

Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands

Bering Sea pollock

Sixteen catcher/processors (c/ps), 8 shore plants with 79 catcher vessels, and 3 motherships caught 89% or 1,164,389 mt of the 1,315,332 mt directed fishery allocations. The allocations remaining are: 42,000 mt for c/ps, 11,000 mt for motherships, and 97,900 mt for shoreside. NMFS moved 14,000 mt from the Bering Sea incidental catch account (ICA) to the directed fisheries and 9,800 mt of the Aleut Corporation's and 1,900 mt of Community Development Quota (CDQ) pollock from the Aleutian Islands to the Bering Sea directed fishing allowances. NMFS is working on another reallocation from the Aleut Corporation allocation (4,603 mt) and incidental catch allowance (700 mt) in the Aleutian Islands subarea to the Bering Sea subarea. The CDQ fishery has taken 93% of their 150,400 mt. The non-AFA trawl catcher processors caught 23,335 mt of pollock compared to 29,730 mt in 2005 and retained a higher percentage in 2005 (55%) compared to 2006 (53%). The chinook salmon savings area closed September 1 and the chum salmon savings area remains open.

Squid

Current total catch is 1,381 mt out of a 1,084 mt TAC, 1,970 mt ABC and 2,620 mt overfishing level. Catch is almost entirely in the pollock fishery. The TAC was exceeded when 547 mt was taken in the week of July 8 and retention was prohibited on July 17. If that rate had continued, the overfishing level would have been taken by July 24. The highest catch occurred in the area known as the "horse shoe", north of Akutan. The hotspot was defined by the following longitudes and latitudes:

54 48' N 166 W;

54 48' N 165 W;

54 13' N 166 W.

The industry coordinated a voluntary program for their vessels to stop fishing in the area. During the past few weeks, pollock catcher vessels have "tested the waters" in the above area and catch of pollock and squid has been low.

Trawl catcher/processor flatfish and Pacific cod

In 2006, 22 non-American Fisheries Act (AFA) c/ps, 6 AFA c/ps, and 4 catcher vessels (targeting yellowfin sole) fished using non-pelagic trawl gear. Yellowfin sole and rock sole/flathead sole/"other flatfish" closed August 8 and Pacific cod closed August 31 for non-pelagic trawl gear when the fleet reached the halibut mortality limit.

In 2006, the non-AFA trawl c/ps discarded 22% of the 268,000 mt of groundfish total catch. This compares to discards of 22% out of 286,000 mt, 33% out of 300,000 mt and 30% out of 268,000 mt of total groundfish catch in 2005, 2004, and 2003, respectively. In 2006 the highest discards are Alaska plaice (22% of total groundfish catch), pollock (19%), yellowfin sole (12%), rock sole (11%), other species (10%) and arrowtooth flounder (9%).

Atka mackerel

Eleven c/ps registered for the B season harvest limitation area (HLA) fisheries. The c/ps reached 84% of the 542 HLA limit and 70% mt of the 543 HLA limit. The Central Aleutian district closed September 23 and the Western Aleutian district is projected to close the first part of October. In the Aleutian Islands Atka mackerel target, northern rockfish catch decreased from 4,239 mt in 2003, to 3,896 mt in 2004, 3,299 mt in 2005 and so far to 2,447 mt in 2006. Retention rates of northern rockfish have increased to 3% in 2003, 6% in 2004, 19% in 2005, 22% in 2006.

Pacific cod

The State of Alaska released 1,588 mt of unused Pacific cod from the 5,820 mt guideline harvest level which increased the federal 2006 BSAI total allowable catch. NMFS is working on reallocating about 12,000 mt from trawl and 1,300 mt of jig gear to pot gear and hook-and-line catcher processors. A projected closure of mid to late October is expected at current catch rates.

Hook-and-line catcher/processors

The hook-and-line c/p fishery opened August 15. About 1,743 mt remains in the current 71,218 mt allocation. The B season weekly catch averages 4,300 mt from 39 c/ps. In 2005, 38 c/ps averaged 3,200 mt a week in August/September.

Pot catcher vessels

The fleet is expected to take the remaining 1,798 mt of the 13,354 mt annual allocation and finish after the October red king crab fishery. NMFS plans to reallocate about 500 mt from trawl gear to pot catcher vessels. In 2006, 43 catcher vessels participated. Sixty nine catcher vessels delivered about 14,000 mt in 2004 and 55 catcher vessels delivered about 13,800 mt in 2005.

Pot catcher/processors

Three c/ps caught 2,347 mt so far in 2006 out of the 2,938 mt allocation. NMFS plans to reallocate about 100 mt from trawl gear to pot c/ps. In 2005, c/ps caught 3,339 mt of Pacific cod.

Trawl catcher vessels and catcher/processors

About 80% of the annual trawl allocations of 41,251 mt for each sector were taken by 104 catcher vessels and 39 c/ps. Of their catch trawl gear took 72% in the A season, 18% in the B season, and 10% in the C season. In the combined trawl allocations about 14,224 mt of Pacific cod is remaining. The remaining trawl Atka mackerel and pollock fisheries need 1,400 mt for Pacific cod incidental catch. NMFS plans to reallocate an estimated 13,300 mt to the hook-and-line c/p and pot gear components as noted above.

Hook-and-line catcher vessels

Sixty-five percent of the 267 mt allocation has been taken. Seven of the 10 hook-and-line vessels that participated are less than 60 feet. The catch from vessels less than 60 feet is deducted from this category until it closes. Then the less than 60 feet vessels can continue to fish under the following fishery allocation.

Hook-and-line and pot catcher vessels less than 60 feet length overall

Seventeen vessels caught about 3,200 mt of Pacific cod. Hook-and-line gear caught 12% and pot gear caught 88%. Activity was relatively strong in March to early May and in mid June through July with minimal landings in August and late September. The annual allocation of 1,416 mt was increased from the jig gear allocation by 1,300 mt in March, 696 mt in May, and 296 mt in August.

Jig gear

Twelve catcher vessels caught 81 mt of Pacific cod. The fishery started in January, but most catch was in May and June when weekly catch rates averaged 9 mt. Nineteen vessels caught 116 mt in 2005, 16 vessels caught 231 mt in 2004, and 15 vessels caught 156 mt in 2003.

Greenland turbot

About 1,340 mt of the 1,607 mt TAC has been taken in the Bering Sea subarea. Twelve hook-and-line c/ps took 83% of the catch in the directed fishery mostly in July. Currently, some c/ps targeting Pacific cod are retaining turbot.

Total catch and optimum yield

In 2004 and 2005, 99% of the 2 million optimum yield (OY) was caught. So far in 2006, 89% of the OY has been taken.

Gulf of Alaska

Pacific cod

The B season fisheries for inshore and offshore Pacific cod in the Western and Central GOA opened September 1. In 2005, the B season fisheries remained open until December 31 for non-trawl gear. This is also possible for 2006 depending on trawl effort managing their halibut mortality and Pacific cod catch rates.

Western GOA

Inshore Pacific cod

The total catch to date is 12,459 mt leaving 5,668 mt. During the B season the average weekly catch is 52 mt and a total of 167 mt has been taken. The B season catch by gear is: 4 pot vessels taking 70%, 23 trawl vessels taking 10%, and 19 hook-and-line or jig vessels taking 20%.

Offshore Pacific cod

A total of 758 mt of the 2,014 mt annual TAC has been caught.

Central GOA

Inshore Pacific cod

The total catch to date is 18,201 mt leaving 7,364 mt. During the B season the average weekly catch is 380 mt and a total of 1,744 mt has been taken. The B season catch by gear is: 9 pot vessels taking 13%, 32 trawl vessels taking 37%, and 94 hook-and-line vessels taking 50%.

Offshore Pacific cod

The total catch for the year is 429 mt of a 2,840 mt TAC.

Rockfish

The GOA trawl rockfish season opened July 1 when the third season trawl halibut mortality apportionments became available.

Western GOA

During the July fishery, 9 c/ps took 4,000 mt of Pacific ocean perch and 523 mt of northern rockfish. Shoreside effort remains low. The Pacific ocean perch fishery closed July 11 and northern and pelagic shelf rockfish closed July 16.

Central GOA

In July 2006, 7,976 mt of Pacific ocean perch was taken compared to 7,859 mt in 2005 and 8,338 mt in 2004. The c/p sector catch increased in 2006 to 45% from 5 c/ps up from 42% in 2005 and 39% in 2004. The Pacific ocean perch fishery closed July 6 and northern and pelagic shelf rockfish closed July 21.

Pollock

The pollock C season opened August 25 in the Western and Central GOA. The D season opened October 1.

Area 610

After two, three day openings, NMFS opened the fishery at noon, September 6 and closed September 27. Twenty-five catcher vessels harvested 6,156 mt. During 2004 and 2005 D seasons, daily pollock catch rates average 950 mt. About 10,494 mt remains for the D season.

Area 620

The C season fishery had 3 separate openings. Nineteen catcher vessels participated taking 917 mt. Area 620 has 5,531 mt remaining of the annual 30,492 mt TAC. The length of the D season fishery depends on when the fleet starts fishing in 620 since initial D season effort focuses on the 630 fishery.

Area 630

The C season fishery closed September 27. Twenty nine catcher vessels harvested 6,986 mt. Area 630 has 6,083 mt remaining of the annual 18,448 mt TAC. Catch data from previous years indicates the October fishery can have highly accelerated rates compared to the September and August fisheries which averaged 1,000 mt /day in 2005.

Flatfish

So far in 2006, non-pelagic trawl gear took about 34,000 mt of flatfish. An increased from 26,700 mt in 2005 and 21,400 mt in 2004 and lower than 41,000 mt in 2003. The largest difference is from c/p arrowtooth flounder catch in 2006 (10,655 mt) compared to 2003 (22,352 mt). These reductions are due to reduced effort in August to maximize the amount of halibut mortality available for the fall Pacific cod opening. Also in 2004 and 2005, the flatfish fisheries did not occur in late September and October as the halibut mortality in the September 1 Pacific cod fishery closed trawl gear for the remainder of the year.

Halibut bycatch mortality

Trawl gear

Trawling for the shallow water and deep water species complexes opened July 1. The deep-water fishery closed GOA-wide September 5. Rockfish and rex sole were the primary targets in July. The shallow water complex closed at midnight September 1. The shallow water fisheries opened for 12 hours 3 separate times in September. During the September openings, the fleet took 31 mt of the 2,000 mt total trawl halibut mortality limit. More than 500mt of Halibut mortality is expected to be available October 1.

Hook-and-line gear

The hook-and-line fishery for groundfish remains open. The B season halibut mortality is 17 mt and 128 mt of halibut mortality remains for 2006.