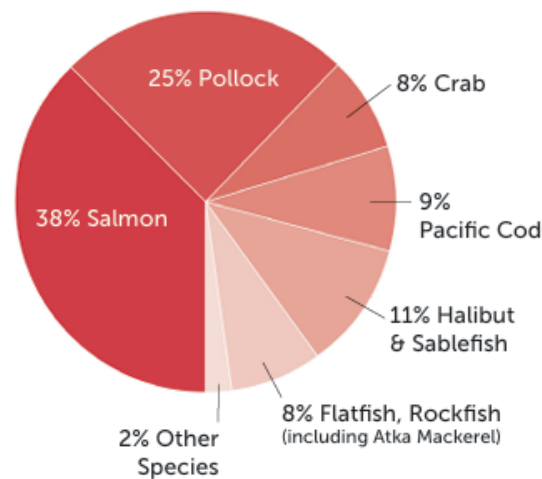
Source: 2023 NMFS Inseason Management Report -- December 2023 Meeting, Agenda B-2

Economic Benefits to Alaska

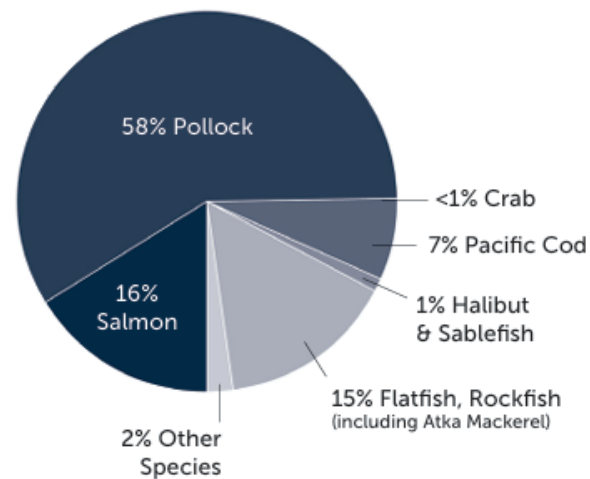


All commercial fisheries are important to Alaska. Salmon and pollock are the largest contributors by value and volume. All sectors within the Alaska seafood industry – particularly the processing sector – are reliant on one another. It takes the volume and consistency of large-scale fisheries, like salmon and pollock, to offset the high cost of labor and logistics of operating in remote Alaska communities. This allows processors to remain open and to provide markets for smaller volume fisheries like halibut, sablefish, and crab, which on their own, would not justify the costs to keep processors open. ***Diversification is an important economic strategy for both fishermen and processors, who need all fisheries to remain competitive.***

VALUE AND VOLUME BY SPECIES 2022-2023



Percent of Ex-Vessel Value



Percent of Volume

Federal Fisheries Provide Direct Benefits to Western Alaska

THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT QUOTA PROGRAM

More than 10% of all federal commercial fishery harvest quotas in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands are allocated to six nonprofit Community Development Quota (CDQ) groups representing 65 communities in Western Alaska.

The program was created in 1992 to provide eligible villages with an opportunity to participate and invest in Bering Sea fisheries, support economic development in the region, alleviate poverty, provide economic and social benefits, and achieve sustainable and diversified local economies.

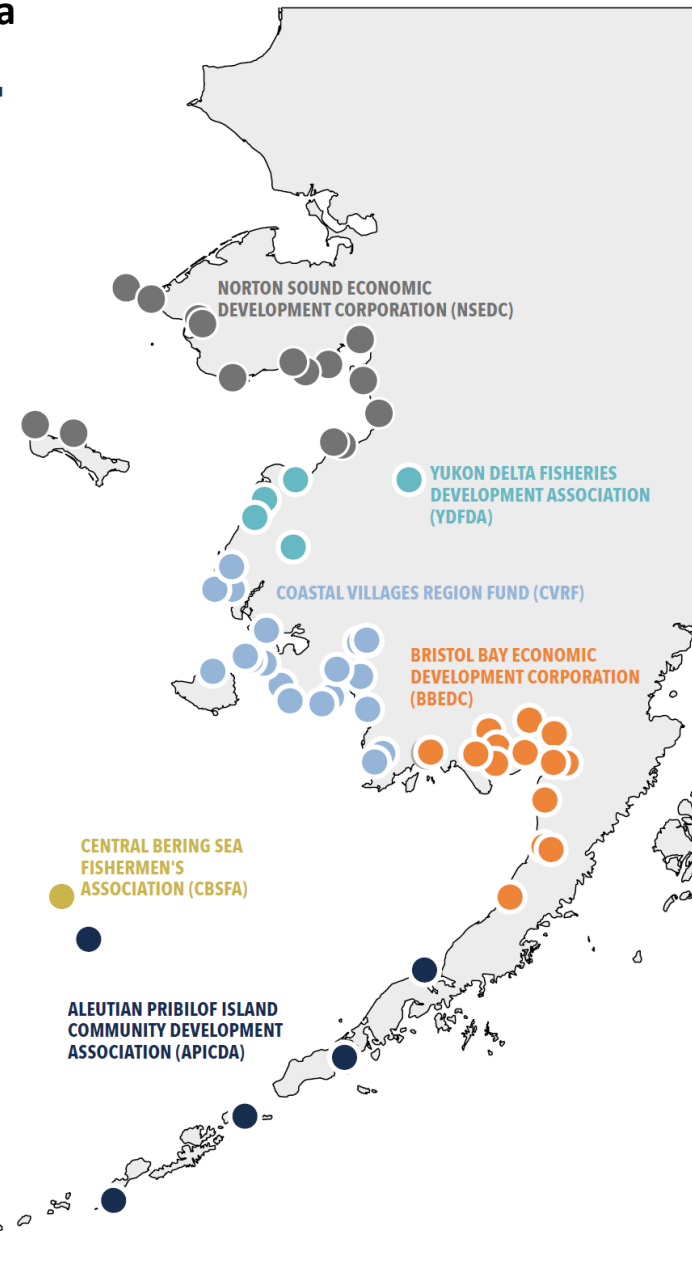
In 2020, the six groups owned a combined \$1.3 billion in assets, including full or partial ownership of nearly 60 commercial vessels, including catcher processors.

CDQ groups provide direct employment opportunities as a primary economic development initiative. In 2020, groups generated \$19.7 million in wages for 1,400 Western Alaska residents. In total, approximately 5,060 jobs and \$268 million in annual labor income can be measured and linked to the CDQ program through BSAI seafood industry jobs, jobs connected with development programs, and all multiplier effects.

CDQ groups issue more than \$30 million annually in community development grants to leverage state, federal, and private resources, provide debt repayment assistance, plan large-scale infrastructure projects, help with fuel assistance and utilities, support elder programs, and assist with technical and grant writing support.

Training and education support is foundational to the CDQ program, with groups providing funding for a wide range of scholarships, internships, vocational trainings in partnership with state and nonprofit entities, marine safety and first-aid courses, fisheries education, culture camps, school grants, and early childhood education programs. The CDQ program invested more than \$25.6 million in training and education from 2011-2020.

CDQ groups fund \$5 million annually in essential science and research to help support sustainable state and federal fisheries management.



Economic Impacts of Alaska Pollock

Alaska pollock is the nation's largest fishery and is the subject of recent (2025) reports from Northern Economics and McKinley Research Group to assess the broad economic importance of the Alaska Pollock fishery.^{8, 9} The summary findings are provided below, which highlight critical jobs and economic benefits in Alaska. The report also highlights how the scale and stability of the Alaska pollock industry helps lower the cost of living in rural Alaska, by sustaining essential marine freight and fuel services. In doing so, the fishery not only supports its own workforce, but also reduces costs and expands shipping options for other Alaska fisheries that rely on shared infrastructure to reach markets.

- In 2023, the Alaska pollock fishery supported more than 16,800 U.S. jobs - spanning harvesting, processing, and the businesses that support them.
- Alaska accounted for the largest share of these total jobs over any other state - more than 6,300 jobs in Alaska. The fishery's U.S. workforce is comprised of 35% Alaska residents.
- In 2023, the Alaska pollock industry generated more than \$336 million in labor income to Alaskans - nearly one-third of all income created.
- Alaska pollock processors convert virtually the entire Alaska pollock catch weight into marketable products. In 2023, the total value of Alaska-processed products was estimated at \$1.7 billion, which includes fillets, surimi, roe, headed and gutted, minced, fish meal and oil.
- Ownership of fishing quota and the final sales value produces economic benefits to Western Alaska CDQ communities through their more than 30% ownership of Alaska harvesting and processing entities.
- The Alaska Pollock fishery generated more than \$2.5 billion in total U.S. economic output (sales activity) in 2023, with more than \$830 million in Alaska.

⁸ <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/66957f81ee2ae14061bb3861/t/68cdb88570e9017a388f06bf/1758312581652/Northern+Economics+Report.pdf>

⁹ <https://mckinleyresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/IMPORTANCE-OF-THE-ALASKA-POLLOCK-FISHERY-TO-ALASKA-TRANSPORTATION-AND-FUEL-NETWORKS-8.20.25.pdf>

- Without the Alaska pollock fishery, freight and fuel logistics in and out of Alaska would be significantly disrupted and costs would be higher:
 - Marine freight providers said they would reduce sailings to Dutch Harbor and other rural ports without the scale and regularity of Alaska pollock shipments.
 - This would mean fewer deliveries of groceries, building materials, and basic supplies for Western Alaska communities.
 - It would also weaken Unalaska's role as a critical logistics hub for Western and Northern Alaska.
 - The Alaska pollock fishery creates *economies of scale* that keep freight rates down across the seafood sector. Without it, other Alaska fisheries could lose access to domestic and international shipping services, leaving their products stranded and unable to reach key markets at sustainable costs.
 - Fuel distributors said they would need to lay off workers, cut service, and raise prices for diesel and gasoline without the pollock fishery, impacting Western and Northern Alaska most.

Alaska Seafood pays its way, and then some

In FY 2022, commercial fishing and seafood processing businesses paid **\$161 million in taxes, fees and self-assessments**, as outlined below (source: [ASMI](#), pg. 18). For reference, the ADFG budget for the Division Commercial Fisheries in FY 2022 was **\$43 million**.

Hence, the Alaska seafood industry not only pays for its own management, but also subsidizes the management of other divisions of ADFG, as well as provides additional salmon for all salmon users through salmon hatchery production.

	FY2022 (\$ MILLIONS)
Taxes	\$97.2
Fisheries Business Tax.....	\$54.7
Fisheries Resource Landing Tax.....	\$9.3
Local Raw Fish & Other Taxes	\$27.0
Marine Motor Fuel Tax.....	\$2.7
Corporate Income Tax.....	\$3.4
Agency Fees & Cost Recovery	\$41.2
Federal Cost Recovery Fees-Federal Share	\$7.8
Federal Cost Recovery Fees-State Share	\$1.4
Federal Observer Program.....	\$3.1
Salmon Hatchery Cost Recovery.....	\$8.0
CFEC Permit and Vessel Fees	\$7.6
Processing/Mariculture/Other Fees.....	\$7.1
Crew License Sales.....	\$2.8
Test Fishery Receipts.....	\$3.4
Industry Self-Assessments	\$22.6
Seafood Marketing Assessment (ASMI).....	\$10.3
Salmon Enhancement Tax.....	\$8.6
Regional Seafood Development Tax.....	\$3.2
Dive Fishery Management Assessment.....	\$0.6
TOTAL	\$161.1