Bering Sea Pollock Industry Report on Dynamic Spatial Closure Measures for 2026 A Season

NPFMC MEETING – DECEMBER 2025 – B9

SUSIE ZAGORSKI - AFA CV IC MANAGER AND INSHORE IPA REPRESENTATIVE

JAMES MIZE – MOTHERSHIP IPA REPRESENTATIVE

CAITLIN YEAGER – AT SEA PROCESSORS ASSOCIATION

AUSTIN ESTABROOKS – AT SEA PROCESSORS ASSOCIATION & CP IPA REPRESENTATIVE

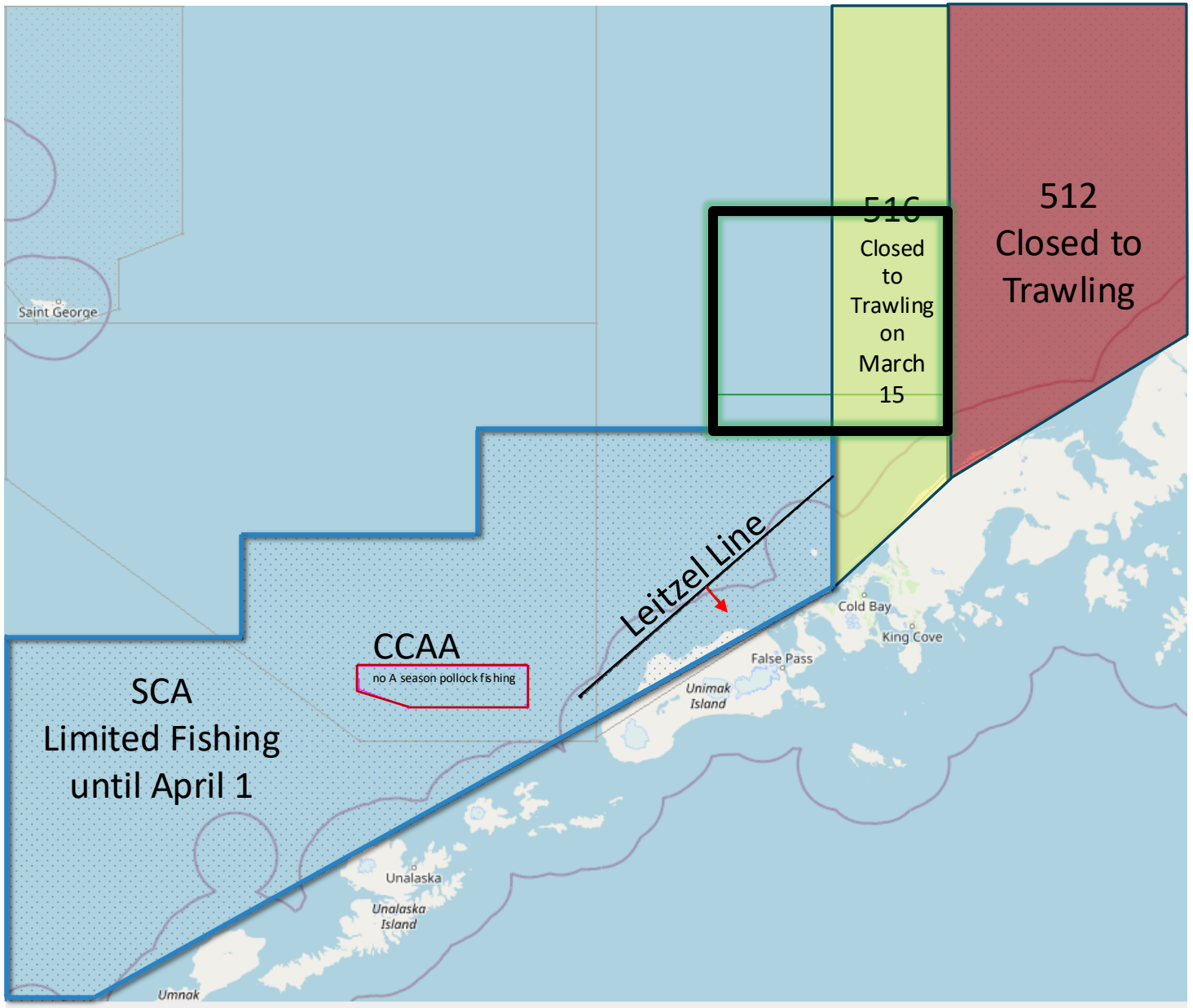
Council's Request from June 2025

"2026 Measures for Dynamic Spatial Closures.

The Council requests the Bering Sea pollock industry to develop dynamic spatial closures for the 2026 A season to protect Bristol Bay red king crab based on the new winter pot surveys and tagging data, and other recent data sources. Salmon bycatch should continue to be the highest priority for avoidance; thus, the measures should include mechanisms to consider salmon bycatch (e.g., rate-based exclusion) that would override identified closures."

Agenda

- Current Regulations in A season
- CV’s Supporting Data and Information
- CV’s Dynamic Closure
- CP’s Supporting Data and Information
- CP’s Dynamic Closure
- Questions



Current Regulatory Measures in A Season

A Season Start – Jan 20

NMFS Area 512 – no trawling

NMFS Area 516 – closes to trawling March 15th

Leitzel Line – No trawling east

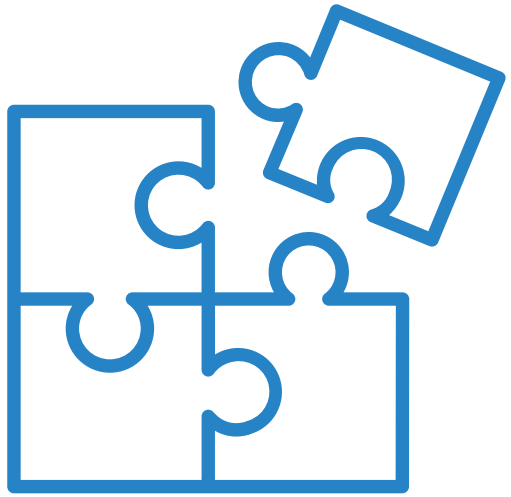
SCA – Limited fishing until April 1 (inside/outside fishing)

Chinook Conservation Area Agreement CCAA – No IPA member fishing during A season

Steller Sea Lion Rookeries

Bycatch Avoidance Measures

Keep In Mind



- Fish move
- Crab move
- Different fishing seasons
- Interannual variability
- Surveys at different times

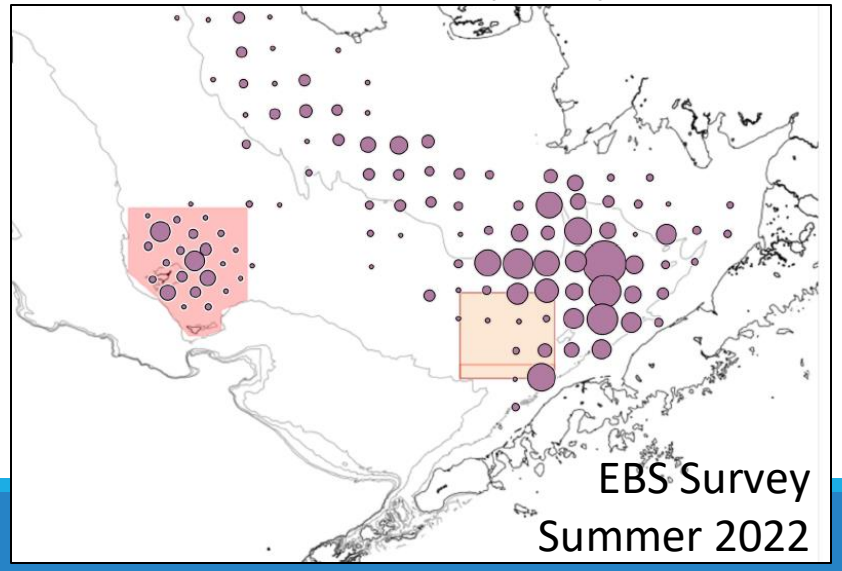
Catcher Vessel Fleets: Dynamic Spatial Closure A Season 2026

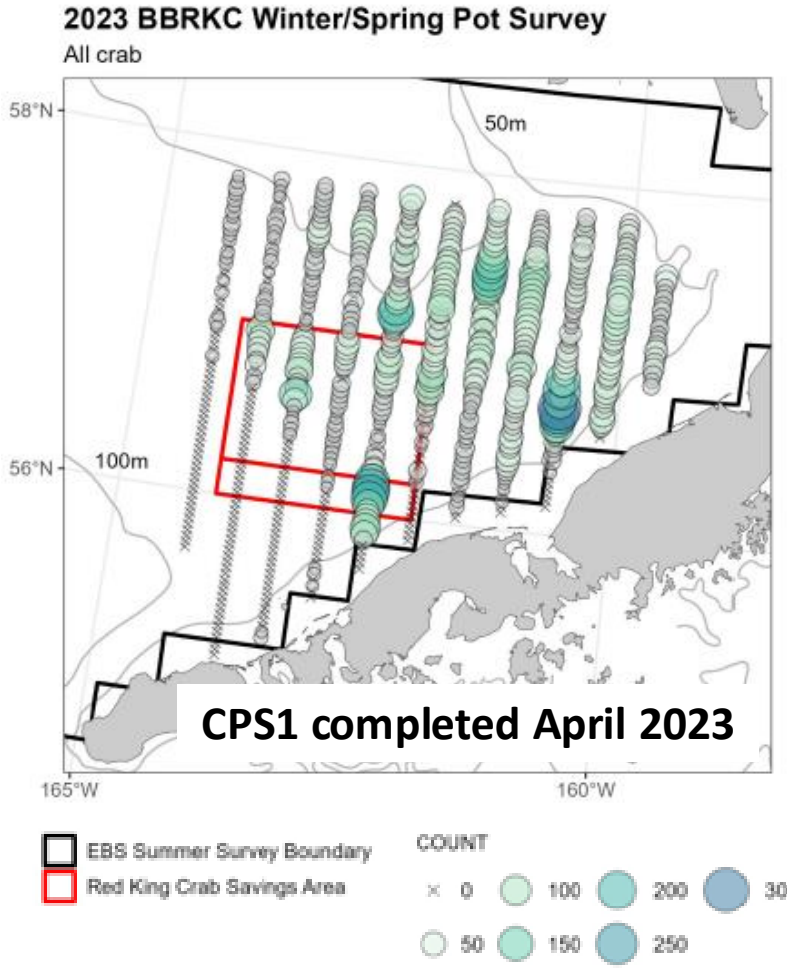
- **Review of Pot & Trawl Survey Data, Tagging Data**
- **Historical Salmon Bycatch Data and Avoidance**
- **CV Operations and Considerations**
- **CV Fleet Dynamic Closure**

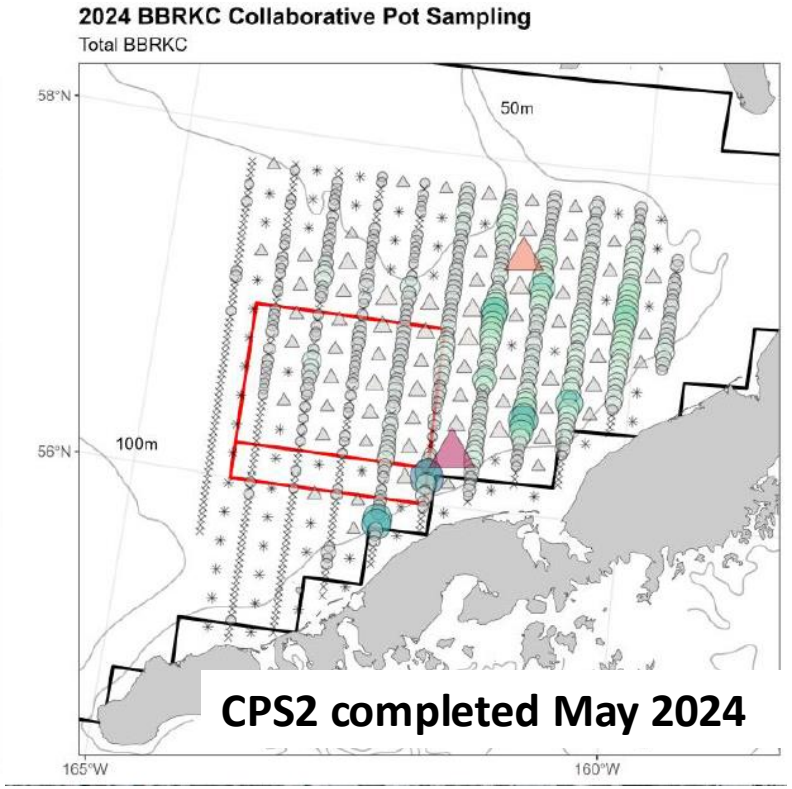
CPS and Survey Data

Lowest Densities of BBRKC observed in the SW corner of the RKCSA. BBRKC concentrations to the East and North.

- Similar observations in CPS and EBS surveys
- Absent diagonally below 56° 50’ N, 164° 15’ W (CPS1 report)
- Less than 20% of crab observations in RKCSA vs outside (CPS1)







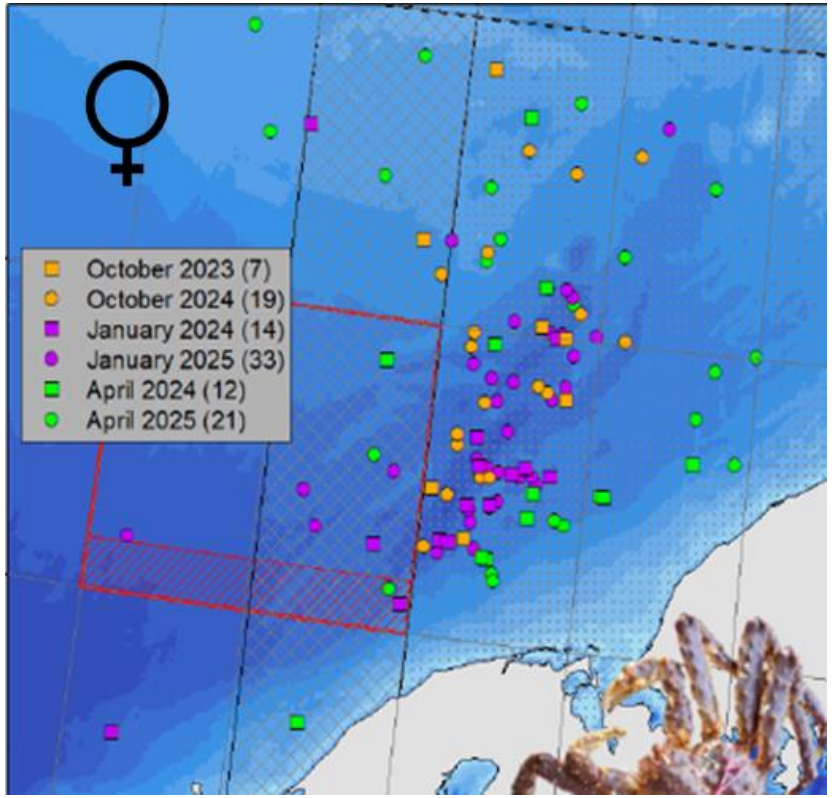
Pot Surveys and Tagging Data

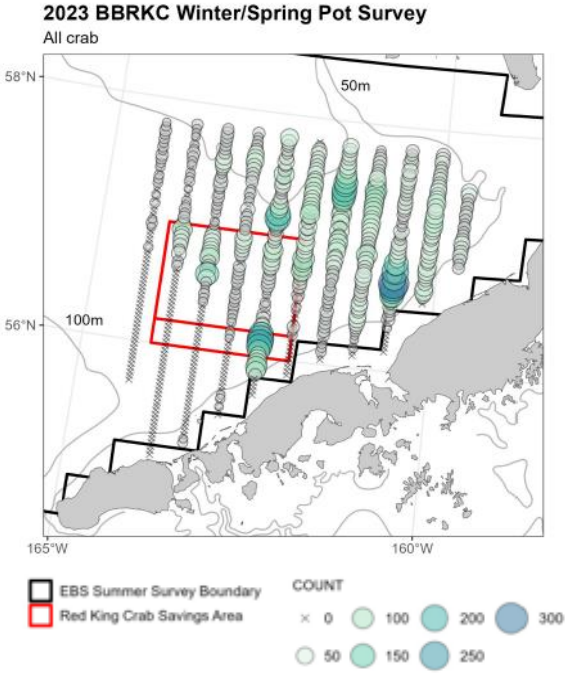
Lowest Densities of BBRKC observed in the SW corner of the RKCSA. BBRKC concentrations to the East and North.

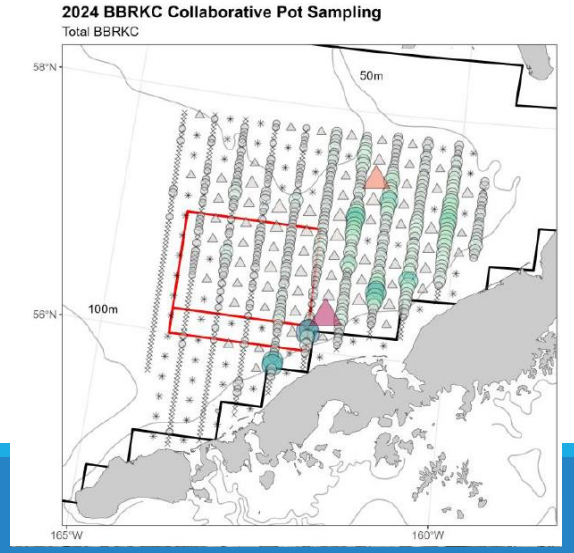
- Similar observations in CPS and EBS surveys
- Absent diagonally below 56° 50’ N, 164° 15’ W (CPS1)
- Less than 20% of all crab observations in RKCSA vs outside (CPS1)

Recent Tagging Data - **General movement east to shallower water in the late fall prior to A season.**

- Crab west and inside the RKCSA move east, back to shallower waters between October and January.
- Tagged crab consistently moved from RKCSA to shallow waters North and East. Oct - June
- Females moved further east than males.







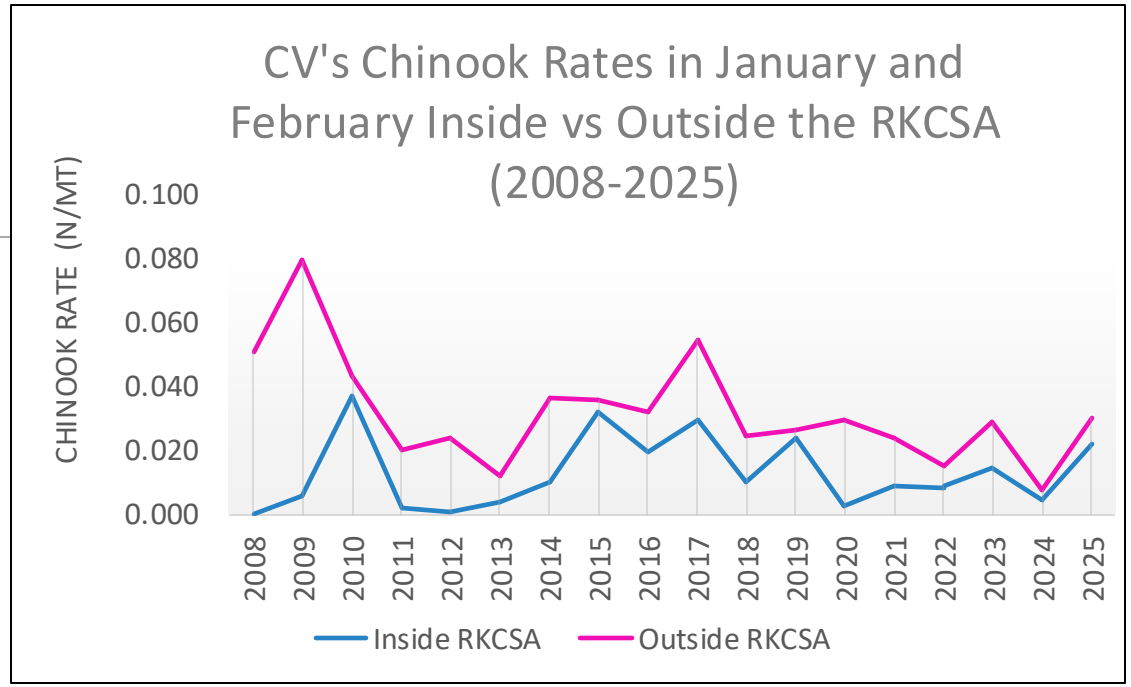
Salmon Bycatch Data

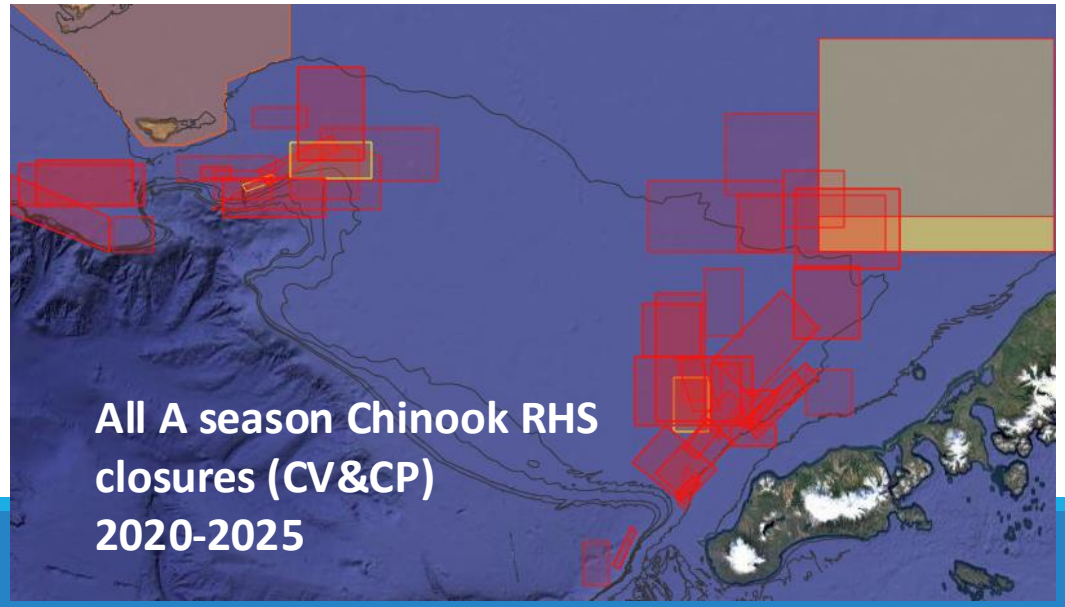
January and February – main months the fleet relies on the RKCSA for salmon avoidance

Chinook bycatch rates less inside the RKCSA over the last 18 years.

Majority of RHS closures outside of RKCSA over last 5 years

2024 PSC Impact Analysis - *Changes [from displacement] in Chinook PSC occurred primarily in the A season. Displacement from the RKCSA led to Chinook PSC increases in all years."*





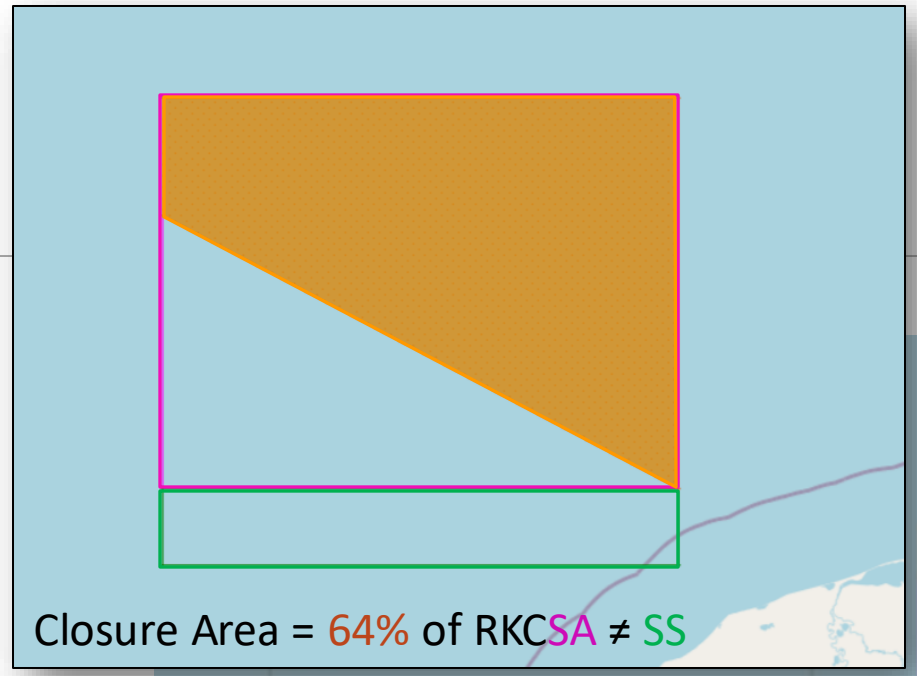
CV Operations and Considerations

CVs conducted analytical exercises looking at VMS tracks and reliance on the RKCSA.

- Less than 6% of the RKCSA area was fished annually over the last few years by CVs.
- That minimal area inside the RKCSA is important to CV operations for:
  - Salmon avoidance
  - Complying with SCA Limits

Multiple CV coops, sectors, and various fleet dynamics

CV Fleet Dynamic Closure



Closure Area – orange boundary filled in
RKCSA – pink boundary
RKCSS – green boundary

Rules

- Jan 20-30 Open
- Jan 31 Closed

Opens IF:

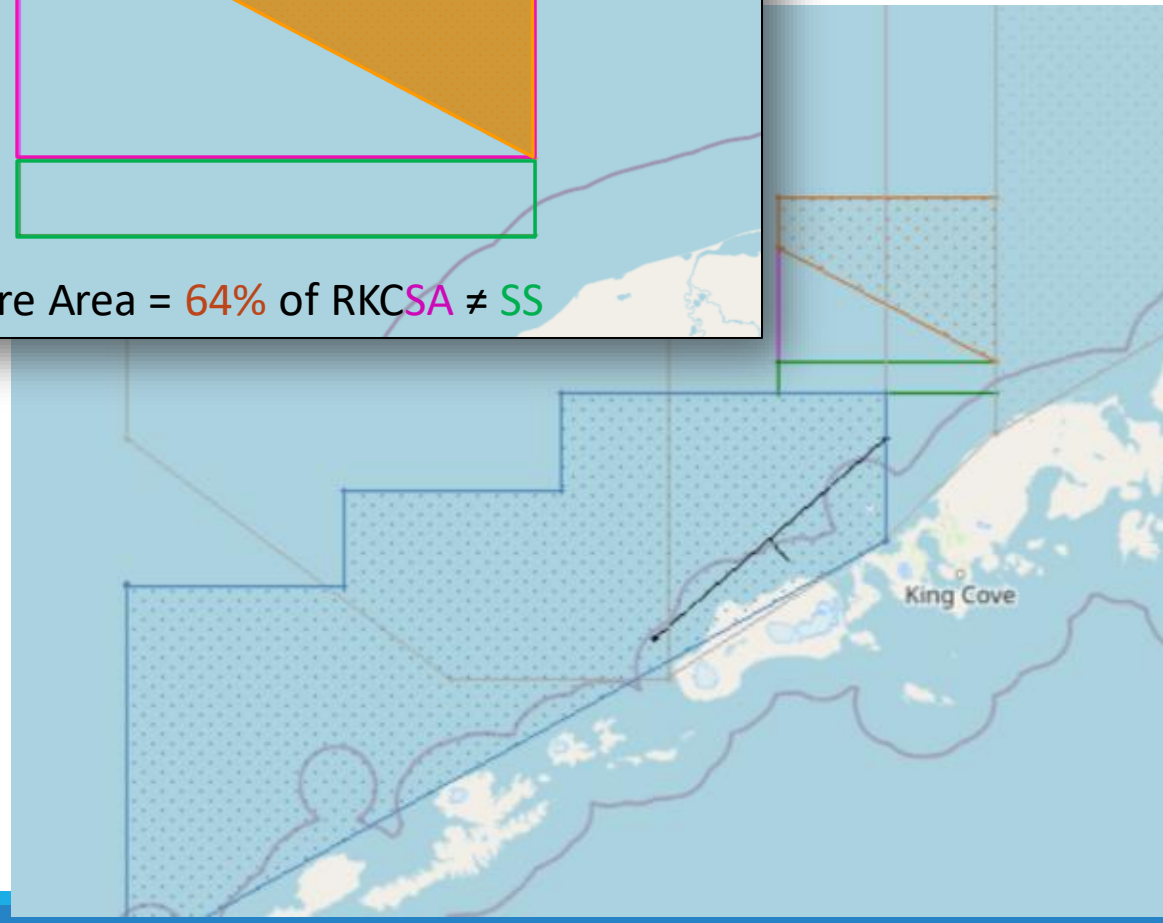
- Chinook rolling hotspot triggered outside of RKCSA
- *AND* if cleaner Chinook rates in the RKCSA during active fishing

Closes IF:

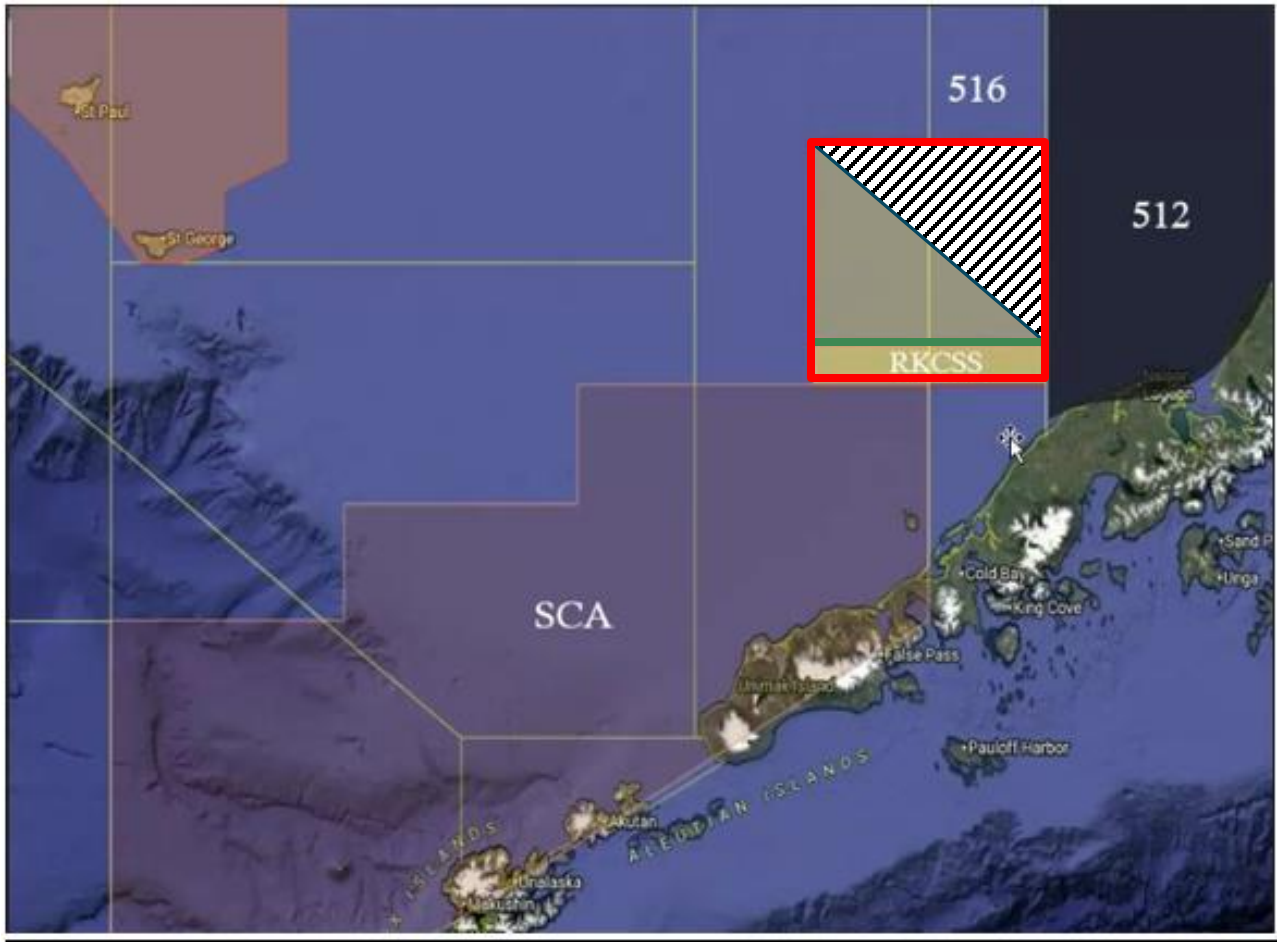
- *No rolling hotspots triggered*
- *AND* No fishing in the RKCSA or cleaner Chinook rate outside the RKCSA

Notification and Monitoring:

- Notified through Weekly IPA Report to Fleet
- Monitored on weekly basis from start of A season



Catcher Processor Fleet:
Dynamic Spatial Closure A season 2026

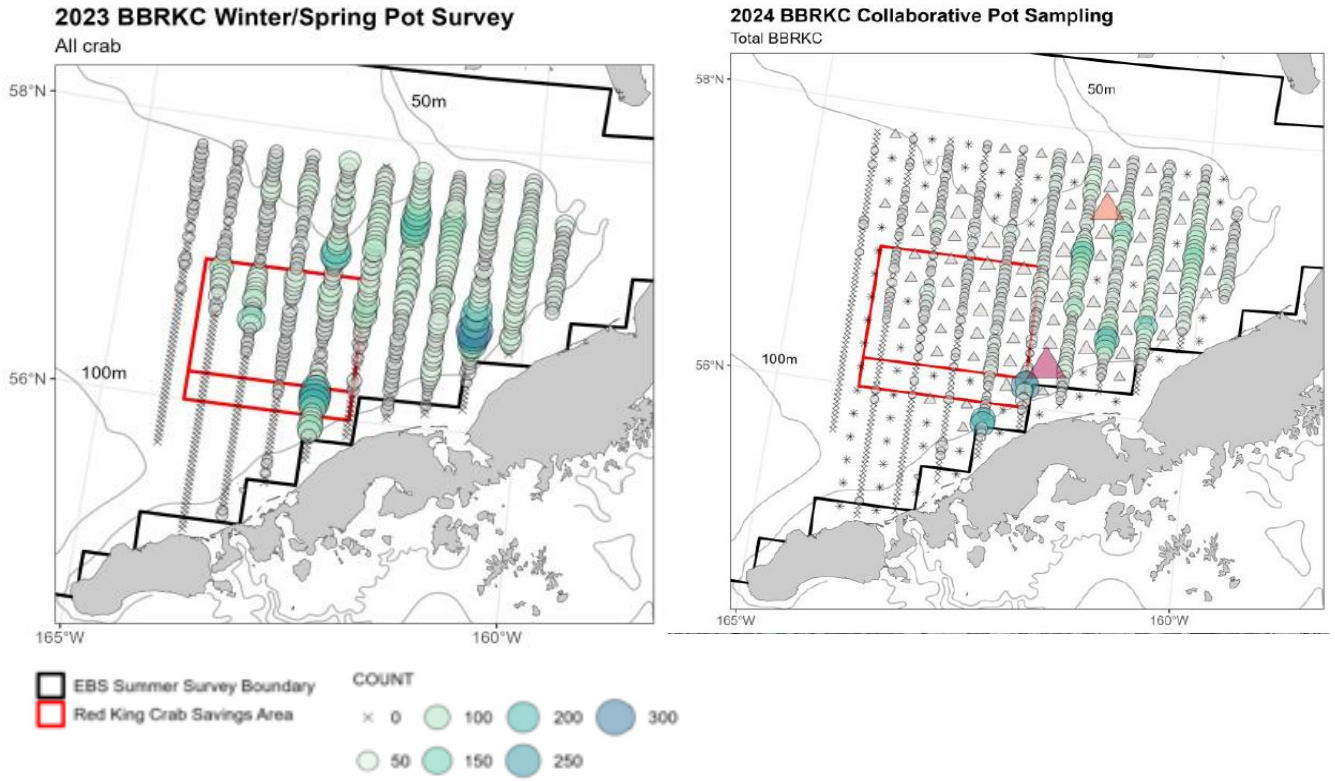


- **Review of Tagging, Pot Survey, Trawl Survey Data**
- **BSFRF Consultation**
- **Historical Salmon Bycatch & Other Considerations**
- **CP Fleet Dynamic Closure**

2023-2024 Crab Pot Survey (CPS) Data

- 2023 & 2024 Pot Surveys showed similar trends with higher densities of crab along the Eastern half of the RKCSA & in Area 512
- Winter distributions consistent with tagging/migration patterns

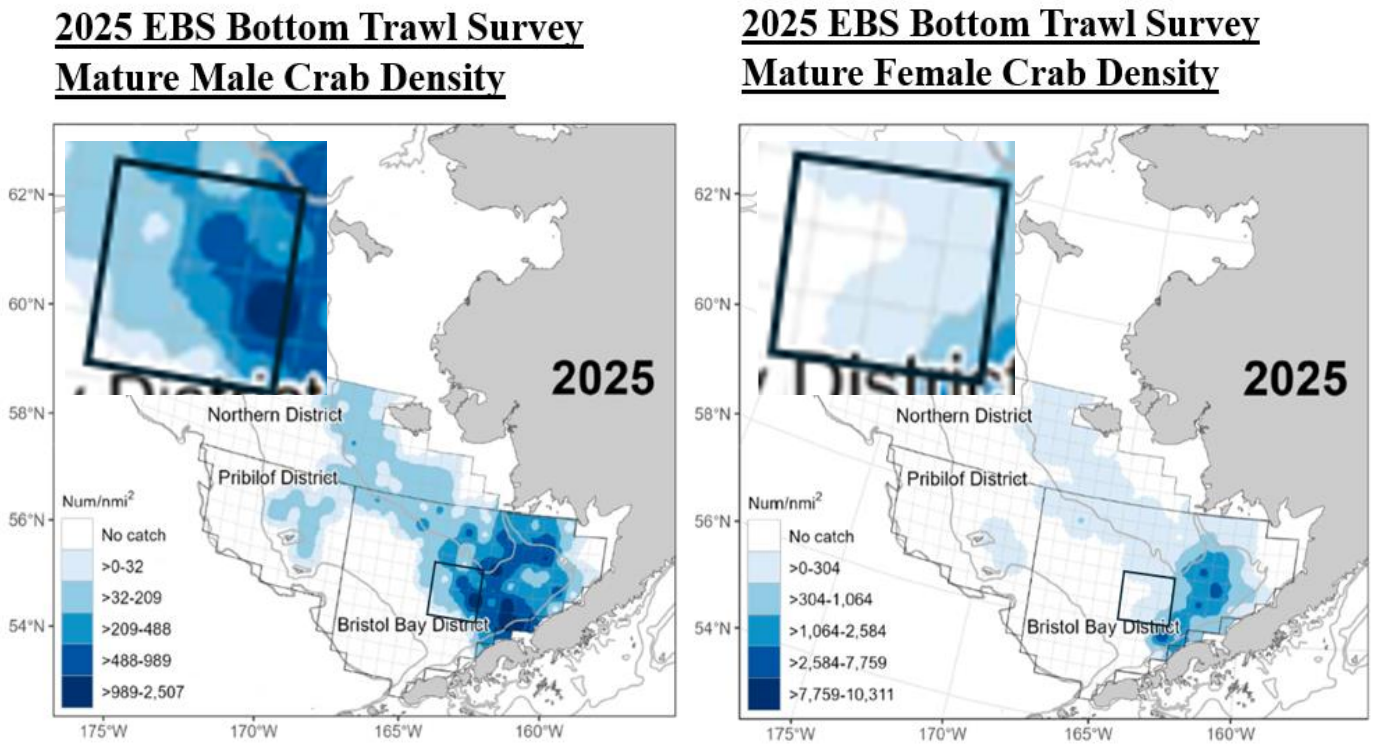
CPS data shows lowest densities of BBRKC in the SW corner of the RKCSA



2025 EBS Bottom Trawl Survey Data

- 2025 Trawl Survey Data:
  - Consistent with 2023-2024 CPS data
  - Higher densities of male crab in Area 512 and the Eastern half of RKCSA
  - Female crab primarily in Area 512 and 516 beneath RKCSA
- Tagging Data:
  - Generally move East & Shallow in the Fall
  - Females moved further east than males

Lowest densities of BBRKC remain in SW corner of RKCSA



Crab Prevalence: RKCSA, Area 512, NBBTCA

Table ES-3 Proportion of RKC caught in the NMFS trawl survey (1978-2023) in RKCSA, RKCSS, NMFS Area 512, the remainder of the NBBTCA and all remaining areas of the Bristol Bay management area.

Sex/maturity category	Area	Mean proportion	Minimum proportion	Maximum proportion
Immature Female	RKCSA	0.07	0	0.40
	RKCSS	0.02	0	0.16
	NMFS Area 512	0.55	0.07	0.88
	remainder of NBBTCA	0.24	0.01	0.93
	all other Bristol Bay	0.12	0.00	0.40
Immature Male	RKCSA	0.11	0	0.32
	RKCSS	0.03	0	0.13
	NMFS Area 512	0.49	0.12	0.85
	remainder of NBBTCA	0.17	0.03	0.83
	all other Bristol Bay	0.20	0.03	0.39
Mature Female	RKCSA	0.11	0	0.40
	RKCSS	0.04	0	0.23
	NMFS Area 512	0.58	0.22	0.81
	remainder of NBBTCA	0.07	0.03	0.22
	all other Bristol Bay	0.19	0.05	0.47
Mature Male	RKCSA	0.16	0.02	0.46
	RKCSS	0.03	0	0.09
	NMFS Area 512	0.33	0.06	0.58
	remainder of NBBTCA	0.08	0.02	0.19
	all other Bristol Bay	0.40	0.16	0.81

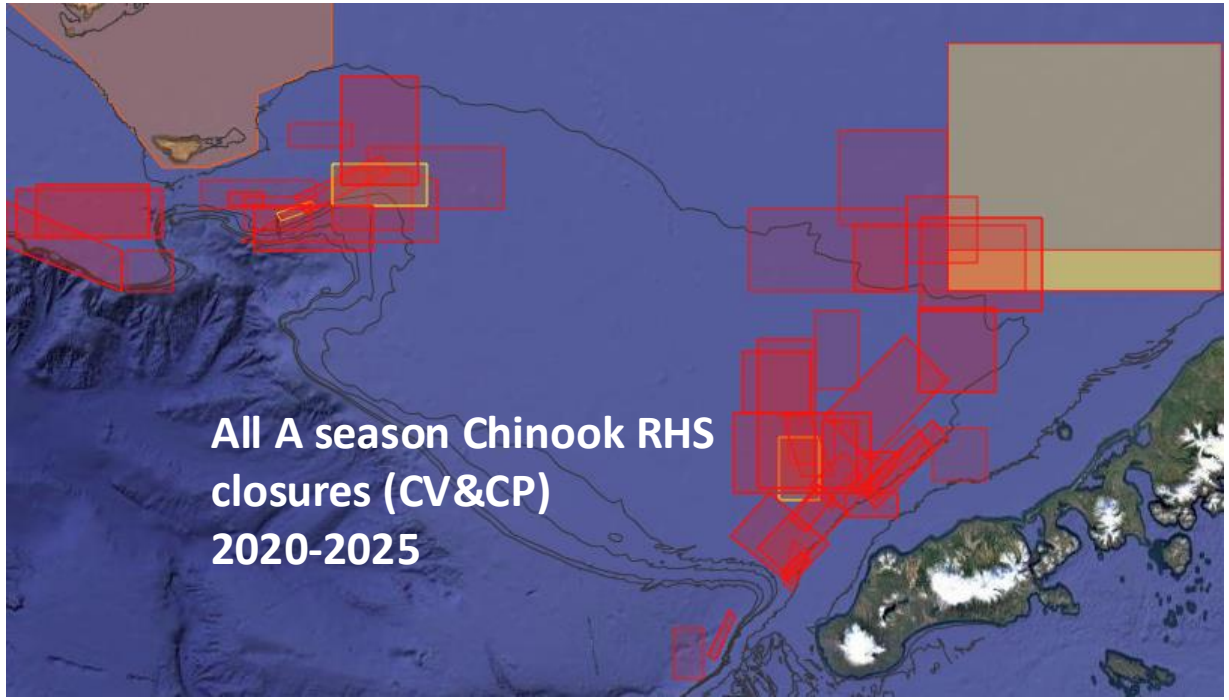
CPS 2 proportions RKC in the RKCSA:

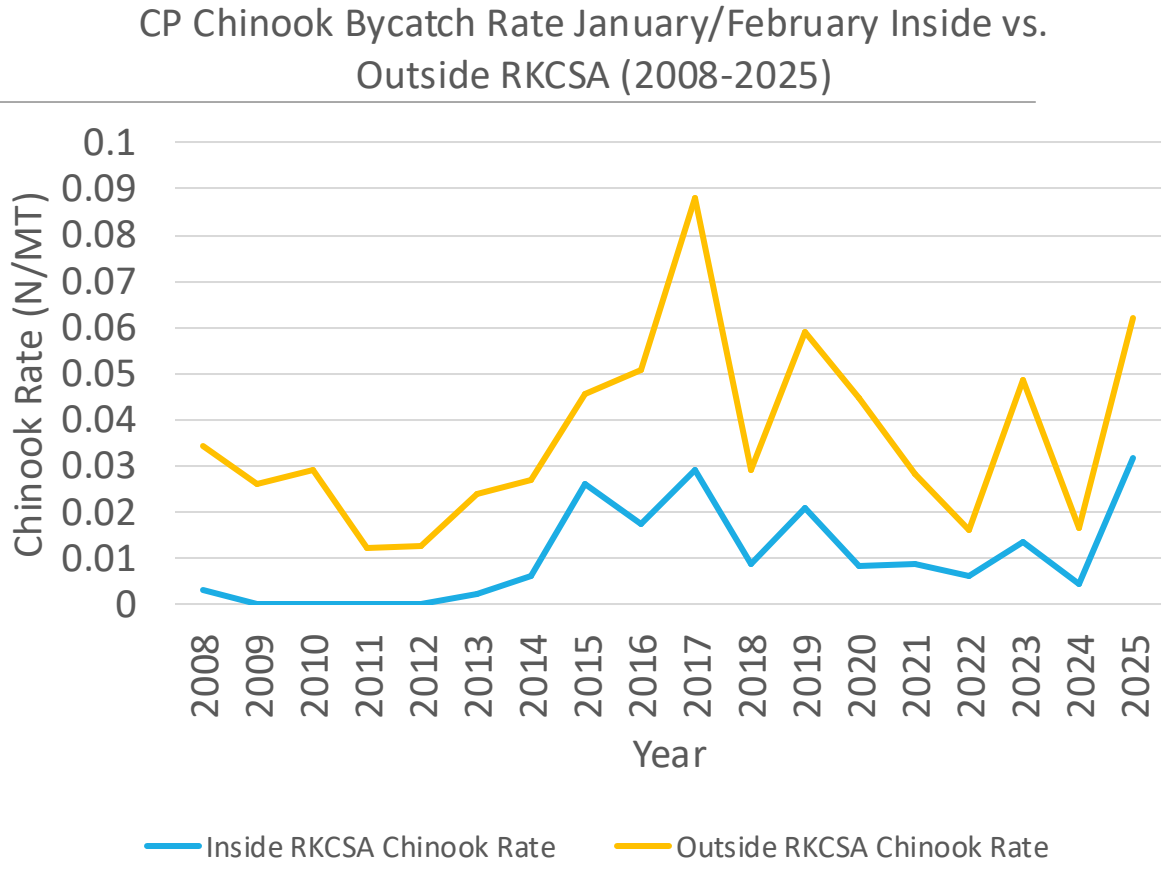
		NBBTCA		RKCSA		RKCSS		BLZ1-W	
Demographic	Total	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Legal-size (≥ 135 mm) males	3,498	2,160	61.7	689	19.7	66	1.9	649	18.6
Sublegal-size (< 135 mm) males	4,326	2,796	64.6	804	18.6	308	7.1	726	16.8
Mature-size (≥ 120 mm) males	5,000	3,098	62.0	979	19.6	122	2.4	923	18.5
Immature-size (< 120 mm) males	2,824	1,858	65.8	514	18.2	252	8.9	452	16.0
Mature females	1,934	1,466	75.8	336	17.4	74	3.8	132	6.8
Immature females	433	307	70.9	33	7.6	9	2.1	93	21.5
Total catch	10,191	6,729	66.0	1,862	18.3	457	4.5	1,600	15.7

- CPS 1 in RKCSA: Immature ♀ 0.3%, Mature ♀ 3.3%, Immature ♂ 5%, Mature ♂ 9.6%, Legal ♂ : 6.7%

RKCSA has a proportionally low concentration of crab. Majority of the stock remains protected from all Trawl Gear

Salmon Bycatch Data





- Majority of RHS closures outside of RKCSA over last 5 years

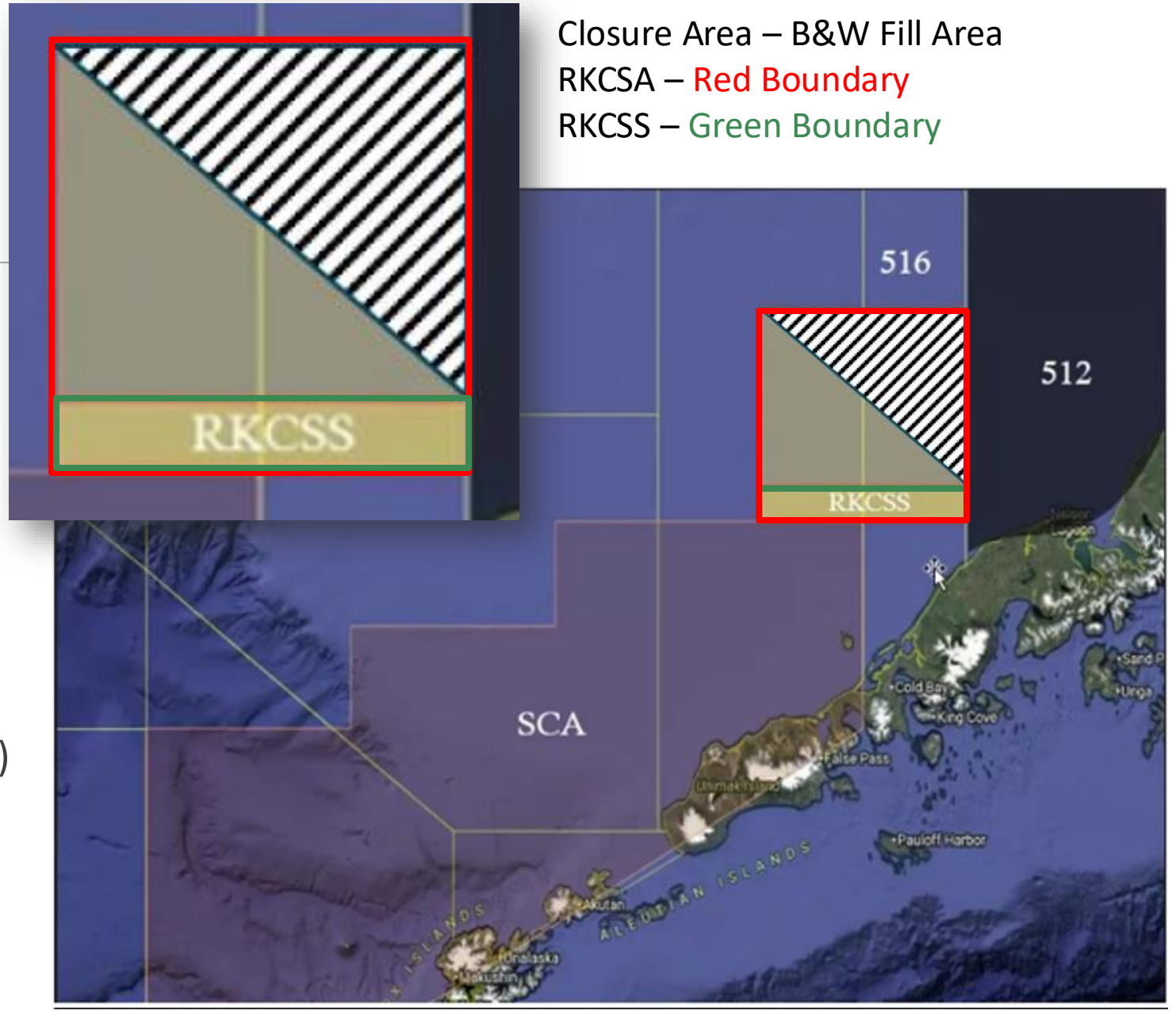
Chinook bycatch rates have been lower inside the RKCSA over the last 18 years.

CP Fleet Dynamic Closure

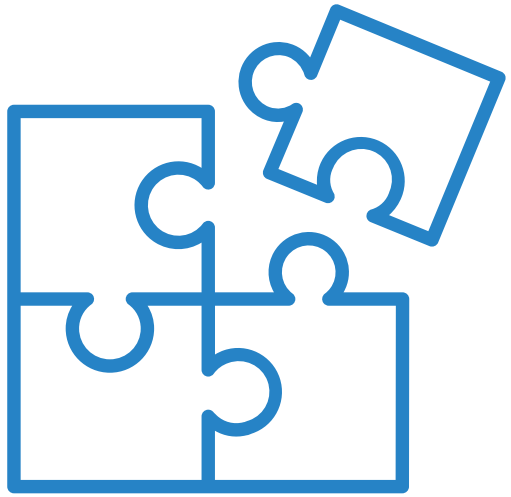
Rules

- **Effective:** Jan 31st – A Season End
- **Closure Area**:
  - $56°10'N\ 162°\ W$;
    $57°\ N\ 162°W$; $57°\ N\ 164°\ W$
  - Excludes RKCSS
- **Opens If:**
  - CP Fleet weekly bycatch rate ≥ 80% of Chinook performance standard

  (2026 est. is ~0.034 Chinook/mt of pollock)
- **Notification:**
  - Via weekly IPA Reports
  - Re-evaluated on a weekly basis



Keep In Mind



- Sector Specific IPA's
- Operational Differences
- Existing Regulatory Closures
- Upcoming EFH Review
- Ongoing Crab Research


Questions?