



1976
—
2026

NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

Angel Drobnica, Chair | Diana Evans, Executive Director
1007 W. 3rd Avenue, Suite 400, Anchorage, AK 99501
Phone 907-271-2809 | www.npfmc.org

C2 Bering Sea Chum Salmon Bycatch Management – Final Action

February 2026

Action Memo

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Council Staff: | Dr. Kate Haapala, Sarah Marrinan |
| AFSC Staff: | Dr. Patrick Barry |
| NMFS Staff: | Doug Shaftel, Gretchen Harrington, Doug Duncan, Josh Keaton, Krista Milani, Dr. Mason Smith, and Dr. Molly Zaleski |
| Other Contributors: | Karla Bush (ADF&G), Terese Vincente (KRITFC), and Krystal Lapp (TCC) |
| Action Required: | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Review the Draft EIS analysis, the NMFS comment summary report, NMFS Tribal Consultation and Engagement report and the Council outreach report2. Select a preferred alternative and make a final recommendation |

BACKGROUND

At this meeting, the Council may provide a final recommendation on proposed changes to Federal regulations and the Bering Sea/Aleutian Island Groundfish FMP to reduce chum salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery, particularly Western Alaska chum salmon bycatch. The Council will review the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), in which five alternatives are analyzed. The range of management alternatives being considered includes limits or “caps” on the number of chum salmon that may be caught in the pollock fishery and closure of all or part of the Bering Sea to pollock fishing once a cap is met as well as changes to the pollock industry’s incentive plan agreements (IPAs). These actions are being considered in light of the recent and ongoing declines in WAK chum salmon abundance.

AVAILABLE INFORMATION

A DEIS provides an assessment of the environmental impacts of an action and its reasonable alternatives, as well as the economic benefits and costs of the action alternatives and their distribution. This DEIS addresses the statutory requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), the National Environmental Policy Act, and Presidential Executive Order 12866. Additional information has also been provided under the C2 agenda item wherein Figures 3-35 and 3-36 in the DEIS have been reformatted, and the data for these two figures are provided in Tables A-1 and A-2 of that document. The analysts have provided this information for the sole purpose of increasing readability and transparency.

As noted above, five different alternatives are being considered under this action. Chapter 2 of the DEIS, as well as the Executive Summary, contain a detailed description of the alternatives. However, given the complexity of the alternatives, a description of the alternatives *in brief* is available under the C2 agenda item. Providing this streamlined content as a standalone document is intended to aid the Council in its

consideration of these alternatives and increase the accessibility of this information for members of the public.

NMFS is the lead Federal agency responsible for this DEIS. A public comment period was open for the DEIS from September 12, 2025 – January 5, 2026. A direct link to the docket containing all public comments submitted during that period is available under the C2 agenda item, as is a summary comment report prepared by NMFS. The report provides a summary of comments organized under seven primary topics. The agency will prepare a formal response to public comments on the DEIS to publish with the Final EIS, should the Council choose to recommend a preferred alternative.

Related, NMFS is responsible for undertaking Tribal Consultations under Executive Order 13175. Under this agenda item, NMFS staff will provide a summary of recent Tribal Consultations and engagement sessions on this action in conjunction with the agency's presentation on the comment summary report. Note that Sections 1.3.6 and 1.3.7 of the DEIS contain additional information on NMFS' Tribal Consultations and engagement sessions for this action.

Finally, Council staff have prepared an outreach and engagement report that is available to the Council under this agenda item. The Council will not receive an oral presentation on this report, but staff are available for questions. As a reminder, at its October 2024 meeting, the Council reiterated its interest in receiving invitations to engage with communities, Alaska Native Organizations, and Tribal entities to ensure the venue and timing of engagement activities are appropriate for the community. The Council also indicated its interest in committing Council members' and staff time to participating in several Regional Subsistence Advisory Council (RAC) meetings in 2025. Outreach and engagement activities are not official meetings of the Council. No more than five Council members (i.e., a non-quorum) are allowed to participate in any single event. This report was prepared to document the outreach process and the information shared with Council members and staff at these events.

Selecting a Preferred Alternative

At this meeting, the Council may provide a final recommendation and select a preferred alternative. If the Council wishes to do so, there are several points for consideration that need to be addressed. Directly below is Table 1-11 from the DEIS which captures these decision points, each of which is written to convey what decisions need to be made to move that alternative forward as part of a preferred alternative.

Table 1-1 Points for consideration to develop a preferred alternative

| Alternative/Option | Points for Consideration |
|--|--|
| Alternative 1 No Action | There are no additional points for consideration related to Alternative 1. Selecting Alternative 1 would retain the current regulations for chum salmon bycatch management in the Bering Sea. |
| Alternative 2 Overall Chum Salmon PSC Limit | <p>Does the Council want to include Alternative 2 in a PA?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, Alternative 3 cannot be selected. • If yes, an amount must be selected for the overall chum salmon PSC limit, set at an amount between 100,000 and 550,000 chum salmon. • If yes, an apportionment approach must be selected based on one of the four options under consideration. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, does the Council want to include a CDQ Reserve Pool? |
| Alternative 3 Overall Chum Salmon PSC Limit with Abundance Indices | <p>Does the Council want to include Alternative 3 in a PA?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, Alternative 2 and Alternative 5, Option 3 cannot be selected. • If yes, the Council must select one index for WAK chum salmon abundance, either Option 1 (Three-area Index) or Option 2 (Yukon Area Index). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, the Council must select a value to use to set index thresholds, either Suboption 1 (25th percentile) or Suboption 2 (50th percentile). • If yes, an amount must be selected for the overall chum salmon PSC limit, set at an amount between 100,000 and 550,000 chum salmon. • If yes, an apportionment approach must be selected based on one of the four options under consideration. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, does the Council want to include a CDQ Reserve Pool? |
| Alternative 4 Modifications to the IPAs | <p>Does the Council want to include Alternative 4 in a PA?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, the Council may wish to consider whether or not to include all six provisions or individually select some provisions and not others. No provisions are mutually exclusive. |
| Alternative 5 Inseason Corridor Cap | <p>Does the Council want to include Alternative 5 in a PA?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, the Council must select one inseason corridor option to apply, either Option 1, Suboption 1, or Option 2. The three inseason corridor closure areas being considered are mutually exclusive and only one could be included in a final recommendation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, an amount must be selected for the corridor chum salmon PSC limit, set at an amount between 50,000 and 350,000 chum salmon. • If yes, an apportionment approach must be selected based on one of the four options under consideration. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, does the Council want to include a CDQ Reserve Pool? • If yes, does the Council wish to include Option 3 (abundance-based threshold)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If yes, Alternative 3 cannot be selected. • If yes, the Council must select a value to use to set index thresholds, either Suboption 1 (75th percentile) or Suboption 2 (90th percentile). • If yes, does the Council want to include Option 4 to adjust the Winter HSA start date for the pollock fishery? |