

Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands

Bering Sea Pollock

All three directed fisheries completed the A season by the end of March. The combined non-CDQ A season allocation was 514,122 mt. Of the 26,825 Chinook salmon limit, 26,309 animals were taken, leaving about 516. The 2005 A season Chinook catch in the pelagic trawl fishery is higher compared to 2004 (22,787 Chinook) but much lower than 2003 (32,103 Chinook). Based on the last few years, the entire limit will likely be taken by early August, which will close the Bering Sea Chinook salmon savings areas on September 1. The CDQ pollock fishery caught 59,074 mt of the 59,140 mt pollock allocation and took about 1,300 of the 2,177 CDQ Chinook salmon limit. The Pollock B season starts at noon, June 10.

The incidental catch of pollock through May 7 is 22,600 mt which is less than in 2004 (26,300 mt). The total groundfish catch in the non-pollock fisheries for January-April is about 236,000 mt for both 2004 and 2005, indicating an average incidental catch rate of pollock in those fisheries of about 10%. Roughly 40% of the pollock incidental catch occurs in the Pacific cod target and the remainder in the yellowfin sole, rock sole and flathead sole fisheries in descending order.

In the non-pollock fisheries, pollock retention rates (i.e. of the total incidental pollock caught, the proportion that was retained) are highest in the hook-and-line catcher/processor Pacific cod target (87%) with a total catch of 1,453 mt of pollock.

Within the flatfish targets total catch of pollock dropped (comparing Jan-May, 2004 vs 2005) by 14% from 23,448 mt to 20,143 mt, however retention rates increased from 54% in 2004 to 60% in 2005. Fewer pollock were caught but retention rates were higher.

Aleutian Islands Pollock

The Aleutian Island subarea directed pollock fishery allocation to the Aleut Corporation became effective on February 24, 2005. Two vessels using pelagic trawl gear caught about 200 mt. One vessel encountered high incidental catch of Pacific ocean perch. Thirty-six Chinook salmon were caught out of the 647 salmon limit. About 730 mt of pollock was taken incidentally primarily in the trawl catcher vessel and catcher/processor Pacific cod fisheries and to a lesser extent in the Atka mackerel fishery. NMFS is pursuing an action to reallocate the uncaught amounts of the non-CDQ and CDQ allocations from the Aleutian Islands subarea to the Bering Sea subarea.

Flatfish

Flatfish fisheries (arrowtooth flounder, rock sole, flathead sole, 'other flatfish' and yellowfin sole targets) have taken about 140,000 mt of groundfish through May 21, compared to about 144,429 mt through roughly the same time period in 2004. Of the

140,000 mt of groundfish caught, about 70% was taken in the yellowfin sole target, 23% in rock sole with arrowtooth flounder, flathead sole and other flatfish making up the remaining 5%. Yellowfin sole closed to directed fishing on May 19 when the initial TAC was reached. Retention was prohibited for Alaska plaice on May 9 and catch is currently over the initial TAC by 2,100 mt. Rock sole (4,300 mt remaining) and “other flatfish” (200 mt remaining) are close to reaching their initial TACs. Incidental catch of rock sole is expected to be high in the current trawl Pacific cod fishery.

The ‘rock sole/other flatfish/flathead sole’ fishery opens July 5 with the final release of halibut mortality. The primary target is expected to be flathead sole. Depending on the status of catch of groundfish at the end of July the agency is contemplating a reserve release apportionment that may re-open the yellowfin sole fishery for a brief time in August.

Atka mackerel

Preparations are being made for the second harvest limitation area (HLA) ‘platoon’ fisheries in 542 and 543. The registration deadline is July 31 for the September 1 opening. In 2004, 9 catcher/processors participated in the B season.

Six catcher/processors participated in the 2005 A season HLA fisheries in 542 and 543. The A season fishery took about 70% of the available TACs which totaled 29,103 mt. Eighty percent of the catch came from Area 542.

PSC Management

The rock sole/flathead sole/other flatfish fishery exceeded its first seasonal allocation of halibut mortality by 78 mt and closed March 1. The second season started April 1 with 86 mt of halibut mortality available and closed April 22 leaving 135 mt of halibut mortality for the third season starting at noon, July 5.

Zone 1 closed for the year on March 16 to yellowfin sole fishing due to incidental catch of red king crab. The yellowfin sole fishery had reasonable bycatch rates of halibut. The fishery has taken 416 mt of halibut mortality out of a cumulative third season limit of 509 mt. The fourth season allocation adds 380 mt of halibut mortality on July 5.

The catch rates of *C. opilio* crab inside the *C. opilio* Bycatch Limit Zone (COBLZ) increased in late April to 150,000 crab/day. The fleet avoided a closure by moving outside of the COBLZ where the opilio bycatch decreased significantly. Currently NMFS estimates 90% of the 3,101,095 crab COBLZ limit has been taken. Over the last three years an average of about 30% of the limit has been taken with the previous peak of 50% in 2004.

Pacific cod

BSAI Hook-and-Line Catcher/Processor

A 5% smaller Pacific cod A season TAC, stronger participation, good weather and higher catch rates than previous years combined to create a very fast paced fishery. Comparing

2004 and 2005, the total number of vessels fishing increased from 37 to 39. In 2004, the average number of catcher/processors active during any given week was 33. In 2005 the average was 38. The overall weekly CPUE increased from roughly 140 mt/vessel to 160 mt/vessel. In 2005, a total of 46,093 mt was taken of the 46,406 mt A season allocation. The fishery closed on February 22, 2005 compared to March 13 in 2004.

The B season opens August 15 when an additional 455 mt of halibut mortality and 30,938 mt of Pacific cod becomes available. In 2004 the total rollover from jig, trawl and pot gear to the hook-and-line catcher processors was just under 17,000 mt. The 2005 rollover may be less given that the trawl yellowfin sole fishery has closed earlier this year and that the Pacific cod TAC is lower. Initial 'serious' estimates of un-harvested gear allocations and rollover amounts will be made in September. The fishery is expected to stay open into late November/early December.

Eleven vessels fishing under the CDQ program took about 7,091 mt through May 25, fishing ended by early April.

BSAI Hook-and-Line/Pot Catcher Vessels < 60' and Hook-and-line Catcher Vessels

The A season hook-and-line catcher vessel allocation is 174 mt. The fishery closed on March 10 with the entire allocation taken by vessels < 60'.

The 2005 allocation of Pacific cod to vessels < 60' using hook-and-line or pot gear was 1,354 mt and an additional 1,500 mt was transferred from the jig allocation. During the A season, hook-and-line vessels (12) harvested 800 mt and pot vessels (9) harvested 2,101 mt. Compared to 2004 the effort was lower by 2 pot vessels and higher by 2 hook-and-line vessels in 2005. Catch was accelerated in 2005 vs. 2004. The 2005 fishery closed on April 19 and in 2004 it remained open all year.

Jig Gear

Nine vessels have caught 25 mt of Pacific cod so far this year. In 2004, 16 vessels caught 230 mt of Pacific cod and in 2003, 15 vessels caught 156 mt.

Trawl catcher vessels

The directed fishery under the B season allocation is open with about 1,400 mt remaining. The A season fishery initially closed on March 13 and as enough quota remained reopened on March 29 just prior to the initiation of the B season on April 1.

On June 10, the final seasonal allocation of 8,956 mt will be released. The total catch to date is 34,425 mt of an annual allocation of 44,779 mt. Since April 14, no catcher vessels have participated in this fishery.

Trawl Catcher/Processors

The directed fishery under the B season allocation is open with about 10,500 mt remaining until the final allocation on June 10 of 8,956 mt. Since the closure of the A season on March 13, most of the Pacific cod has been taken in the yellowfin sole fishery. With the closure of the yellowfin sole on May 19, the portion of the fleet that does not

stop operations during late May and June in advance of the July 5 fisheries is expected to target Pacific cod. A total of 25,844 mt of Pacific cod have been taken of the 44,779 mt annual allocation.

Greenland turbot and arrowtooth flounder

Three hook-and-line catcher/processors are currently participating in the Greenland turbot fishery, which opened on May 1. In 2004, seventy percent of the BSAI catch (of about 2,200 mt) was taken by hook-and-line vessels, 30% by non-pelagic trawl gear (primarily incidentally in flatfish targets) with trace amounts by pelagic trawl and pot gear. Total catch so far this year is 180 mt, 80% of which has been taken primarily in the directed fishery by hook-and-line catcher/processors. Effort by hook-and-line catcher/processors is expected to increase in July prior to the August hook-and-line Pacific cod fishery. Catch incidental to the trawl flathead sole fishery in July is also expected increase take of Greenland turbot.

About 3,800 mt of arrowtooth flounder has been taken in 2005 compared to about 4,800 mt through May of 2004. Eighty five percent of the catch in 2005 (~3,300 mt) has been taken by non-pelagic trawl gear. Of that amount about half has been retained which is nearly double the retention rate for non-pelagic trawl gear in 2004. Hook-and-line catcher/processors have taken about 5% of the arrowtooth catch in 2004 and 2005, (roughly 225 mt) the retention rate for this sector has likewise increased from 23% to 36%.

Gulf of Alaska

Skates

As of May 25, 1,708 mt of skates were caught in the GOA (55% retained). Longnose skate made up 42% (710 mt) of the catch, 74% were retained. Big skate made up 32% (546 mt) of the catch, 66% were retained. 'Other' skates made up 26% (451 mt) of the catch, 26% were retained. Seventy percent of all skates were from statistical area 630. Most of the skates were caught in the non-pelagic trawl arrowtooth target (40%) and hook-and-line Pacific cod target (20%). Only 54 mt of big and 107 mt of longnose skates were caught in the directed hook-and-line skate target.

Western GOA Pacific cod

The Western GOA Pacific cod A season inshore component closed February 24 (same date as 2004). The catch (10,259 mt) has exceeded the A season TAC (8,471 mt) by 1,788 mt. Catch rates were 5.5 times higher during the last week of the fishery than the previous week (driven by trawl catcher vessels) and were not anticipated by inseason management. As a proportion of total A season catch, trawl catcher vessel catch increased by 26% from 15% in 2004 to 42% in 2005, catcher vessel pot gear decreased from 65% to 50% and hook-and-line catcher/processors from 17% to 3%.

Central GOA Pacific cod

The Central GOA Pacific cod A season inshore component closed January 26 (January 31 in 2004). The A season TAC is 13,547 mt and the directed fishery caught 11,700 mt. To date, 740 mt of the A season allocation was taken as incidental catch primarily in trawl fisheries. The hook-and-line catcher vessel proportion of catch dropped from 31% in 2004 to 23% in 2005, non-pelagic trawl catcher vessel proportion dropped from 42% to 36% and pot catcher vessel catch increased from 25% to 38%.

GOA Pollock

The A season in statistical area 610 was marked by very high catch rates in a 3 day fishery opening on January 20. NMFS expected a catch of 5,035 mt, but the fishery took more than 7,200 mt. The B season TAC was reduced by the A season overage to 2,900 mt. The fishery opened on March 10 for 2 days based on expected effort and historic catch rates. It took 2,200 mt which leaves about 610 mt of the combined A and B season TACs. The C season will open with about 10,700 mt.

Fishing in the A season in statistical area 620 and 630 was delayed as the trawl fleet initially fished for Pacific cod.

Once fishing got started in statistical area 620, 12,872 mt were taken by March 2 against the TAC of 11,692 mt. This overage is about a day of fishing. The B season fishery opened on March 10 and closed March 20 taking 13,629 mt against the TAC of 13,820 mt. Combined with other incidental catch a total overage of 1,251 mt for the A & B season leaves about 3,200 mt for the C season fishery in August.

The A season fishery in statistical area 630 was active from February 6 through 14. About 4,677 mt were taken against the TAC of 4,148 mt leaving an overage of 529 mt. The bigger surprise occurred in the B season fishery when a 12 hour opening took nearly 3,862 mt against a B season TAC, adjusted for the A season fishery overage, of about 1,500 mt. The combined A and B season overage is 2,370 mt. The C season will open with about 3,900 mt.

The C season fishery for pollock in statistical areas 610, 620 and 630 opens August 25.

Statistical area 640, West Yakutat, has an annual TAC of 1,688 mt. A 3 day fishery from March 24 through 26, involving 15 vessels, took 1,876 mt. Statistical area 650 has a 6,520 mt TAC of which none is harvested.

Flatfish

About 14,000 mt (13,300 mt in 2004 and 20,000 mt in 2003) of flatfish have been taken through May. Catcher/processors caught 42% of the flatfish with arrowtooth flounder being the majority of their catch followed by rex sole and flathead sole. Shore delivering catcher vessels caught 58% of the flatfish, the majority of which was arrowtooth flounder followed by flathead sole and shallow water flatfish (predominately rock sole).

GOA wide, arrowtooth flounder retention has increased from 44% in 2004 to 66% in 2005. Within the catcher/processor component retention has increased from 16% in 2004

to 38% in 2005. Within the catcher vessel component retention has increased from 64% in 2004 to 82% in 2005. In 2004 a total of about 15,000 mt of arrowtooth flounder were caught. Through May of 2005 catch is estimated at 11,200 mt.

In the Western GOA about 30% of the rex sole and flathead sole TACs have been taken with about 1,200 mt and 1,500 mt remaining, respectively. Seventy percent (about 6,000 mt) remains in the arrowtooth flounder TAC.

In the Central GOA about 6,300 mt of rex sole, 3,700 mt of flathead sole, and 12,000 mt of shallow water flatfish remain. The primary target within the shallow water flatfish species group is rock sole. Fifteen thousand eight hundred metric tons of arrowtooth flounder (63% of TAC) remain.

Deep Water Complex Trawl Fishery

The trawl deep water complex fishery closed for the second season on May 3. The 400 mt halibut mortality allocation from the first and second seasons was exceeded by about 15 mt. The arrowtooth flounder target accounted for 86% (63% catcher vessel) of the halibut mortality and rex sole target accounted for 14%. An additional 400 mt of halibut mortality becomes available on July 5.

Shallow Water Complex Trawl Fishery

The trawl shallow water complex fishery has been open all year. About 271 mt of halibut mortality remains out of the combined 550 mt first and second seasonal allocations. Pacific cod accounted for 55%, shallow water flatfish accounted for 31%, and flathead sole (all catcher/processor) accounted for 14% of the halibut mortality. Catcher/processors accounted for 15% and catcher vessels accounted for 83% of the halibut mortality, driven by the inshore Pacific cod fisheries in the Western and Central Districts. An additional 200 mt of halibut mortality becomes available on July 5.