



Fish News

April 8, 2011

Federal Council Votes to Set Chinook Bycatch Cap in Pollock Fishery at 22,500

Council Scheduled to Take Final Action in June

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council took initial action last weekend (April 2, 2011) to set a chinook bycatch cap in the pollock fishery at 22,500 in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). The Council is scheduled to take final action in June.



The Council voted during initial review of the April meeting to set the Chinook bycatch cap in the pollock fishery at 22,500. Final action will be taken in June.

The Council fast-tracked this issue after Chinook bycatch exceeded an estimated 43,000 fish during

the 2010 Gulf pollock season. According to a Council report, the number of kings caught by trawlers last year in the Gulf was more than twice the previous eight-year average. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) uses a rate of chinook to pollock catch that they establish, based on observer data, and then applies that rate to the entire fishery.

Local fishermen believe the NMFS methodology resulted in overestimating the number of Chinook in the bycatch. The Council considered bycatch limits ranging from 15,000 to 30,000 kings.

Before taking a vote during initial review of the chinook salmon bycatch control measures, the Council listened to hours of testimony from fishermen, community advocates and seafood processors. Many representatives from the industry argued that the Council was moving too quickly on the issue.



Sand Point pollock fisherman Kiley Thompson (left) told the Council that local fishermen are trying to avoid salmon as much as possible, no matter what the cap is.

Alfieri. “So let’s at least get it right. We’re just asking you to slow this process down. That’s all we’re asking.”

AEB Natural Resources Director Beth Stewart testified that the local fleet understands that what happened last year in the D season, can’t happen again.

“These folks take this issue seriously,” she said. “But they really need some time to have more conversations between themselves, with the processors and with folks from ADF&G and NOAA, so they can put together a program that allows as much pollock fishing as possible with as little Chinook bycatch as possible.”

“Why is Alaska salmon bycatch on the fast track?” Sand Point pollock fisherman Taylor Lundgren asked during his testimony. “We understand the importance of it. But it took the Bering Sea pollock fishery five years to develop the same plan. Although it’s smaller, the GOA fishery is no less important to the stakeholders.”

“This is a huge impact to the state, whatever measure you take here,” said fisherman Mike



Pollock fisherman Mike Alfieri told Council members that their decision will have a huge impact to the state. “So let’s get it right. We’re asking you to slow this process down,” he said.

Stewart said for years, the problem has been that fishermen can't see small salmon that are brought onboard once the bag gets unzipped and goes down the hull.

"We're going to try and avoid salmon as much as possible, no matter what the cap is," said Sand Point pollock fisherman Kiley Thompson. "But we don't know what we're catching until they're caught."

"Requiring that fish ticket data (from the processors) is available in a timely manner would be a good tool," said Thompson. "We don't want to be shut down. There is definitely more awareness about this problem, and we are communicating with one another."



Pending final action by the Council, the Chinook bycatch cap is scheduled to go into effect in August 2012, during the pollock fishery C season.



Sand Point fisherman Taylor Lundgren told the Council that local fishermen are trying to put together an observer or camera program, but they need more time.

"We are trying to put together an observer or camera program, but we need a little more time before you close the door with a hard cap," said Lundgren.

Pending final action by the Council, the hard cap is scheduled to go into effect in August 2012, during the pollock fishery C season. Another component of the control measures would be expanded observer coverage on smaller fishing vessels (boats less than 60 feet would be required to carry observers 30 percent of the time). Current regulations waive the rule for observer coverage on boats less than 60 feet. The Council will review this portion of the proposal at its June meeting in Nome. The new observer program is tentatively scheduled to go into effect in January 2013.

N. Pacific Council Postpones Cod Jig Fishery Decision until December

The Council is taking more time to reach a decision on another issue: how to revise management of the Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod jig fishery. On Sunday (April 3, 2011), the Council voted to hold off on the decision until December.



**The Council delayed the
cod jig fishery decision
until December.**

After reviewing options to change the management of that fishery, the Council decided to analyze two alternatives. The proposed action would open federal waters to a directed fishery for P. cod with jig gear at the same time as the state fishery, within three miles of shore. As it stands now, jig operators would only have access to the federal waters during the parallel/federal waters A and B seasons. The proposal would most likely allow year-round access to federal waters.

The proposal would require a change in state management of the jig fishery. The Alaska Board of Fisheries will consider Gulf of Alaska cod issues at its October meeting. Advocates from the jig sector managed to convince the Council to delay final action on this issue until December so the state could weigh in and take any necessary action.

[Read more - Bristol Bay Times article](#)

ADF&G Releases 2011 Tanner Crab Catch Numbers for South AK Peninsula and Chignik Districts

Officials with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game have released the tanner crab harvest catch numbers from the January - February 2011 season (below). The guideline harvest levels are listed further below for comparison.

South Alaska Peninsula District - Total Tanner Crab Harvest Catch:

Western 1,886,199 pounds

Eastern 988,544 pounds

Total District 2,874,743 pounds

South Alaska Peninsula - Guideline Harvest Levels:

Western 1.4 million pounds

Eastern 900,000 pounds

Total District 2.3 million pounds

Chignik District - Total Tanner Crab Harvest Catch:

646,531 pounds

Chignik District - Guideline Harvest Levels:

600,000 pounds

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