

# **The North Pacific Council and Recent Measures to Minimize Halibut and Salmon Bycatch**

A presentation for the Alaska House Fisheries Committee



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North Pacific Fishery Management Council**

# Guiding Law for U.S. Marine Fisheries: Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

Adopted in 1976, the Act established:

- The 3-200 nm exclusive economic zone [**200 mile limit**].
- **National Standards** and other requirements for conservation and management of resources.
- A system of 8 **Regional Councils** (composed of fishermen and government agency representatives) to develop fishery regulations for their specific area, subject to approval and implementation by the Federal government (i.e., National Marine Fisheries Service).

# Magnuson-Stevens Act

## National Standards

1. Prevent Overfishing
2. Use Best Scientific Information
3. Manage Stocks as Discrete Units
4. No Discrimination Between Residents of Different States
5. Promote Efficiency in Fishery Resource Utilization
6. Variations in Fisheries, Fish Stocks and Catches
7. Minimize Costs and Avoid Duplication
8. Include Fishing Communities
9. Minimize Bycatch and Bycatch Mortality
10. Promote Safety



# The North Pacific Fishery Management Council

**Structure**: 11 voting members (7 fishing representatives and 4 agency representatives): AK (6), WA (3), OR (1), and 1 from NMFS; and 4 non-voting members (USFWS, USCG, PSMFC, State Dept). Staff (13) prepares scientific environmental and economic impact analyses used for decision making.

**Function**: The Council develops plans and regulations for U.S. fisheries off Alaska, working with affected fishermen and public. Approval and implementation of these plans is effected through partnership with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS).

**Process**: Council meets 5 times per year, concurrent with its advisory groups: Advisory Panel (21 members from various constituencies), and Scientific and Statistical Committee. Numerous other committees provide advice. Public testimony is taken at all meetings, for all issues.



# Council membership

Sam Cotten,  
ADF&G



voting

Dan Hull,  
Anchorage, AK



voting

Bill Tweit,  
WDFW



voting

Dave Hanson,  
PSMFC



Roy Hyder,  
ODFW



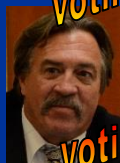
voting

Trent Hartill



voting

Simon Kinneen,  
Nome, AK



voting

Craig Cross,  
Seattle, WA



voting

Theresa Peterson,  
Kodiak, AK



voting

Andy Mezirow,  
Seward, AK

Aaron Martin  
US Fish and Wildlife

Buck Laukitis,  
Homer, AK



voting

Kenny Down,  
Seattle, WA



voting

RADM Michael McAllister,  
US Coast Guard



CAPT Stephan White

Jim Balsiger,  
NMFS AK Region



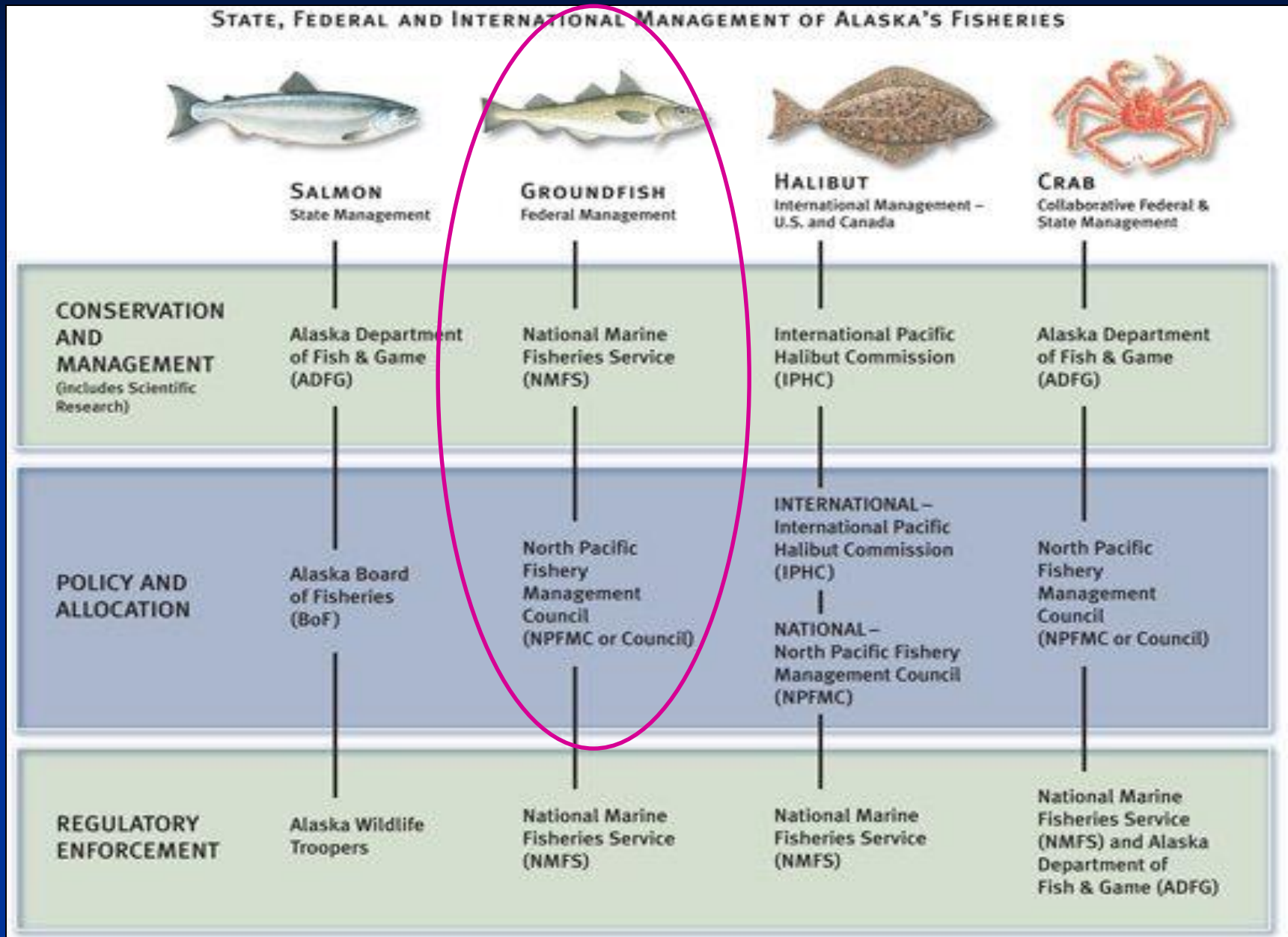
voting



Glenn Merrill

US Dept. State

# Who Manages What Fisheries off Alaska?





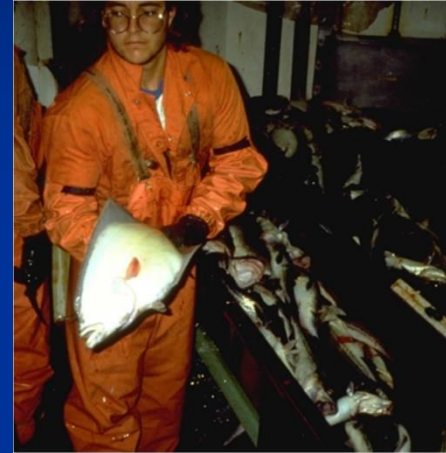
# Important Elements of the Ecosystem Based Approach to fisheries in the North Pacific

- Strong science and research base
- Adherence to scientific advice
- Stakeholder involvement in development of regulations
- Effective monitoring, accounting, and enforcement
- Comprehensive observer program
- Limits on fishing capacity
- Conservative and strict catch and bycatch limits
- Precautionary approach to address uncertainty
- Habitat protection
- Ecosystem considerations



# Comprehensive observer program for BSAI, GOA groundfish/halibut fisheries

- **Full coverage** (CPs, motherships, catch share programs)
  - Companies contract directly with observer providers to comply with their 100% (or more) observer coverage requirements (pay-as-you-go)
  - 2015: \$15 million, 380 observers covered ~40,000 observer days, on 170 vessels and in 7 processing facilities





# Comprehensive observer program for BSAI, GOA groundfish/halibut fisheries

- **Partial coverage** (catcher vessels in non-catch share programs)
  - Vessels pay an observer fee equivalent to 1.25% of the value of all landed groundfish and halibut.
  - Random deployment by trip, differential selection rates based on gear type
  - 2015: \$5.7 million budget, with \$3m of that from industry fee (rest Federal)
  - 95 observers covered ~5,300 observer days, deployed onto 300 vessels from 32 ports
  - Electronic monitoring alternative for longline and pot catcher vessels



# Bycatch Controls for Prohibited Species

- Salmon and halibut (and crab and herring) are bycatch species in the groundfish fisheries that are defined as “prohibited species”
  - By law, the fish must be avoided, and cannot be sold or retained (except for counting), although some salmon and halibut is donated to food banks
- The Council has implemented additional measures to reduce bycatch in the groundfish fisheries
  - Bycatch caps (also known as PSC limits, for “prohibited species catch”)
  - Time/area closures (can be problematic as fixed closures are not responsive to changing environmental conditions)
- The Council also encourages industry efforts to reduce bycatch through gear modifications and communication
  - e.g., salmon and halibut excluders for trawl nets

# BSAI Salmon Bycatch Measures

- Bering Sea pollock fishery
  - 60,000 Chinook salmon bycatch limit, with incentive plans to remain below 47,591 salmon (*implemented 2011*)
    - Apportioned by sector (catcher vessel, catcher processor, mothership, CDQ) and inshore cooperative
    - If sector exceeds its apportionment of 47,591 Chinook salmon 3 times in 7 year period, sector's limit will permanently reduce to lower cap



# Recent Modifications - April 2015

1. Combined chum and Chinook program
2. Changes to incentive plan requirements
  - More stringent in September/October
  - Required excluder usage
3. Lower bycatch caps in years of low Chinook abundance (to 45,000 cap/33,318 incentive)
4. Increased flexibility to avoid Chinook by allowing additional 5% of pollock quota to be harvested in winter season
  - Previously split 40:60 ➡ Now 45:55

# Additional provisions of BSAI Chinook Management Program

- 100% observer coverage
- Complete census of all salmon species by observers
- Increased genetic sampling for stock of origin (both BSAI and GOA)
- Annual reports to Council on genetic stock of origin results from fishery
- Annual reports to Council on the effectiveness of the incentive programs (and third party audit)

# GOA Salmon Bycatch Measures

- GOA pollock fishery
  - 25,000 Chinook salmon bycatch limit *(implemented 2012)*
    - Apportioned between the central and western regulatory area pollock fisheries
- GOA non-pollock fisheries
  - 7,500 Chinook salmon bycatch limit *(implemented 2014)*



# GOA Halibut PSC Limits

Council took action in June 2012 to reduce halibut PSC mortality limits in GOA fisheries.

- Trawl and CV Longline sector limits were decreased 15% over the course of three years (2014-2016); CP Longline sector limit were decreased 7% in one year.

Current limits are:

**266 mt for hook and line** (seasonally apportioned, with 9 mt set aside for demersal shelf rockfish fisheries)

**1,706 mt for trawl gear** (apportioned seasonally and among between deep-water and shallow-water species.)

# BSAI Halibut Bycatch Measures

- June 2015: Council reduced PSC limits for all groundfish sectors in BSAI

	Current PSC limit	PSC limit reduction	New PSC limit
<b>Amendment 80 cooperatives</b> (catcher processors targeting flatfish, rockfish, Atka mackerel, Pacific cod)	2,325 mt	-25%	1,745 mt
<b>BSAI trawl limited access fisheries</b> (pollock fishery, Pacific cod catcher vessel fishery)	875 mt	-15%	745 mt
<b>Longline fisheries</b> (mostly Pacific cod catcher processors)	833 mt	-15%	710 mt
<b>CDQ fisheries</b>	393 mt	-20%	315 mt
<b>TOTAL</b>	4,426 mt	-21%	3,515 mt

# Additional BSAI Halibut Items

- **Halibut Framework**: ways to improve coordination between IPHC and Council (ongoing)
- Exploration of **abundance-based halibut PSC limits** in BSAI (workgroup discussion paper in April 2017)
- Annual report by trawl flatfish fishery (Amendment 80) on **fleet requirements to achieve reduced halibut bycatch** (reviewed each December)
- Improved methodology for assessing halibut bycatch **discard mortality rates** (DMRs) in groundfish fisheries
- **Decksorting** of trawl caught halibut to reduce bycatch mortality – future progress to make incorporate this in regulations.



# PSC Bycatch Limits

	Gear Type	Overall Limit	2016 Catch	Apportionment
<b>Halibut</b>				
BSAI	trawl	2,805 mt	1,928	Am 80, TLAS, CDQ
	hook and line	710 mt	204	CV/CP, seasonal
GOA	trawl	1,706 mt	1,299	seasonal & species depth
	hook and line	257 mt	234	seasonal and DSR
<b>Chinook Salmon</b>				
BSAI	pollock trawl	47,591 fish	21,290	cooperatives
GOA	pollock trawl	25,000 fish	20,524	Western & Central GOA
	non-pollock trawl	7,500 fish	988	CVs, CPs, rockfish CVs
<b>Herring</b>				
BSAI	trawl	2,630 mt	1,485	
<b>Crab</b>				
King	bottom trawl	97,000 crab	39,858	Zone 1
Tanner	bottom trawl	2,900,000 crab	215,543	Zones 1 and 2
Opilio	bottom trawl	9,105,477 crab	175,793	COBLZ



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