



Fish News

April 10, 2009

North Pacific Fishery Management Council Takes Final Action on LLP Recency and Bering Sea Chinook Salmon Bycatch

By Sam Cotten, AEB Fisheries Consultant and NPFMC Member

LLP Recency:

There are 264 Western and 883 Central Gulf of Alaska (GOA) fixed gear licenses currently eligible to fish Pacific cod in federal waters. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) took action that will award approximately 122 Western and 295 Central GOA Pacific cod endorsements.

Pacific cod endorsements will be required to participate in the federal waters of the Gulf of Alaska. LLP holders must have landed at least 10 metric tons of cod in the period between 2002 and December of 2008 in order to qualify.

Twenty-one communities will be eligible to receive additional LLPs with cod endorsements if they are qualified under Amendment 66 (the CQE program). Sand Point will receive 10 and King Cove will receive 7 LLPs that can only be used by local residents. The CQE organization, Aleutia, may assign the LLPs to residents who have maintained a residence for at least 1 year. Aleutia may not profit from the LLPs.

Fishing with jig gear will no longer require an LLP, but will be limited to 5 jig machines with no more than 30 hooks per line.

Bering Sea Chinook Salmon Bycatch:

The Council placed a hard cap of 60,000 Chinook salmon that will require the Bering Sea Pollock Fleet to stop fishing when that cap is reached. A performance standard of 47,591 was also imposed. The performance standard cannot be exceeded three times in any seven-year period, otherwise the hard cap will be reduced to that standard (47,591).

The pollock industry has designed two incentive programs that should keep bycatch below 47,591, and hopefully in the mid to low 30s, or lower.

The issue of limiting bycatch is not new. There are already limits on halibut and other species, but this is a first for salmon.

Historical catch rates back to 1991 show a broad range. The issue attracted much attention and heat when it went from 34,000 in 2002; 45,000 in 2003; 51,000 in 2004; 67,000 in 2005; 82,000 in 2006 and 122,000 in 2007. The 2008 level was quite low, at just under 20,000.

The debate centered around two national standards that guide council action. The first was the call for optimum yield, which means we should allow for a full harvest of pollock within the limits established, based on conservation. The second standard calls for minimizing bycatch.

The pollock industry and folks from one of the CDQ groups, the Coastal Villages Region Fund, argued that with the incentives, the level of bycatch will come down to acceptable numbers while other folks are advocating for the Chinook (Yukon River and interior villages and the upper Kuskokwim. Norton Sound felt the number would still be unacceptably high.) The U.S. State Department reminded us of our obligations to Canada under the Yukon River Treaty and asked for a lower cap. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Department of the Interior) also requested a lower cap. The National Marine Fisheries Service (Department of Commerce) preferred the level that was finally approved.

For more information, visit this link:

[North Pacific Fishery Management Council](#)

If you have any questions about these issues, contact AEB Fisheries Consultant and NPFMC Member Sam Cotton at (907) 242-1197.

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