

E Staff Tasking

Council motion – Herring PSC

October 8, 2025

The Council adopts the following Purpose and Need statement and alternatives for analysis.

Purpose and Need:

Pacific herring bycatch in the BSAI groundfish trawl fisheries is managed by time and fixed area closures (Herring Savings Areas) based on herring migration data from the 1980s. Herring Savings Area closures are triggered if the abundance-based prohibited species catch (PSC) limit is reached. In recent years, pollock fishery participants have encountered herring at different rates, times, and locations than historically occurred and these changes have constrained the fleet's ability to meet requirements to minimize salmon bycatch in the pollock fisheries.

Based on changing conditions in the Bering Sea, the Council is considering a minor revision to the herring PSC limit, which is currently 1% of the estimated mature herring biomass. The revision is intended to maintain herring conservation objectives and its contributions to the pelagic forage fish complex while not adversely affecting subsistence and commercial herring fishing opportunities, and to provide the pollock fleet with flexibility to adapt to fishery conditions and ensure that salmon bycatch avoidance efforts are effective. The Council does not intend to modify the fixed closures (Herring Savings Areas) at this time.

Alternative 1: Status Quo

Alternative 2: Set the Bering Sea herring PSC limit at:

Option 1: 2%

Option 2: 3%

of the estimated mature biomass of Pacific herring in the eastern Bering Sea.