

## **Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands**

### **Bering Sea pollock**

Sixteen catcher/processors (c/ps), 8 shore plants using 84 catcher vessels, and 3 motherships caught 93% or 1,215,807 mt of the 1,307,573 mt directed fishery allocations. The allocations remaining are: 18,000 mt for c/ps, 7,800 mt for motherships, and 65,700 mt for the shoreside fleet. In August, NMFS moved 7,000 mt from the incidental catch account (ICA) to the directed fisheries. In June, NMFS reallocated 14,500 mt of the Aleut Corporation's and ICA pollock and 1,900 mt of Community Development Quota (CDQ) pollock from the Aleutian Islands to the Bering Sea directed fishing allowances. The CDQ fishery has taken 98% of their 149,750 mt. The chinook salmon savings area closed September 1 and the chum salmon savings area remains open.

### **Trawl catcher/processor flatfish and Pacific cod**

In 2005, 22 non-American Fisheries Act (AFA) and 5 AFA c/ps fished using non-pelagic trawl gear. On August 18, except for Atka mackerel and CDQ, the BSAI closed for non-pelagic trawl gear when the fleet reached the flatfish and Pacific cod halibut mortality limits. "Other flatfish" and rock sole went to bycatch status in July due to reaching the TAC and Alaska plaice went to PSC status in May due to exceeding the TAC.

In 2005, the non-AFA trawl c/ps discarded 22% of the 280,000 mt of groundfish total catch. This compares to discards of 33% out of 300,000 mt and 31% out of 278,000 mt of total groundfish catch in 2004 and 2003, respectively. The total amount retained increased from 201,429 mt in 2004 to 217,745 mt in 2005. Monthly discard rates for the BSAI in all targets for the 22 non-AFA H&G trawl vessels are displayed in the attached graph.

### **Atka mackerel**

Ten c/ps registered for the B season harvest limitation area (HLA) fisheries. The c/ps reached 94% of the 542 HLA limit and 19% mt of the 543 HLA limit. The Central Aleutian District directed fishery closed September 22 and the Western Aleutian District is projected to close during the first week of October. Northern rockfish catch in the Aleutian Islands Atka mackerel target decreased from 4,235 mt in 2003, to 3,896 mt in 2004 and so far 2,535 mt in 2005. Retention rates have increased from 3% in 2003, to 6% in 2004, and 19% in 2005.

## Pacific cod

### Hook-and-line catcher/processors

The hook-and-line catcher/processor fishery opened August 15. About 13,400 mt remains of their current 77,344 mt Pacific cod allocation. The B season weekly catch averages 3,160 mt from 37 c/ps. In 2004, 38 c/ps participated during August/September and averaged 3,050 mt a week. NMFS plans to reallocate 17,064 mt from trawl gear and 1,611 mt from jig gear to hook-and-line c/ps. Another Pacific cod reallocation may occur in 2005 depending on the activity of other fisheries.

### Pot catcher vessels

If the fleet has a strong showing after the October red king crab fishery, they may take the remaining 2,396 mt of their 14,502 mt annual allocation. NMFS plans to reallocate 736 mt from trawl gear to pot catcher vessels. So far in 2005 a total of 56 catcher vessels targeting Pacific cod delivered about 12,100 mt. This compares to 2004 when 72 catcher vessels delivered about 14,000 mt of Pacific cod.

### Pot catcher/processors

Catcher/processors caught 2,400 mt of Pacific cod catch so far in 2005 out of the 3,190 mt allocation. NMFS plans to reallocate 162 mt from trawl gear to pot catcher/processors. In 2004, 3 c/ps caught 3,235 mt of Pacific cod.

### Trawl catcher vessels and catcher/processors

Both catcher vessels and c/ps took about 80% of their annual allocations of 46,779 mt each. Most of this catch occurred during January to April with the A season taking 99% and the B season 1%. About 64 catcher vessels participated in the directed fishery with only 4 of those vessels active during the B season. In the combined trawl allocations about 19,288 mt of Pacific cod was left. The remaining trawl Atka mackerel and pollock fisheries need 1,250 mt for incidental Pacific cod catch. NMFS plans to reallocate 17,962 mt to the catcher/processor hook-and-line and pot gear components as noted above.

### Hook-and-line catcher vessels

Seventy percent of the 290 mt quota 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 ft length overall

Seventeen vessels caught about 2,200 mt of Pacific cod. Thirty six percent of the catch was by hook-and-line gear and the remainder by pot gear. Activity was relatively strong in March to early May and in mid June through July with minimal landings through August and late September. The annual allocation of 1,416 mt was increased from the jig gear allocation in April with 1,150 mt, in May with 350 mt, and in August with 500 mt.

### Jig gear

Nineteen catcher vessels caught 116 mt of Pacific cod. The fishery started in January, but most catch occurred in May and June when weekly catch rates averaged 10 mt.

Deliveries from jig vessels stopped the end of July except for a small amount in September. In 2004, 16 vessels caught 231 mt and in 2003, 15 vessels caught 156 mt.

### **Greenland turbot**

A total of about 2,000 mt has been taken in the Bering Sea subarea of the 2,295 mt TAC. Seventy four percent was taken in the directed fishery by 8 hook-and-line c/ps mostly in July. Currently, some c/ps targeting Pacific cod are retaining turbot. The trawl fisheries account for the remaining catch.

### **Total catch and optimum yield**

In recent years the total catch of groundfish in the BSAI has increased. The attached graph shows the percentage of the 2,000,000 mt OY cap taken in 2003-2005.

The 2005 data includes projections for catch in October through December.

### **Gulf of Alaska**

#### **Skates**

Big skate total catch is 840 mt of which 54 mt was taken in the skate directed fishery by hook-and-line catcher vessels. Longnose skate total catch is 1,089 mt of which 141 mt was taken in the directed fishery by hook-and-line and trawl catcher vessels. For both big and longnose skate catch, 32% was taken by hook-and-line and 66% by non-pelagic trawl gear. The “other skates” category catch is 658 mt with no catch taken in a directed fishery. The “other skates” catch by gear is 53% by non-pelagic trawls and 46% by hook-and-line gear. The decreased effort in the 2004 and 2005 directed fisheries compared to 2003 may be attributed to lower price. Also increased retention of skates as incidental catch may be meeting the markets volume demand.

#### **Pacific cod**

The B season fisheries for inshore and offshore Pacific cod, in the Western and Central GOA, opened September 1 and they remain open for hook-and-line, pot and jig gear.

#### **Western GOA**

##### **Inshore Pacific cod**

The total catch to date is 11,023 mt leaving 2,915 mt. During the B season the average weekly catch is 215 mt and a total of 847 mt has been taken. The B season catch by gear type breaks out as: 13 pot vessels taking 92%, 21 trawl vessels taking 3%, and 11 hook-and-line or jig vessels taking 5%.

##### **Offshore Pacific cod**

A total of 430 mt of the 1,569 mt annual TAC has been caught. Currently, 3 hook-and-line c/ps are targeting Pacific cod.

### Central GOA

#### Inshore Pacific cod

Out of the 22,577 mt TAC 3,167 mt remains. The B season catch by gear type breaks out as: 27 pot vessels taking 30%, 34 vessels using non-pelagic trawl gear taking 53%, and 55 vessels using hook-and-line gear taking 17%.

#### Offshore Pacific cod

The total catch for the year is 361 mt of a 2,508 mt TAC. Currently, no vessels are participating in this fishery.

### **Rockfish**

The GOA trawl rockfish season opened July 5 when the third seasonal trawl halibut mortality apportionments became available.

### Western GOA

Eight c/ps took 2,271 mt of Pacific ocean perch and 509 mt of northern rockfish during the July fishery. Shoreside effort remains low. The Pacific ocean perch fishery closed July 16 and northern rockfish closed July 19.

### Central GOA

In July 2005, 8,021 mt of Pacific ocean perch was taken compared to 8,329 mt in 2004. Sector percentages are consistent between 2004 and 2005 with 42% from 7 c/ps and 58% from 25 catcher vessels (32 in 2004). The Pacific ocean perch fishery closed on July 14 and northern rockfish closed on August 30.

### **Pollock**

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

### Area 610

The C season fishery closed on September 3 after 9 days. Twenty-one vessels harvested 9,111 mt with an average daily catch rate of 1,100 mt. Both effort and catch rates were higher than the March fishery. During 2003 and 2004 D seasons, daily pollock catch rates average 1,300 mt. At this rate, the remaining TAC of 11,583 mt should last 9 days. The fishery may be shorter or longer depending on effort and weather conditions.

### Area 620

The C season fishery had 4 separate openings. Fourteen catcher vessels participated. Area 620 has 6,700 mt remaining of the annual TAC of 34,404 mt. 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 also had 4 separate openings. Twenty six catcher vessels participated. Area 630 has 6,986 mt remaining of the annual TAC of 18,718 mt. 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 a day in 2005.

### **Flatfish**

So far in 2005, non-pelagic trawl gear took about 25,800 mt of flatfish. Trawl gear closed September 4, so this represents most of the 2005 catch. The 2005 flatfish catch increased from 21,300 mt in 2004 and remains lower than 42,000 mt in 2003. The largest difference is from c/p arrowtooth flounder where catch in 2005 (16,549 mt) is less than half of 2003 (30,577 mt). These reductions are due to reduced effort in August to maximize the amount of halibut mortality available for the September 1 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 both the shallow water and deep water species complexes opened July 5. The deep-water fishery closed gulf-wide July 24. Rockfish and rex sole were the primary targets in July. The shallow water complex closed August 19. Both shallow and deep water fisheries opened September 1 to 4 and the fleet targeted Pacific cod and arrowtooth flounder. During the September Pacific cod opening, the fleet took 521 mt of the 2,000 mt total trawl halibut mortality limit. Eventually all trawling closed for the year due primarily to the extremely high halibut bycatch rates in the Pacific cod fishery.

#### Hook-and-line gear

The hook-and-line fishery for groundfish remains open. The B season weekly halibut mortality averages 15 mt. With 108 mt of halibut mortality remaining the fishery will remain open for about 7 weeks.