

# **Alaska Bycatch Advisory Council**

A fishing vessel is silhouetted against a bright sunset over the ocean. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong reflection on the water. The vessel has two masts and various rigging.

**Report to:**

**House Fisheries Committee  
May 1, 2025**



# Definition of Bycatch

*Fish which are harvested  
in a fishery,  
but are not sold or kept*

*Discards include*  
*Economic*  
*Regulatory*  
*Prohibited Species*





## **Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force (ABRT)**

The 17-member Task Force was established by Governor Dunleavy in 2022 to explore the issue of bycatch and provide recommendations to policy makers with the goal of improving the health and sustainability of Alaska's fisheries.

The ABRT and subcommittees met a total of 45 times in 2022 and submitted a comprehensive report to the governor on November 30, 2022, with state engagement, research and management recommendations.

[https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/fishing/PDFs/bycatchtaskforce/abrt\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/fishing/PDFs/bycatchtaskforce/abrt_final_report.pdf)

# **Bycatch Advisory Council (BAC)**

Commissioner Doug Vincent-Lang created the BAC in March of 2023 to advise the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) on ways to implement the recommendations contained in the final ABRT report.

## **Current Membership of the BAC**

*Megan O'Neil, Chair*

*Kevin Delaney, Vice-Chair*

*Eva Dawn Burk*

*Brian Gabriel*

*Chelsae Radell*

*Karma Ulvi*

*Erik Velsko*

*Commissioner's representative – Deputy Commissioner Rachel Baker*

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=bycatchtaskforce.meetinginfo#abac>

# Bycatch Advisory Council Overview

## **Meetings (virtual):**

- Five meetings were held in 2023
- Four meetings were held in 2024
- Two meetings to date in 2025 (March 3 and April 24)
- Attendance ranged from 40-140 individuals
- Public testimony is available at the meetings
- Next BAC meeting is set for Tuesday, September 23

## **Town hall meetings held by Commissioner:**

- Kodiak – September 19, 2023
- Homer – November 27, 2023

At each town hall there were 60-70 people in attendance.

# **Focus of the Bycatch Advisory Council**

## **2023**

Review of ABRT recommendations and developed progress reports. Created a bycatch utilization subcommittee.

## **2024**

Identified priorities for ABRT management and research recommendations.

## **2025**

Recommend priorities and ways to achieve goals on State engagement.





# **Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

# Bycatch Advisory Council

## Progress Report

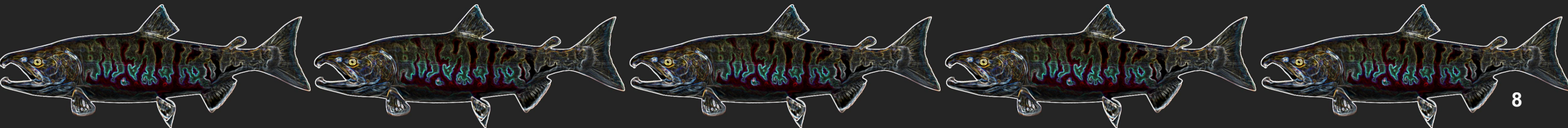
### MANAGEMENT

#### **Establish a scientific-based chum salmon cap in the Bering Sea.**

*Progress: Action on this item was initiated by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC), and review documents have been presented at several meetings.*

- Initial review of a full analysis was presented at the February 2025
- Meeting and final action is tentatively scheduled for December 2025

<https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/3071>





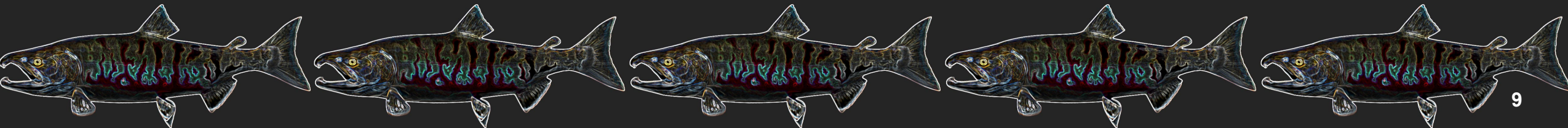
# Bycatch Advisory Council

## Chum Salmon Bycatch Research

### ABRT Recommendation

#### *A Top Research Goal*

*Research to improve our ability to determine the stock of origin of chum and Chinook salmon taken as bycatch.*



# Bycatch Advisory Council

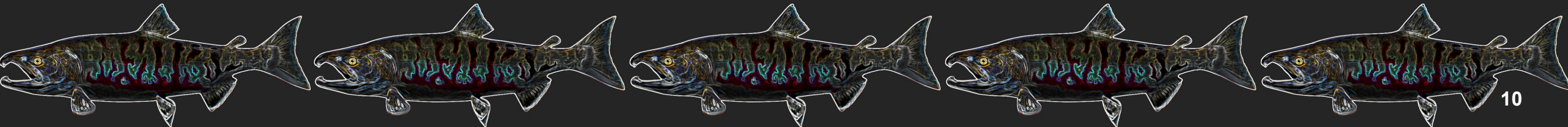
## Chum Salmon Bycatch Research

### 2024 State of Alaska Legislative Grant

#### Bristol Bay Science & Research Institute

- Tested in-season weekly chum salmon genetics in the Bering Sea
- Continued research is needed for real-time genetic information
- Pollock trawl chum salmon bycatch avoidance measures will be improved
- Funding for continued research in 2025 is uncertain

[https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/fishing/multimedia/bycatchtaskforce/bycatchcouncil/10524\\_bsri\\_chum\\_genetics\\_audio.mp4](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/fishing/multimedia/bycatchtaskforce/bycatchcouncil/10524_bsri_chum_genetics_audio.mp4)



# Bycatch Advisory Council

## Progress Report

### MANAGEMENT

**Consider a rationalization program for the Bering Sea 60' and greater pot cod vessels as a way to manage bycatch.**

*Progress: The NPFMC requested a discussion paper which will be reviewed at the June 2025 meeting.*

**Evaluate possible Bering Sea area closures to protect red king crab.**

*Progress: The NPFMC is encouraging all groundfish and crab fishery participants to develop agreements for dynamic area-management, information sharing for crab avoidance, and best practices.*

*A discussion paper was requested to inform options to incentivize pelagic trawl gear innovation. A review of that paper is scheduled for the June 2025 meeting.*



# Bycatch Advisory Council

## Progress Report

### MANAGEMENT

**Review open and closed areas in the Gulf of Alaska for trawl gear.**

*Progress: The NPFMC has initiated discussion papers to review possible protective action for Tanner crab in the Kodiak area. A problem statement and options for analysis were finalized at the April 2025 meeting.*

**Recommended for Gulf of Alaska pelagic trawl pollock vessels and tenders to have 100% electronic monitoring.**

*Progress: This action was approved by the NPFMC and was put into effect beginning in January 2025.*

**Address the lack of monitoring in the directed Tanner crab and state waters pot cod fisheries.**

*Progress: Legislation has not been approved to authorize the implementation of an electronic monitoring program for state managed fisheries.*

# Bycatch Advisory Council

## Bycatch Utilization Subcommittee

**ABRT Recommendation:**      *Take incremental measures through the regulatory process to improve bycatch utilization.*

**Action:**                      In 2023, the Bycatch Advisory Council formed a subcommittee to review the proposal and prepare a report.

**Members:**                Brian Gabriel (chair), Duncan Fields, Chelsae Radell

**Meetings:**                The subcommittee met four times, and a full report was presented to the BAC at the April 2024 meeting.

[https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/fishing/PDFs/bycatchtaskforce/041624\\_abac\\_report.pdf](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/fishing/PDFs/bycatchtaskforce/041624_abac_report.pdf)

# **Bycatch Advisory Council**

## **Bycatch Utilization Subcommittee**

### **Challenges identified for bycatch utilization of salmon, halibut and crab**

Public comment was predominately opposed to bycatch utilization.

- Minimize bycatch before moving forward with utilization
- Need to develop infrastructure and create individual accounting
- Processor capacity poses challenges
- Concerns about incentivizing bycatch

The report detailed challenges that would need to be addressed, including: regulatory, economic, logistical, and political issues.

[https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/fishing/PDFs/bycatchtaskforce/041624\\_abac\\_report.pdf](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/fishing/PDFs/bycatchtaskforce/041624_abac_report.pdf)



# **Bycatch Advisory Council**

## **Bycatch Utilization Subcommittee**

### **Recommendation**

*Based on the logistical challenges and concerns expressed by the public, the BAC made no recommendation that action be taken at this time to create regulations requiring retention and utilization of bycatch for the high value species of salmon, halibut, and crab.*

# **Bycatch Advisory Council**

## **2024 Management Priority Recommendations**

- Continue work at the NPFMC toward finding solutions for Gulf of Alaska Tanner crab protections
- Electronic monitoring (EM) is an important tool for state-managed fisheries. The BAC supports efforts to create and pass legislation providing for EM authority
- Consider development of Abundance Based Management for halibut in the Gulf of Alaska as has been adopted for the Bering Sea trawl fisheries
- Rationalization for the Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries is recommended in order to more fully manage and control bycatch of prohibited species through avoidance and individual accountability



# **Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force**

## **RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS**



# **Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force**

## **General Research Recommendations**

- Develop state bycatch research priorities, utilizing input from communities, Alaska Native tribes, industry, and the public, to share with funding entities that would help identify and acquire research funds
- Implement strategies to encourage and facilitate industry/agency cooperative research to reduce bycatch and associated mortality
- Create methods for collaboration with Alaska Native tribes, organizations and other research entities to better track proposed or funded bycatch research, along with developing opportunities for cooperative projects and combined reporting of findings

# **Bycatch Advisory Council**

## **2024 Research Priorities**

- Continue the emphasis and focus on salmon genetics and work toward real-time reporting of salmon origins for the Bering Sea pollock fishery
- Track bycatch research by various organizations and provide information to the public
- Find ways to use cultural/historical knowledge to inform bycatch discussions and regulatory action
- An annual virtual meeting focused on research with various presenters could help provide information to the public and other organizations



# **Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force**

## **STATE ENGAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

# **Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force**

## **State Engagement Recommendations**

- The State of Alaska should establish a process for providing bycatch-related information and resources for Alaskans in a format that is understandable and easily accessible
- State of Alaska federal fisheries staff should continue to offer the public an opportunity to provide input on NPFMC issues before each NPFMC meeting
- State should support legislative action to remove sunset of the Education Tax Credit Program



# **Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force**

## **State Engagement Recommendations**

- State of Alaska should work with other entities, including the State Department, to request that the State Department, through bilateral and multilateral diplomatic channels with Russia, request information on the bycatch of Chinook salmon and chum salmon taken in Russian domestic fisheries
- Using the Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force as a template, the state should establish a permanent bycatch advisory entity
- It is recommended that the State of Alaska work with the Alaska Board of Fisheries, stakeholders and a bycatch advisory entity to develop a State of Alaska Bycatch Policy

# **Bycatch Advisory Council**

## **State Engagement Priority**

At the March 3, 2025, BAC meeting, the members unanimously agreed that in order to more fully implement the three general research recommendations and the six state engagement recommendations, it is suggested that a dedicated ADF&G staff member position be created to be the primary contact for bycatch-related information, website development and outreach to the public.

# **Bycatch Advisory Council**

## **North Pacific Fishery Management Council**

### **Update on bycatch-related actions before the North Pacific Fishery Management Council**

- Chum salmon excluder experimental fisheries permit
- Chum salmon bycatch final action
- Pelagic trawl gear definition and innovation actions
- Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands pot cod rationalization discussion paper
- Maximum Retainable Amount adjustments final action
- Gulf of Alaska Tanner crab protections

A wide-angle photograph of a harbor filled with numerous fishing boats, mostly white with blue and red accents. The boats are docked at a wooden pier, and their reflections are clearly visible in the calm, blue water. In the background, a steep, forested hill rises under a clear blue sky. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic.

Questions?



# Alaska Bycatch Advisory Council

## Contact Information

**EMAIL NOTIFICATIONS:** If you would like to sign up to receive Bycatch Advisory Council meeting notifications, please contact the Department of Fish & Game staff by email at [dfg.dcf.bycatchreview@alaska.gov](mailto:dfg.dcf.bycatchreview@alaska.gov).

**WRITTEN COMMENTS:** Written comments will be accepted by the Bycatch Advisory Council by email at [dfg.dcf.bycatchreview@alaska.gov](mailto:dfg.dcf.bycatchreview@alaska.gov). Please include your full name and contact information. Comments will be provided to BAC members and publicly posted.