



Fish News

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This Year's Chinook Salmon Bycatch Falls Far Below Hard Cap

By Sam Cotten, AEB Fisheries Consultant & NPFMC Member

So far this year, a total of 9,407 Chinook salmon have been taken as bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska trawl fisheries. The majority of the salmon (5,750) have been taken in the non-pollock fisheries. The breakdown is as follows: arrowtooth fishery: 2,574; rock fish: 954; cod: 561; rex sole: 1,357; other flats 122.

Only Chinook salmon caught in the pollock fishery count against the hard cap of 25,000 in the Gulf of Alaska.

The pollock fishery has taken 3,657 Chinook salmon with the following breakdown.

A season: Jan 20

area 610: 144

area 620: 1571

area 630: 94

area 640: 74

Prince William Sound: 120



The pollock fishery has taken 3,657 Chinook salmon so far this year.

B season: March 10

area 610: 318

area 620: 425

area 630: 94

area 640: 37

C season: Aug. 25

area 610: 89

area 620: 597* (could be a high number due to using preliminary data)

area 630: 18

The total quota for the 610 C season is 8,600 tons, of which about 3,000 tons remain uncaught. Beginning Oct. 1, the D season will allow another 8,600 tons. So far in the C season, there have been 13 - 15 vessels averaging about 500 - 600 tons per day. There has been at least one vessel with an observer aboard thereby avoiding having to extrapolate salmon numbers.

The North Pacific Council imposed a hard cap of 25,000 Chinook salmon **only on the pollock fishery** beginning with the C season in 2012. It had been anticipated that the cap would be 22,500. However, at the Nome meeting, the Council added 2,500 additional fish to the Central Gulf. The original split was Western Gulf: 6,684 and Central Gulf: 15,816. After the motion to increase the cap to 25,000, the split was Western Gulf: 6,684 and Central Gulf: 18,316.

Historically the Western Gulf fleet has stayed well under the cap of 6,684. Only once in the last ten years has this number been exceeded (2010).

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