

D-1(a) BSAI Salmon Bycatch Motion

The Council forwards the problem statement and alternatives and options as provided in the February 2008 D-1(a) staff discussion paper for analysis with the following revisions. Additions are underlined and deletions are shown in strikethrough.

Replace the current problem statement present in December analysis with the following:

An effective approach to salmon prohibited species bycatch reduction in the Bering Sea pollock trawl fishery is needed. Current information suggests these harvests include stocks from Asia, Alaska, Yukon, British Columbia, and lower-48 origin. Chinook salmon are a high-value species extremely important to Western Alaskan village commercial and subsistence fishermen and also provide remote trophy sport fishing opportunities. Other salmon (primarily made up of chum salmon) harvested as bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock trawl fishery also serve an important role in Alaska subsistence fisheries. However, in response to low salmon runs, the State of Alaska has been forced to close or greatly reduce some commercial, subsistence and sport fisheries in Western Alaska. Reasons for reductions in the number of Chinook salmon returning to spawn in Western Alaska rivers and the Canadian portion of the Yukon River drainage are uncertain, but recent increases Bering Sea bycatch may be a contributing factor.

Conservation concerns acknowledged by the Council during the development of the Salmon Savings Areas have not been resolved. Continually increasing Chinook salmon bycatch indicates the VRHS under the salmon bycatch intercooperative agreement approach is not yet sufficient on its own to stabilize, much less, reduce the total bycatch. Hard caps, area closures, and/or other measures may be needed to reduce salmon bycatch to the ~~maximum~~ extent practicable under National Standard 9 of the MSA. We recognize the MSA requires use of the best scientific information available. The Council intends to develop an adaptive management approach which incorporates new and better information as it becomes available. Salmon bycatch must be reduced to address the Council's concerns for those living in rural areas who depend on local fisheries for their sustenance and livelihood and to contribute towards efforts to reduce bycatch of Yukon River salmon under the U.S./Canada Yukon River Agreement obligations.

Option 1 (applies to Alternatives 2 and 4):

Modify the PSC accounting period to begin at the start of the B season in one calendar year and continue through the A season of the following calendar year (if this option is not selected, the accounting period is the calendar year).

Option 2 (applies to Alternatives 3 and 4 only):

Exempt those vessels participating in a VRHS system from area closures.

Alternative 1: Status Quo

Alternative 2: Hard Cap

Option 1: Hard cap based upon average historical bycatch (1997-2006)

Sub-

option Description	Chinook	Chum
i) 3 year average (2004-2006)	68,392	498,733
ii) 5 year average (2002-2006)	57,333	355,194
iii) 10 year average (1997-2006)	43,328	207,620
iv) 10 year average (1997-2006): drop lowest year	47,591	225,515
v) 10 year average (1997-2006): drop highest year	38,891	151,585
vi) 10% increase of historical average (3 years, 2004-2006)	75,231	548,607
vii) 20% increase of historical average (3 years, 2004-2006)	82,070	598,480
viii) 30% increase of historical average (3 years, 2004-2006)	88,909	648,353
ix) 10% increase of highest year (pre-2007)	91,583	783,133
x) 20% increase of highest year (pre-2007)	99,908	854,327
xi) 30% increase of highest year (pre-2007)	108,234	925,521

Option 2: Cap set relative to salmon returns

Option 3: Cap set based on Incidental Take Permit amount

This involves setting the Chinook (only) cap at 87,500 fish.

Option 4: Set cap ~~in accordance with International treaty considerations~~ relative to bycatch levels pre-accession to the Yukon River Agreement (1992-2001, based on average historical bycatch pre-2002)

Sub-

option	Description	Chinook	Chum
i)	3 year average (1999-2001)	16,795	55,542
ii)	5 year average (1997-2001)	29,323	60,046
iii)	10 year average (1992-2001)	32,482	77,943

Analysis of hard cap levels

For analysis, spread the range of estimated bycatch under Options 1, 3, and 4 and select four equally spaced numbers for analysis, approximately as follows:

	<u>Chinook</u>	<u>Chum</u>
<u>Analysis point 1</u>	<u>29,323</u>	<u>60,046</u>
<u>Analysis point 2</u>	<u>48,715</u>	<u>206,275</u>
<u>Analysis point 3</u>	<u>68,108</u>	<u>352,504</u>
<u>Analysis point 4</u>	<u>87,500</u>	<u>498,733</u>

Option 5: Divide the final cap by sectors based on

- i) 10% of the cap to the CDQ sector, and the remaining allocated as follows: 50% shore based CV fleet; 10% for the mothership fleet; and 40% for the offshore CP fleet
- ii) Historical average of percent bycatch by sector based on 3, 5, and 10 year averages (see Alternative 2, Option 1 for range of years)

Transfer suboptions:

- i) Transfer salmon bycatch among sectors (industry initiated)
- ii) NMFS will rollover unused salmon bycatch to other sectors and ~~inshore~~ other cooperatives still fishing

Option 6: Divide the sector cap by cooperative based upon the percent of total sector pollock catch their coop allocation represents. Except for catcher vessels that deliver unsorted cod end, participation in pollock fishery for vessels will require a minimum of 100% observer coverage or video monitoring to ensure no at-sea discards. When the Chinook a salmon coop cap is reached, the coop must stop fishing for pollock and may:

- i) Lease their remaining pollock to another coop (inter-cooperative transfer) within their sector for that year (or similar method to allow pollock harvest with individual coop accountability)
- ii) Purchase Transfer salmon bycatch from other inshore cooperatives

Rollover suboption: NMFS will rollover unused salmon bycatch to other sectors and inshore cooperatives still fishing

Option 7: Periodic adjustment for updated bycatch information

A time period may be specified after which caps may be re-specified with updated bycatch data.

Alternative 3: Fixed closures

Option 1: Timing options

- i. A season (Chinook only)
- ii. B season (Chinook and Chum)

Option 2: Area options

Option 3: Periodic adjustment for updated bycatch information

A period may be specified after which areas may be re-specified with updated bycatch data.

Alternative 4: Triggered closures

Option 1: Timing options

- i. A season
- ii. B season

Option 2: Area options

- i. Adjust area according to the number of salmon caught
- ii. Single area closure
- iii. Multiple area closures

Option 3: Periodic adjustment for updated bycatch information

A time period may be specified after which areas may be re-specified with updated bycatch data.

Option 4: Trigger Cap formulation

See Alternative 2 for description of cap formulation options.

Option 5: Divide the final cap by sectors based on:

- i) 10% of the cap to the CDQ sector, and the remaining allocated as follows: 50% shore based CV fleet; 10% for the mothership fleet; and 40% for the offshore CP fleet
- ii) Historical average of percent bycatch by sector based on 3, 5, and 10 year averages (see Alternative 2, Option 1 for range of years)

Transfer suboptions:

- i) Transfer salmon bycatch among sectors (industry initiated)
- ii) NMFS will rollover unused salmon bycatch to other sectors and inshore cooperatives still fishing

~~Option 6: Divide the sector cap by cooperative based upon the percent of total sector pollock catch their coop allocation represents. When the Chinook salmon coop cap is reached, the coop must stop fishing for pollock and may:~~

- i) ~~Lease their remaining Pollock to another coop (inter-cooperative transfer) within their sector for that year (or similar method to allow pollock harvest with individual coop accountability)~~
- ii) ~~Purchase salmon bycatch from other cooperatives.~~

Candidate closures for Alternatives 3 and 4

1) Closures areas defined by historic effort

- 1a) Fixed A season closure (Chinook)
- 1b) Sequential two-week A season closures (Chinook)
- 1c) Sequential two-week B season closures (Chinook)
- 1d) August B season closure (Chum)

2) Candidate Closure areas defined by rate-based criteria

- 2a) Rate-based criteria 0.10 Chinook/pollock (t)
- 2b) Rate-based criteria 0.125 Chinook/pollock (t)
- 2c) Rate-based criteria 0.15 Chinook/pollock (t)
- 2d) Rate-based criteria 0.175 Chinook/pollock (t)
- 2e) Rate-based criteria 0.20 Chinook/pollock (t)
- 2e) ~~Rate-based criteria 0.30 Chinook/pollock (t)~~
- 2d) ~~Rate-based criteria 0.40 Chinook/pollock (t)~~

3) Candidate Closure areas defined by percent bycatch reduction criteria

- 3a) 50% bycatch reduction closure
- 3b) 75% bycatch reduction closure

The Council request staff further develop a discussion paper to reduce BSAI salmon bycatch in the pollock trawl fishery through market mechanisms such as including, but not limited to, per salmon fees (likely administered by industry) or forced transfer of some increment of pollock for each salmon harvested. This discussion paper should include an overview of legal concerns, possible fee collection and use options, and management/administrative concerns.

The Council requests that industry present additional candidate closure areas at the April 2008 meeting.