
**SURVEILLANCE NO. 3**

**CERTIFIED SEAFOOD INTERNATIONAL RFM FISHERIES STANDARD V2.2**

# Alaska pollock

| | |
|---|---|
| **Certification Body** | DNV Business Assurance USA |
| **Assessment team** | Jodi Bostrom, Giuseppe Scarcella, Paul Knapman |
| **Fishery client** | At-sea Processors Association |
| **Date** | June 5, 2026 |

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| ABC | Allowable Biological Catch |
| ADFG | Alaska Department of Fish and Game |
| AFSC | Alaska Fisheries Science Center |
| BOF | Board of Fisheries |
| BSAI | Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands |
| CCRF | Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries |
| CDQ | Community Development Quota |
| CSI | Certified Seafood International |
| EIS | Environmental Impact Statement |
| EEZ | Exclusive Economic Zone |
| EFH | Essential Fish Habitat |
| ESA | Endangered Species Act |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| FMP | Fishery Management Plan |
| GOA | Gulf of Alaska |
| IUU | Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (fishing) |
| MSY | Maximum Sustainable Yield |
| mt | Metric tons |
| nm | Nautical miles |
| NMFS | National Marine Fisheries Service |
| NOAA | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration |
| NPFMC | North Pacific Fishery Management Council |
| OFL | Overfishing Limit |
| PSC | Prohibited Species Catch |
| RFM | Responsible Fisheries Management |
| SAFE | Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (Report) |
| SSC | Scientific and Statistical Committee |
| SSL | Steller Sea Lion |
| TAC | Total Allowable Catch |
| USCG | U.S. Coast Guard |

# 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Table 1. General information and the fishery**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fishery name | Alaska Pollock Fishery | | |
| Fishery being assessed | **Applicant Group:** At-sea Processors Association (APA)<br>**Product Common Name (*Species*):** Alaska pollock (*Gadus chalcogrammus*)<br>**Geographic Location:** Gulf of Alaska (GOA) and Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) within Alaska jurisdiction (200 nautical miles [nm] exclusive economic zone [EEZ])<br>**Gear Types:** Pelagic Trawl (main), other gears (bottom trawl, jig, longline, pot) from other non-directed pollock fisheries legally landing pollock<br>**Principal Management Authority:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS); North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC); Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG); Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) | | |
| Date certified | Second recertification on February 6, 2023 | Date of certificate expiry | February 5, 2028 |
| Surveillance type | Off-site surveillance | | |
| Date of surveillance audit | March 23, 2026 | | |
| Surveillance stage | 1st Surveillance | | |
| | 2nd Surveillance | | |
| | 3rd Surveillance | X | |
| | 4th Surveillance | | |
| | Other (expedited etc) | | |
| Surveillance team | Lead assessor: Jodi Bostrom<br>Assessors: Giuseppe Scarcella, Paul Knapman | | |

The Certified Seafood International (CSI) certification program, a voluntary program, provides an independent, third-party certification that can be used to verify that these fisheries are responsibly managed according to the CSI Responsible Fisheries Management (RFM) Fisheries Standard.

The CSI certification program uses the fundamental clauses of the CSI RFM Fisheries Standard v2.2 and is in accordance with ISO 17065 accredited certification procedures. This assessment is based on the fundamental clauses specified in the CSI RFM Fisheries Standard v2.2 and is based on four key components of responsible management derived from the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (1995) and Guidelines for the Eco-labeling of products from marine capture fisheries (2009).

A The Fisheries Management System
B Science, Stock Assessment Activities, and the Precautionary Approach
C Management Measures, Implementation, Monitoring, and Control
D Serious Impacts of the Fishery on the Ecosystem

The purpose of this annual surveillance report is to:

1. Establish and report on any material changes to the circumstances and practices affecting the original complying assessment of the fishery
2. Monitor any actions taken in response to non-conformances raised in the original assessment of the fisheries
3. Rescore any clauses where practice or circumstances have materially changed since the last audit

## 1.1 Audit conclusion

| Fishery | Status of certification | Comment |
|---|---|---|
| **Alaska pollock** (*Gadus chalcogrammus*) caught by vessels within APA using pelagic trawl and other gears (bottom trawl, jig, longline, and pot) from other non-directed pollock fisheries legally landing pollock caught in the GOA and BSAI within Alaska jurisdiction (200 nm EEZ) managed by the NMFS, NPFMC, ADFG, and Alaska BOF | **Certified** | Following the third surveillance audit conducted on March 23, 2026, the team recommends the continued certification of this fishery according to the CSI RFM Fisheries Standard v2.2. |

## 2 ASSESSMENT TEAM DETAILS

| | |
|---|---|
| **Jodi Bostrom**<br>DNV Lead Assessor and main area of responsibility: Fundamental clause D (Serious Impacts of the Fishery on the Ecosystem) | Jodi Bostrom is a senior assessor and team leader for Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Fisheries and CSI RFM Fisheries at DNV Business Assurance. She earned an M.Sc. in Environmental Science from American University and a B.Sc. in Zoology from the University of Wisconsin. She has over 10 years of experience in MSC fisheries assessment services. Prior to that, she worked for five years at the MSC as a Senior Fisheries Assessment Manager. Among other things, she developed the MSC's benthic habitats policy and the Consequence Spatial Analysis (a risk-based framework for assessing habitat impacts in data-deficient situations) as part of the MSC Standard revision. Prior to the MSC, Jodi spent 11 years with the US National Academy of Sciences' Ocean Studies Board where she worked on various projects from fisheries management and policy to bycatch and dredging impacts to eutrophication and sea level rise. |
| **Paul Knapman**<br>Main areas of responsibility: Fundamental clause A (Fisheries Management System) and C (Science, Stock Assessment Activities, and the Precautionary Approach) | Paul is an independent consultant based in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. Paul began his career in fisheries more than 30 years ago as a fisheries officer in the UK, responsible for the enforcement of UK and EU fisheries regulations. He then joined the UK government's nature conservation advisors, establishing and managing their marine fisheries program. He developed an extensive program of work with fisheries managers, scientists, the fishing industry and ENGOs to integrate national and European fisheries and nature conservation requirements. He also helped lead a national four-year project contributing to the 2002 review of the Common Fisheries Policy. He then became Head of the largest inshore fisheries management organization in England, with responsibility for managing an extensive area of inshore fisheries on the North Sea coast. The organization's responsibilities and roles included: stock assessments; habitat monitoring; setting and ensuring compliance with total allowable catches and quotas; establishing and applying regional fisheries regulations; the development and implementation of fishery management plans; the lead authority for the largest marine protected area in England. In 2004, Paul moved to Canada and established his own consultancy providing analysis, advisory and developmental work on fisheries management policy in Canada and Europe. He drafted the first management plan for one of Canada's marine protected areas, undertook an extensive review on illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing in the Baltic Sea and was appointed as rapporteur to the European Commission's Baltic Sea Regional Advisory Council. In 2008, Paul joined Moody Marine as their Americas Regional Manager, responsible for managing and developing their regional MSC business. He became General Manager of the business in 2012. Paul returned to consultancy in 2015. |
| **Giuseppe Scarcella**<br>Main area of responsibility: Fundamental clause B (Science, Stock Assessment Activities, and the Precautionary Approach) | Giuseppe Scarcella is an experienced fishery scientist and population analyst and modeler, with wide knowledge and experience in the assessment of demersal stocks. He holds a first degree in Marine Biology and Oceanography (110/110) from the Unversità Politecnica delle Marche, and a Ph.D. in marine Ecology and Biology from the same university, based on a thesis "Age and growth of two rockfish in the Adriatic Sea". After his degree he was offered a job as project scientist in several research programs about the structure and composition of fish assemblage in artificial reefs, off-shore platform and other artificial habitats in the Italian Research Council – Institute of Marine Science of Ancona now Institute for Biological Resources and Marine Biotechnologies. During the years of employment, he has gained experience in benthic ecology, statistical analyses of fish assemblages evolution in artificial habitats, fisheries ecology and impacts of fishing activities, stock assessment, otolith analysis, population dynamic and fisheries management. During the same years he attended courses of uni-multivariate statistics and stock assessment. He is also actively participating in the scientific advice process of FAO GFCM in the Mediterranean Sea and Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries for the European Commission. He is author and co-author of more than 50 scientific paper peer reviewed journals and more than 200 national and international technical reports, most of them focused on the evolution of fish assemblages in artificial habitats and stock assessment and fishery management. |

# 3 BACKGROUND ON THE FISHERY

## 3.1 Fishery description

All information on this fishery can be obtained from the original full assessment report, subsequent surveillance reports, and recertification reports available for download at https://csicertified.org/certified-fishery-species/alaska-pollock/. Recent catch is similar to previous years, and recent data are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. Total allowable catch (TAC) and catch data for 2025. Source: https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/akro/car110_bsai_with_cdq2025.html and https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/akro/car110_goa2025.html**

| Species | Latin name | 2025 TAC (metric ton; mt) | 2025 Total Catch (mt) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pollock in BSAI | *Gadus chalcogrammus* | 1,394,250 | 1,330,784 |
| Pollock in GOA | *Gadus chalcogrammus* | 186,245 | 134,585 |

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## 3.2 Previous assessments and surveillance audits

The Alaska pollock fisheries were first certified under the requirements of the Alaska RFM standard v1.2 on December 6, 2011. The initial certification and four annual surveillance audits were carried out by the certification body Global Trust.

On April 15, 2017, the certificate for this fishery was transferred from Global Trust to DNV GL (now DNV). The certificate transfer and the fourth surveillance audit were carried out by DNV. During June-December 2017, the fishery went through the full reassessment against a newer version of the standard, v1.3. This reassessment did not result in any changes in the compliance of the fishery with the RFM standard, and no non-conformances were raised. The new certificate was, therefore, issued with the validity date until December 5, 2022.

In January 2021, the fourth surveillance of the recertification took place via an off-site surveillance audit, which was done in conjunction with the reassessment site visit, and the surveillance report was issued on May 27, 2022. Following the results of the second reassessment, the fishery was recertified against the RFM Fisheries Standard v2.1 with one non-conformance on Fundamental Clause 3. The certificate was issued with the validity date until February 5, 2028. The non-conformance was closed at the first surveillance audit of this new certification cycle.

The third surveillance audit of this new certification cycle took place via an off-site surveillance audit on March 23, 2026. The fishery is being assessed against CSI RFM Fisheries Standard v2.2.

# 4 THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The CSI assessment/reassessment evaluates the fishery against the conformance criteria outlined in the CSI RFM Fisheries Standard v2.2, which contains clauses that are categorized into four sections:

- Section A – The Fishery Management System
- Section B – Science and Stock Assessment Activities and the Precautionary Approach
- Section C – Management Measures, Implementation, Monitoring, and Control
- Section D – Serious Impacts of the Fishery on the Ecosystem

Scoring of each clause is based on a series of Evaluation Parameters: Process, Current Status/Appropriateness/Effectiveness, and Evidence Basis. The scoring guidelines, which are used for all clauses, are as follows:

- If all Evaluation Parameters are satisfied, the clause is scored in full conformance.
- If any single Evaluation Parameter is not satisfied, the clause is scored in minor non-conformance.
- If any two Evaluation Parameters are not satisfied, the clause is scored in major non-conformance.
- If any three or more Evaluation Parameters are not satisfied,the clause is scored in critical non-conformance.

During the assessment/reassessment, the fishery is assigned a confidence rating for each clause, which signifies the confidence of the assessment team that the fishery is demonstrated to be in conformity to the requirements of that clause. Clauses are scored according to the following confidence ratings:

- Low confidence rating (critical non-conformance level) – Information and/or evidence is completely absent or contradictory to whether an element of the fishery complies with the given requirements of a supporting clause. In these cases, a low confidence rating, equivalent to a critical non-conformance, is assigned.
- Medium confidence rating (major non-conformance) – Information and/or evidence is limited. In these cases, major improvement is needed to achieve full conformance, and a medium confidence rating with a major non-conformance is assigned.
- Medium confidence rating (minor non-conformance) – Information and/or evidence is broadly available; however, there are some information gaps. In these cases, minor improvement is needed to achieve full conformance, and a medium confidence rating with a minor non-conformance is assigned.
- High confidence rating (full conformance) – Sufficient information and/or evidence is available to demonstrate full conformance. In these cases, a high confidence rating is assigned.

Annual surveillance audits are undertaken to review any changes in the fishery since the last assessment, reassessment, or surveillance audit. Progress toward closing any non-conformances is also evaluated.

## 4.1 Surveillance audit meetings

The surveillance announcement was announced publicly on CSI's website (https://csicertified.org/certified-fishery-species/alaska-pollock/) on February 13, 2026. The audit took place remotely via Microsoft Teams on March 23, 2026.

## 4.2 Stakeholder input

Table 3 provides the agenda and list of participants. DNV received no written stakeholder input before the audit and no requests to meet with the team. The team did receive an update on the fishery, including the latest catch data, from the client.

**Table 3. Surveillance agenda and participants**

| Time | Activity | Participants |
|---|---|---|
| 9:00-9:15 am PDT | Opening meeting with Alaska pollock client<br>• Introductions, surveillance audit goals, etc. | Assessment team:<br>Jodi Bostrom |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 9:15-9:45 am PDT | Fundamental Clause B (Science, Stock Assessment Activities, and the Precautionary Approach) discussion with client<br>• Review of stock status for each of the stocks<br>• Review of harvest strategy and harvest controls rules<br>• Other potential changes | Giuseppe Scarcella<br>Paul Knapman<br><br>Client:<br>Austin Estabrooks |
| 9:45-10:15 am PDT | Fundamental Clause D (Serious Impacts of the Fishery on the Ecosystem) discussion with client<br>• Updated catch and observer data<br>• Updated non-target species' impacts<br>• Updated habitat and ecosystem impacts | |
| 10:15-10:45 am PDT | Fundamental Clauses A (Fisheries Management System) and C (Science, Stock Assessment Activities, and the Precautionary Approach) discussion with client<br>• Update on management framework, personnel, etc.<br>• Update on enforcement and compliance | |
| 10:45-11:00 am PDT | Wrap up with client<br>• Remaining questions<br>• Next steps and timing | |
| End of Surveillance Audit | | |

# 5 UPDATES TO AND CHANGES WITHIN THE FISHERY

## 5.1 Target species biology

Walleye pollock (*Gadus chalcogrammus*), commonly referred to as Alaska pollock, is one of the most ecologically and economically significant groundfish species in the North Pacific Ocean. Its distribution spans a broad range across the North Pacific, from the Sea of Japan and the Sea of Okhotsk to the Eastern Bering Sea (EBS), Aleutian Islands (AI), and GOA, with the largest commercial concentrations found in U.S. waters off Alaska.

Alaska pollock supports the largest single-species fishery in the United States by volume and is a cornerstone of the U.S. seafood industry. In addition to its economic value, pollock plays a critical ecological role as a mid-trophic-level species in both BSAI and GOA ecosystems. It serves as a major forage species for a wide variety of higher trophic level predators including marine mammals (such as Steller sea lions), seabirds, and larger fish species (such as Pacific cod and arrowtooth flounder), while also being an important predator of zooplankton and smaller fish.

According to FishBase, the trophic level of Alaska pollock is approximately 3.6, indicating it occupies a mid-level position in the marine food web, feeding primarily on euphausiids, copepods, and small fishes (https://www.fishbase.se/summary/Gadus-chalcogrammus.html). This trophic position is further supported by food web analyses conducted by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC), which place pollock as a dominant mid-level consumer rather than a lower trophic level species such as small pelagic fish or zooplankton (https://apps-afsc.fisheries.noaa.gov/Publications/AFSC-TM/NOAA-TM-AFSC-178.pdf). Therefore, Alaska pollock stocks are not considered lower trophic level resources but rather function as key intermediaries in the energy transfer from plankton to higher predators.

NOAA Fisheries (NMFS) currently manages Alaska pollock as three distinct stocks based on geographic and biological considerations:

- **EBS stock**, which supports the largest fishery and is managed as a Tier 1 stock under the NPFMC framework due to its rich data availability and well-developed assessment models.
- **AI stock**, which is smaller and less productive, managed separately to account for ecological and oceanographic differences in this region.
- **GOA stock**, which supports a significant fishery and is managed independently to reflect different population dynamics and environmental drivers compared to the BSAI regions.

These management units recognize the spatial structure of the species' population and are informed by extensive scientific assessments, including genetic studies, tagging research, and ecosystem modeling. Pollock's ecological role and its importance to fisheries management make it a focal point of NOAA's ecosystem-based fishery management strategies across Alaskan waters.

## 5.2 Scientific stock assessment

Due to the lapse in federal appropriations between 1 October and 12 November 2025, AFSC stock assessment authors were unable to complete the groundfish operational assessments scheduled for the 2025 cycle, and the Groundfish Plan Teams did not convene to compile the 2025 SAFE reports. As a result, no full 2025 SAFE reports were available for this surveillance audit. Accordingly, the 2024 SAFE reports are presented again in this section as the most recent fully peer-reviewed stock assessment documents available. These reports remained the basis for the scientific advice used in the 2026 harvest specifications process, including the determination of an overfishing limit (OFL) and allowable biological catch (ABC) values, while TACs for 2026 were set through the corresponding Council and NMFS harvest specification process using the best scientific information available at that time.

Along with the 2024 SAFE reports, the available 2025 survey data are also presented as supplementary evidence of current stock condition. While these survey results were not fully incorporated into updated 2025 stock assessments and are therefore interpreted with caution, they provide useful contextual information on whether there is evidence of a material deterioration in stock status (SSC, 2025a). For GOA pollock, the 2025 survey information was generally positive, with bottom trawl biomass estimated to be 32.1% higher than in 2023 and Shelikof Strait acoustic biomass slightly higher than in 2024 (AFSC, 2025a, b; Markowitz et al., 2025; SSC, 2025b). For EBS pollock, survey signals were mixed, but the SSC concluded that the observed variability remained within the normal range for the stock and did not indicate new ecosystem concerns; the SSC also noted that spawning biomass has remained above BMSY since 2012, except in 2020 (SSC, 2025a). Overall, the 2025 survey information does not indicate stock collapse or a clear declining trend inconsistent with continued precautionary management (SSC, 2025a; Monnahan et al., 2024; Ianelli et al., 2024).

### 5.2.1 AI pollock

Pollock in the AI have experienced notable fluctuations in abundance and spatial distribution since the 1980s, driven by environmental variability, undocumented foreign fishing in the late 1980s (Egan, 1988a, 1988b), and recruitment variability (Coulson et al., 2006; Carr and Marshall, 2008). After reaching 444,000 t in 1986, biomass declined to 78,000 t by 1994, followed by variable recovery reaching 165,565 t by 2024, with high uncertainty (CV: 0.24–0.47 since 2014).

Biomass has shifted eastward since 2004, likely due to recruitment failures in the Central Bering Sea (BS) and past exploitation pressures (Bailey et al., 1999). Genetic studies reveal AI pollock are more similar to GOA stocks than EBS stocks (Grant et al., 2010), with weak genetic differentiation near Adak and Atka (Barbeaux et al., 2016). Recruitment events in 1978, 1989, 2000, and 2012 were shared with other regions, though AI-specific peaks occurred in 1981, 1983, and 1986 (Figure 1).

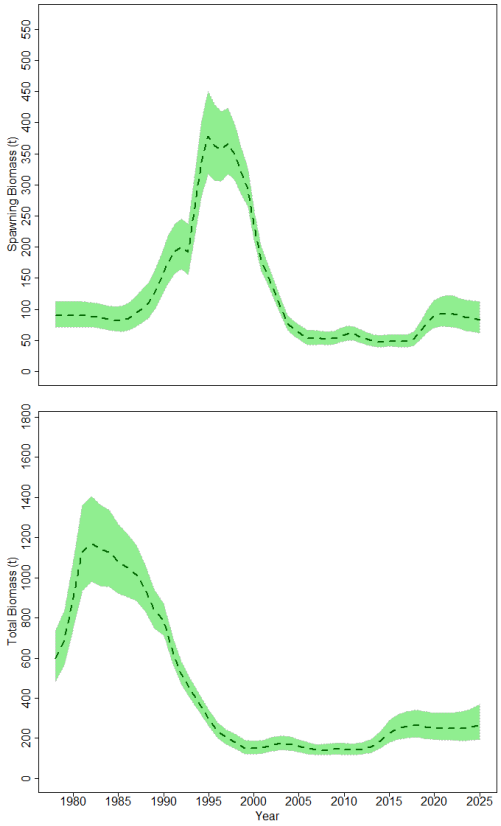


**Figure 1. Estimates of AI pollock spawning stock biomass (SSB) (upper graph) and age 1+ total biomass (lower graph) in 1,000s of tons from the authors' preferred Model 15.1. Confidence intervals are two standard deviations. Source: Barbeaux et al. 2024**

Stock assessment utilizes the AMAK model (Barbeaux et al., 2015) implemented in ADMB software (Fournier, 1998), with Models 15.1 and 15.2 estimating mortality and recruitment dynamics. The 2024 assessment indicates the stock is above B20% (20% of the equilibrium SSB in the absence of fishing) with low exploitation rates (Figure 2; Barbeaux et al., 2024). However, high uncertainty persists, and recent recruitment has been low. Historical analysis shows that the 1978-year class dominates recruitment history, raising concerns about overestimation of stock productivity. Current management remains precautionary under Tier 5 guidelines.

Female SSB rose to a peak of 378,483 t in 1984 from 176,915 t in 1978 due to the large 1978-year class. SSB remained high in the late 1980s as the larger than average 1981, 1982, 1983, and 1986-year classes matured (Figure 2). The early 1990s fishery appeared to concentrate on the older fish, particularly the 1978-year class. This is consistent with a switch in the domestic fishery to a concentration on spawning aggregations for roe. The status of AI pollock in 2023 and 2024 was assessed to be well above B20% and had low exploitation rates (Figure 2).

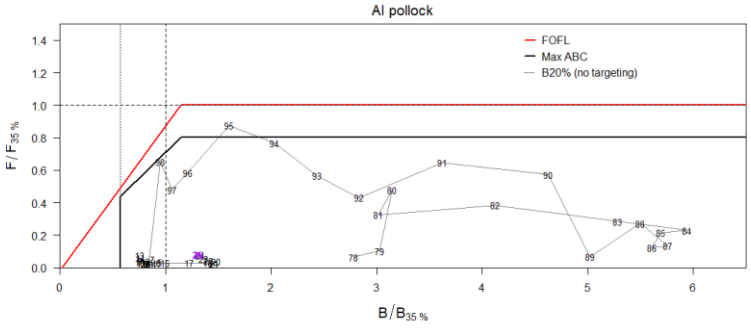


**Figure 2. AI pollock spawning biomass relative to BMSY and full-selection fishing mortality relative to FMSY (1978-2026). The ratio of fishing mortality to FMSY is calculated using the estimated selectivity pattern in that year. 2025 and 2026 are plotted with catch assumed to be at the five-year average of F = 0.032 (Alternative 3). Source: Barbeaux et al. 2024**

The Tiers require reference point estimates for biomass level determinations. The following reference points for Tier 3 of Amendment 56 are in Table 4.

**Table 4. Summary of results of AI walleye pollock. Source: Barbeaux et al. 2024**

| Quantity | As estimated or *specified last* year for: 2024 | 2025 | As estimated or *recommended this* year for: 2025 | 2026* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *M* (natural mortality rate) | 0.21 | | 0.21 | |
| Tier | 3a | | 3a | |
| Total (age 1+) biomass (t) | 279,764 | 302,068 | 288,407 | 305,528 |
| Female spawning biomass (t) | | | | |
| Projected | 79,747 | 81,335 | 82,781 | 80,639 |
| $B_{100\%}$ | 174,218 | | 182,006 | |
| $B_{40\%}$ | 69,687 | | 72,802 | |
| $B_{35\%}$ | 60,976 | | 63,709 | |
| $F_{OFL}$ | 0.380 | 0.380 | 0.406 | 0.406 |
| $maxF_{ABC}$ | 0.305 | 0.305 | 0.325 | 0.325 |
| $F_{ABC}$ | 0.305 | 0.305 | 0.325 | 0.325 |
| OFL (t) | 51,516 | 53,030 | 55,728 | 56,231 |
| maxABC (t) | 42,654 | 43,863 | 46,051 | 46,437 |
| ABC (t) | 42,654 | 43,863 | 46,051 | 46,437 |
| **Status** | 2022 | 2023 | 2023 | 2024 |
| Overfishing | no | n/a | no | n/a |
| Overfished | n/a | no | n/a | no |
| Approaching overfished | n/a | no | n/a | no |

* Projection based on estimated catches of 5,106 t for 2024 and 5,156 t for 2025, the five-year average *F* (2019-2023) of 0.032, used in place of maximum permissible ABC for 2025.

### 5.2.2 EBS pollock

EBS pollock remains one of the largest and most commercially valuable stocks globally. Spawning occurs from March to May, with early life stages influenced by environmental factors (Duffy-Anderson et al., 2016; Gann et al., 2015). Juveniles shift from plankton to piscivory as they grow (Buckley et al., 2009; Livingston, 1991).

Since the 1960s, the fishery has evolved from foreign to fully domestic operations with strict observer coverage and electronic monitoring (EM) (Ianelli and Williamson, 2007). The fishery is managed under Tier 1a, with biomass currently well above BMSY (147% of BMSY; Table 12; Ianelli et al., 2024).

Recent surveys reveal biomass increases and strong recruitment from the 2018 year class. The 2024 Acoustic-Trawl Survey estimated biomass at 2.87 million t, down 25% from 2022, consistent with other surveys (Honkalehto and McCarthy, 2015). Projections show stable stock conditions with low risk of falling below management thresholds (Ianelli et al., 2024; Figure 3; Figure 4).

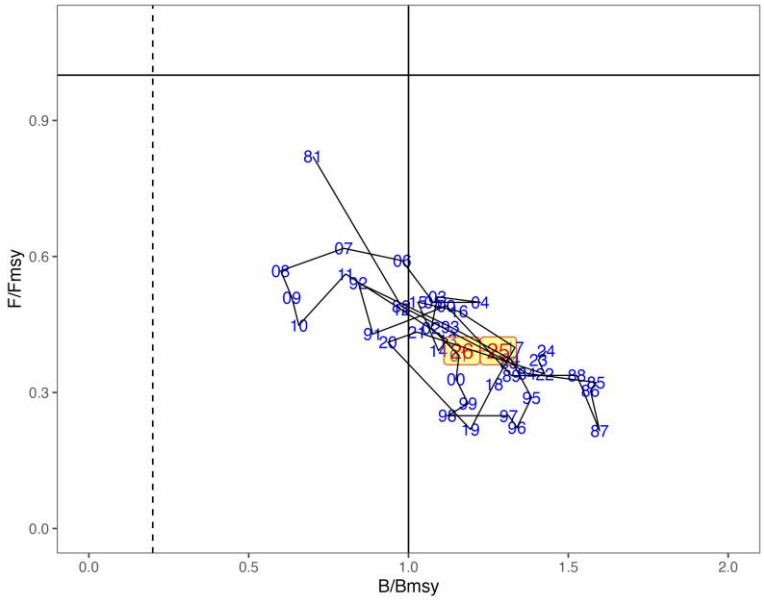


**Figure 3. Estimated SSB relative to annually estimated FMSY values and fishing mortality rates for EBS pollock. Two projection years are shaded in yellow. Source: Ianelli et al., 2024**

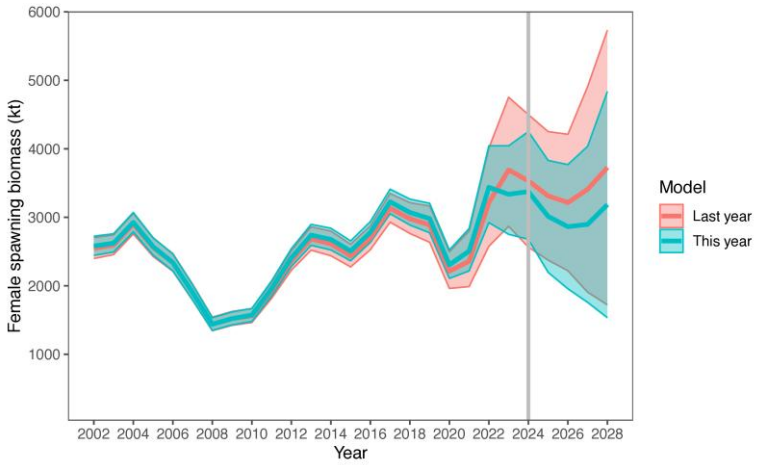


**Figure 4. The estimated EBS pollock SSB for model 23 last year and this with projections equal to the estimated fishing mortality from 2024. Source: Ianelli et al. 2024**

The estimate of BMSY is 2,310 kt (with a CV of 30%) which is less than the projected 2025 spawning biomass of 3,100 kt. For 2025, the estimates put the stock in Tier 1a. The corresponding maximum permissible ABC would thus be 3,715,000 t with a fishable biomass estimated at around 8,378 kt. For the current year SSB, this corresponds to 147% of the BMSY level (Table 5).

For the EBS pollock stock, Figure 5 indicates that the EBS biomass estimate in 2025 was lower than in 2024 (3.8 million t, about 30% below the previous year), but this decline should be interpreted within the context of the long survey series, which shows substantial interannual fluctuations around a long-term mean of about 4.6 million t (Markowitz et al., 2025).

The 2025 distribution and length composition remain broadly comparable to recent years, suggesting a continued widespread stock presence rather than an abrupt contraction. This interpretation is consistent with the SSC's conclusion that, although EBS bottom-trawl biomass and abundance declined from 2024 to 2025, the variability in these biomass and abundance indices remains within the typical range observed for this stock (SSC, 2025). The broader assessment context is also precautionary: the most recent full assessment projected EBS pollock spawning biomass in 2025 at about 3.1 million t, which is above BMSY (2.31 million t), and recent catches in 2024 and 2025 remained well below the respective ABCs (Ianelli et al., 2024; NPFMC, 2025a; b). Overall, the fluctuation shown in the figure is therefore consistent with the historically observed variability of EBS pollock and does not in itself indicate an abnormal stock decline.

The Northern Bering Sea (NBS) fall surface trawl survey indicates unusually high age-0 pollock catches in 2025, with the time series showing the highest value in the available record (Figure 6). According to the survey interpretation, these large catches, together with the observation that fish lengths appeared larger than typical for this time of year, suggest a northward movement of juvenile pollock in 2025 rather than evidence of a decline in stock status (AFSC, 2025a). The same survey notes that a cold pool was still present and that surface waters were near average (9.05 °C), while the broader 2025 Bering Sea summary reports that NBS fall conditions were warmer than recent years, but not as warm as heatwave years, and that age-0 pollock densities were very high (AFSC, 2025a). As these results are preliminary and relate specifically to the juvenile distribution and abundance signal in the NBS, they should be interpreted as evidence of distributional change and potentially strong juvenile presence in the north, rather than as a direct measure of adult stock biomass or overall stock condition (AFSC, 2025a; AFSC, 2025b).

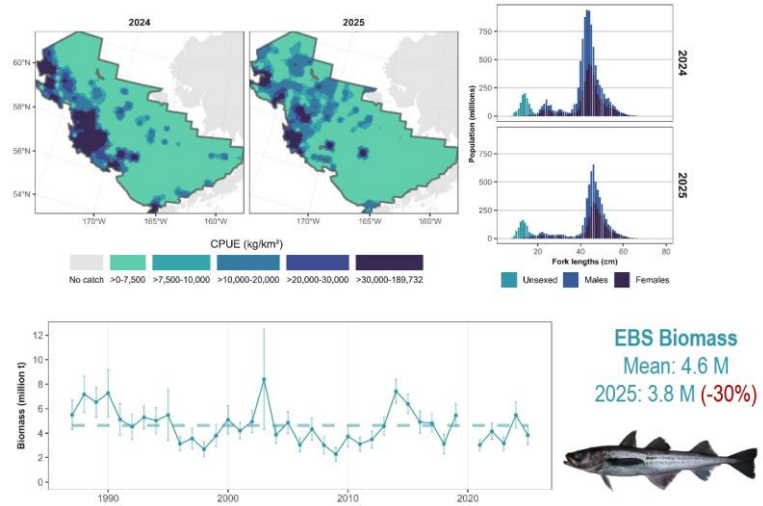


**Figure 5. Inverse-distance weighted design-based weight catch per unit effort, estimated design-based length composition, estimated design-based biomass time series with 95% confidence intervals and comparison to 2024 of BSAI pollock from the 2025 Eastern and Northern Bering Sea Bottom Trawl Survey. Source: Markowitz et al. 2025**

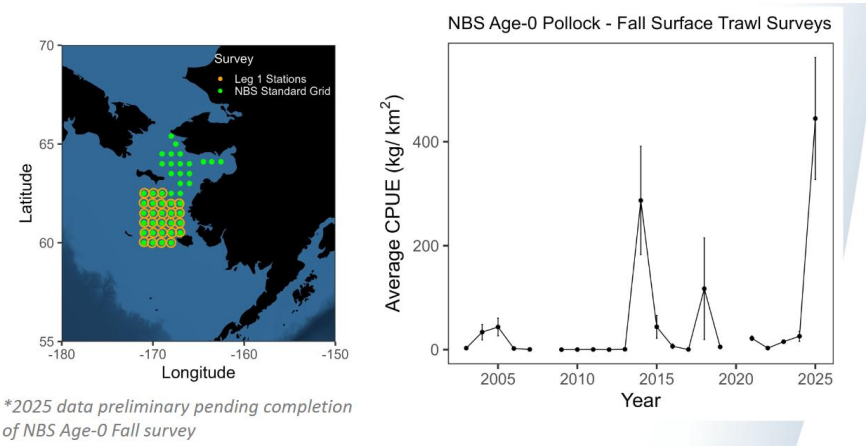


**Figure 6. Fall Northern Bering Sea surface trawl survey results for age-0 pollock. Preliminary 2025 data show unusually high juvenile pollock catches in the NBS, suggesting northward movement of juveniles and a strong juvenile presence in northern waters in 2025, rather than evidence of declining stock status. Source: AFSC 2025a**

**Table 5. Summary of results of EBS walleye pollock. Source: Ianelli et al. 2024**

**Tier 1 version**

| | As estimated or *specified* *last* year for: | | As estimated or *recommended* *this* year for: | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Quantity | 2024 | 2025 | 2025 | 2026 |
| M (natural mortality rate, ages 3+) | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0.3 |
| Tier | 1a | 1a | 1a | 1a |
| Projected total (age 3+) biomass (t) | 10,184,000 t | 9,437,000 t | 8,526,000 t | 8,075,000 t |
| Projected female spawning biomass (t) | 3,518,000 t | 3,255,000 t | 3,118,000 t | 3,342,000 t |
| $B_0$ | 6,728,000 t | 6,728,000 t | 5,975,000 t | 5,975,000 t |
| $B_{msy}$ | 2,689,000 t | 2,689,000 t | 2,310,000 t | 2,310,000 t |
| $F_{OFL}$ | 0.422 | 0.422 | 0.523 | 0.523 |
| $maxF_{ABC}$ | 0.379 | 0.379 | 0.443 | 0.443 |
| $F_{ABC}$ | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.402 | 0.402 |
| $OFL$ | 3,162,000 t | 3,449,000 t | 4,383,000 t | 3,785,000 t |
| $maxABC$ | 2,837,000 t | 3,095,000 t | 3,715,000 t | 3,209,000 t |
| $ABC$ | 2,313,000 t | 2,401,000 t | 2,417,000 t | 2,036,000 t |
| Status | 2022 | 2023 | 2023 | 2024 |
| Overfishing | No | n/a | No | n/a |
| Overfished | n/a | No | n/a | No |
| Approaching overfished | n/a | No | n/a | No |

**Tier 3 version**

| | As estimated or *specified* *last* year for: | | As estimated or *recommended* *this* year for: | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Quantity | 2024 | 2025 | 2025 | 2026 |
| M (natural mortality rate, ages 3+) | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0.3 | 0.3 |
| Tier | 1a | 1a | 3a | 3a |
| Projected total (age 3+) biomass (t) | 10,184,000 t | 9,437,000 t | 8,526,000 t | 8,075,000 t |
| Projected female spawning biomass (t) | 3,518,000 t | 3,255,000 t | 3,118,000 t | 3,342,000 t |
| $B_0(B_{100\%})$ | 6,728,000 t | 6,728,000 t | 5,902,000 t | 5,902,000 t |
| $B_{msy}(B_{35\%})$ | 2,689,000 t | 2,689,000 t | 2,066,000 t | 2,066,000 t |
| $F_{OFL}$ | 0.422 | 0.422 | 0.513 | 0.513 |
| $maxF_{ABC}$ | 0.379 | 0.379 | 0.394 | 0.394 |
| $F_{ABC}$ | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.394 | 0.394 |
| $OFL$ | 3,162,000 t | 3,449,000 t | 2,957,000 t | 2,496,000 t |
| $maxABC$ | 2,837,000 t | 3,095,000 t | 2,417,000 t | 2,036,000 t |
| $ABC$ | 2,313,000 t | 2,401,000 t | 2,417,000 t | 2,036,000 t |
| Status | 2022 | 2023 | 2023 | 2024 |
| Overfishing | No | n/a | No | n/a |
| Overfished | n/a | No | n/a | No |
| Approaching overfished | n/a | No | n/a | No |

### 5.2.3 GOA pollock

GOA pollock is genetically distinct from EBS stocks, though latitudinal gradients and mixing near Adak and Atka exist (Grant and Utter, 1980; I. Spies, pers. comm., 2021). The fishery transitioned to domestic operations in 1988, targeting pre-spawning aggregations in winter and deeper waters in summer. The 2023 biomass estimate was 921,886 t, driven by the 2020- and 2017-year classes. Acoustic and trawl surveys confirmed biomass increases, with a 71.7% rise in 2023 and a 17.2% increase in nearshore biomass (Monnahan et al., 2023). The age-structured model (1970-2024) accounts for fishing mortality, recruitment variability, and environmental influences. Model 23d, the preferred model, improved fit and precision, with spawning biomass at 56% of unfished levels in 2024 (Figure 7 and Figure 8; Monnahan et al., 2024).

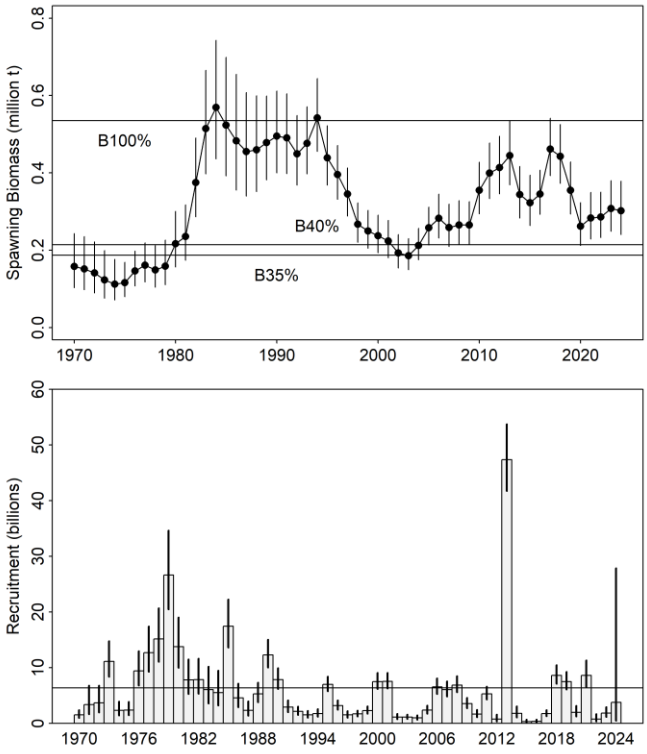


**Figure 7. Estimated time series of GOA pollock spawning biomass (top) and age 1 recruitment (bottom) for the base model, with horizontal line at the average from 1978-2023. Vertical bars represent two standard deviations. The B35% and B40% lines represent the current estimate of these benchmarks. Source: Monnahan et al., 2024**

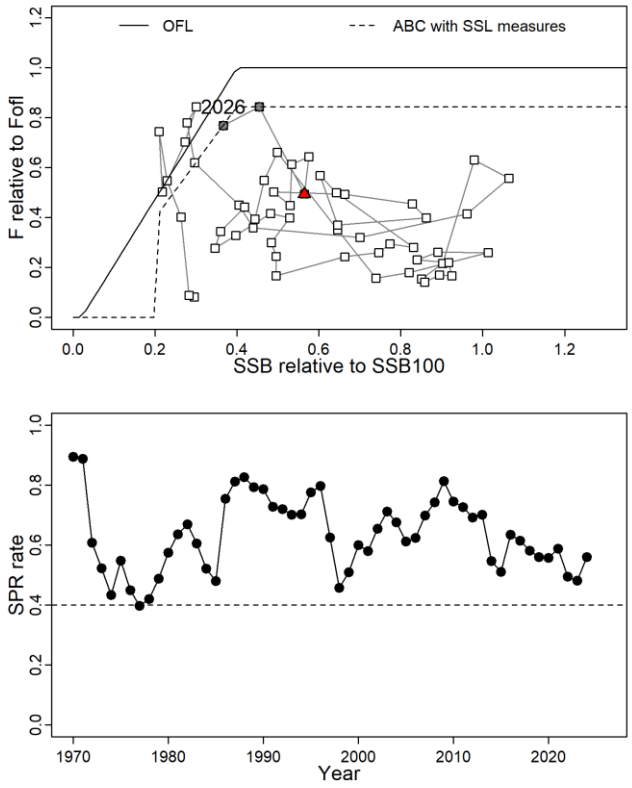


**Figure 8. Annual fishing mortality as measured in percentage of unfished spawning biomass per recruit (top). GOA pollock spawning biomass relative to the unfished level and fishing mortality relative to FMSY (bottom). The ratio of fishing mortality to FMSY is calculated using the estimated selectivity pattern in that year. Estimates of B100% SSB are based on current estimates of maturity at age, weight at age, and mean recruitment. Because these estimates change as new data become available, this figure can only be used in a general way to evaluate management performance relative to biomass and fishing mortality reference levels. Source: Monnahan et al., 2024**

The recommended 2025 acceptable biological catch (ABC) is 181,022 t, a 5.1% decrease from 2024, with an OFL of 210,111 t. Projections suggest negligible risk of the stock dropping below the B20% threshold through 2029. Harvest strategies were evaluated under various scenarios, with results supporting the maximum permissible ABC for 2025 (Table 6).

**Table 6. Summary of results of GOA walleye pollock. Source: Monnahan et al. 2024**

**Status Summary for Gulf of Alaska Pollock in W/C/WYK Areas**

| | As estimated or *specified last* year for: | | As estimated or *recommended this* year for: | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Quantity/Status** | 2024 | 2025 | 2025* | 2026* |
| M (natural mortality) | 0.300 | 0.300 | 0.300 | 0.300 |
| Tier | 3a | 3a | 3a | 3a |
| Projected total (age 3+) biomass (t) | 1,154,403 | 1,430,029 | 1,269,931 | 1,005,310 |
| Projected female spawning biomass (t) | 274,141 | 227,091 | 243,078 | 196,028 |
| $B_{100\%}$ | 505,000 | 505,000 | 535,000 | 535,000 |
| $B_{40\%}$ | 202,000 | 202,000 | 214,000 | 214,000 |
| $B_{35\%}$ | 177,000 | 177,000 | 187,000 | 187,000 |
| $F_{OFL}$ | 0.307 | 0.307 | 0.321 | 0.321 |
| $maxF_{ABC}$ | 0.260 | 0.260 | 0.271 | 0.271 |
| $F_{ABC}$ | 0.260 | 0.260 | 0.271 | 0.271 |
| OFL (t) | 269,916 | 182,891 | **210,111** | 153,971 |
| *max*ABC (t) | 232,543 | 157,687 | 181,022 | 133,075 |
| ABC (t) | 190,740 | 157,687 | **181,022** | 133,075 |
| | As determined *last* year for: | | As determined *this* year for: | |
| **Status** | 2023 | 2024 | 2024 | 2025 |
| Overfishing | No | n/a | No | n/a |
| Overfished | n/a | No | n/a | No |
| Approaching overfished | n/a | No | n/a | No |

*Projections are based on an estimated catch of 131,000 t for 2024 and 181,022 t and 133,075 t for 2025 and 2026.

The 2025 Gulf of Alaska bottom trawl survey indicates a positive signal for GOA pollock, with estimated biomass of about 1.214 million t, representing an increase of 32.1% relative to 2023 (Figure 9). As shown in the time series, the 2025 estimate is toward the upper end of the survey record and clearly above the long-term average, while the spatial distribution map suggests that pollock remained broadly distributed across the surveyed Gulf of Alaska shelf. The size composition shown in the figure is also consistent with continued representation of multiple size classes in the population. Here is a short text and a caption you can use.

The Shelikof Strait winter survey provides an additional fishery-independent indicator of GOA pollock status. As shown in Figure 10, the 2025 survey biomass was estimated at 327.2 thousand t, which is 13% higher than in 2024, while estimated abundance reached 903.1 million fish, an increase of 146% from 2024. The 2025 result therefore suggests an improvement relative to the previous year, although it remains well within the historical range of variability shown by the time series. The length-frequency panel also indicates the presence of a strong age-1 component together with older fish, supporting the interpretation that more than one cohort contributed to the 2025 survey signal. Considered together with the 2025 GOA bottom trawl survey, which estimated pollock biomass at approximately 1.214 million t (+32.1% from 2023), and with 2025 catches remaining below TAC and ABC, this figure supports the conclusion that GOA pollock did not show evidence of an abrupt decline in 2025 (AFSC, 2025b; NPFMC, 2025a; b).

In addition, the beach seine index estimated during the 2025 Ecosystem Surveys in Bering Sea & Gulf of Alaska for age-0 pollock shown on Figure 11 indicates that catches in 2025 were low relative to most recent years, especially compared with the stronger observations recorded in 2018 and 2024. At the same time, the figure also shows substantial interannual variability and wide uncertainty around several annual estimates, so this index should be interpreted as an early signal of recruitment strength, rather than as direct evidence of a change in adult stock status. In this context, the low 2025 value suggests that the 2025 year-class may be relatively weak, which is consistent with the broader 2025 GOA ecosystem summary reporting that age-0 pollock densities were low and that gadid larval abundance was extremely low in 2025 (AFSC, 2025a; Litzow et al., 2022). Overall, this figure is best interpreted as evidence of a potentially weak incoming cohort, not as evidence on its own of a decline in the overall stock.

Taken together, these survey results support the view that the GOA pollock stock remained in a healthy condition in 2025 and do not indicate a declining stock trend. This interpretation is consistent with the most recent stock assessment, which projected the stock to remain above precautionary reference levels and concluded that the stock was not overfished and that overfishing was not occurring (AFSC, 2025a, b; Monnahan et al., 2024).

- Biomass estimate in 2025: ~1214000 mt
- +32.1% from 2023

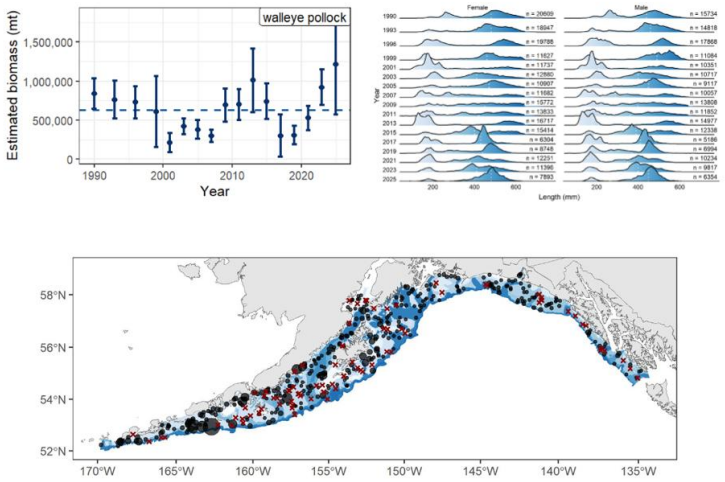


**Figure 9. Estimated design-based biomass time series with 95% confidence ranges, estimated design-based length compositions and maps of positive hauls of GOA pollock the from the 2025 Gulf of Alaska Biennial Bottom Trawl Survey Biomass trends. Source: AFSC, 2025b**

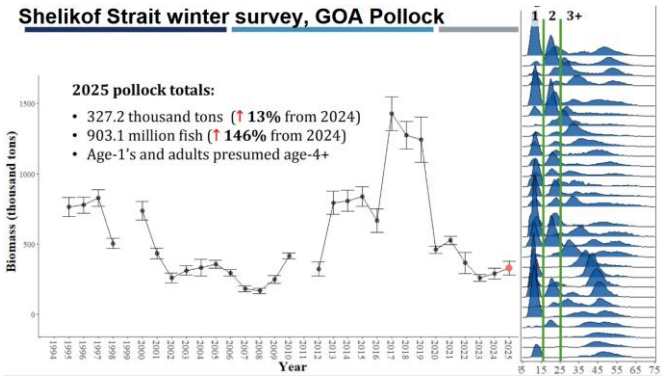


**Figure 10. Shelikof Strait winter survey results for Gulf of Alaska pollock, showing the annual biomass index and length-frequency distributions. Source: AFSC, 2025b**

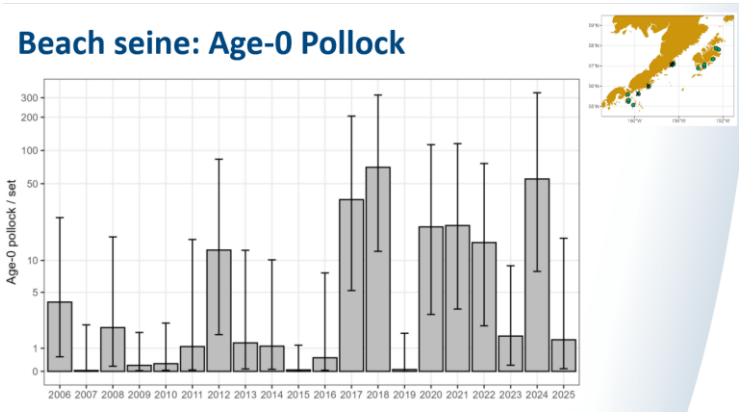


**Figure 11. Beach seine catches of age-0 pollock in the GOA during the 2006-2025 period. Source: AFSC 2025a**

## 5.3 Management practices of the competent management authority

### 5.3.1 Programmatic Evaluation Process

As reported at the last two audits, NPFMC had initiated a Programmatic Evaluation June 2023 (i.e., a review of its management policies, goals, and objectives for all federally managed fisheries in the BSAI and GOA with the intent of ensuring the Council's management framework is adequate to address current and future challenges, including climate change, and to improve the council's ecosystem-based management approach). At the April 2025 Council, it was confirmed that the process would be paused, given the uncertainty regarding forthcoming changes to NMFS' priorities, funding, and other resources.

At the October 2025 Council meeting it was confirmed that the Council had received from NMFS the full $2.5 million in Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding it applied for to support climate readiness planning, whether through continuing the Programmatic Evaluation or through other processes. In a presentation (Latanich, 2025) two possible pathways for the Council's consideration were set out: resuming staff work on the Programmatic Evaluation or taking no further action at this time. The latter would require the Council to reinstitute the triennial process of reviewing Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) Objectives.

The Council recommended taking no further action on the Programmatic Evaluation and expressed support for reinstituting the triennial comprehensive review of Groundfish FMP Objectives as a means for adaptive management. This process, like the Programmatic Evaluation, will provide an opportunity for the Council to consider making changes to FMP policy guidance, but will focus on the Groundfish FMPs.

At the December 2025 Council meeting, in response to the Council's decision at the October 2025 meeting to take no further action on the Programmatic Evaluation (initially envisioned as one analytical vehicle for supporting the Council's grant objectives) an update on the IRA funding for climate resilience and workplan adaptations was provided. This included implementation of the Climate Resilience Workplan, reconstituting the Council's Ecosystem Committee, and plans to develop plain-language communication and outreach materials.

### 5.3.2 Chum salmon bycatch in BS

At the February 2026 Council meeting, the Council received the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Regulatory Impact Review for a Proposed Amendment to the FMP for Groundfish of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Management Area - Bering Sea Chum Salmon Bycatch Management and testimony from more than 170 people, including Tribal leaders and members, Community Development Quota (CDQ) groups, Alaska communities dependent on pollock, and pollock fishery participants, which helped inform the Council's final recommendation to the Secretary of Commerce.

As reported in the February Council Newsletter, available science indicates recent declines in chum salmon populations across many regions of the North Pacific, including Canada, Japan, Russia, Korea, and the U.S., appear to be driven by warmer water temperatures in both the marine and freshwater environments which impact juvenile survival, prey availability and quality, metabolism and growth rates, and reproductive rates. However, Western Alaska chum salmon are also taken as bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock trawl fishery. While responsible for less than 2% of Western Alaska chum mortality from all sources annually, bycatch reduces the amount of salmon that return to western and interior Alaska rivers. Public testimony highlighted that even small increases in the number of salmon returning back to these rivers and the communities that rely on them represents a substantial benefit.

As a result, the Council made final recommendations to establish a bycatch limit and corridor closure, and additional avoidance measures, to minimize Western Alaska chum salmon in the BS pollock fishery.

The Council recommended a bycatch cap of 45,000 Western Alaska chum salmon with a corridor closure for the BS pollock fishery. The Western Alaska chum salmon bycatch cap was considered to be critical to the Council's approach because approximately 80% of the chum salmon in the overall bycatch are not from Western Alaska. The majority of the pollock fishery's chum salmon bycatch are Russian and Asian hatchery chum, as reported in NOAA's annual genetics analyses.

The corridor includes 40 ADF&G groundfish statistical areas (stat areas) north of Unimak Pass. The corridor covers the area where consistently more than 80% of the Western Alaska chum bycatch is caught.

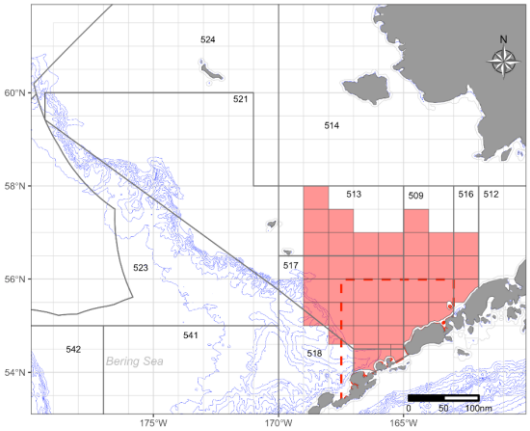


**Figure 12. Recommended in-season corridor. The Catcher Vessel Operational Area[1] is shown to be the red dashed line. Source: BS chum salmon bycatch reduction draft EIS**

All western Alaska chum salmon caught as bycatch in the corridor would count towards the bycatch cap during a migration period identified as critical for Western Alaska chum salmon (June 10 – August 31), which overlaps with the pollock fishery B season.

The Western Alaska chum salmon bycatch cap (by number and %) would be divided among the four pollock fishing sectors:

- CDQ: 4,410 (9.8%)
- Catcher vessels delivering to shoreside plants: 31,950 (71%)
- Catcher vessels delivering to motherships: 4,365 (9.7%)
- Catcher processors: 4,275 (9.5%)

[1] The Catcher Vessel Operational Area (CVOA) is a specific, regulated zone in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) management area. It is primarily used to manage large-scale trawl fisheries—such as Alaska pollock and Pacific cod—by dictating where independent fishing boats (catcher vessels) can operate and where their catch must be delivered

If a sector reaches its portion of the corridor bycatch cap, it will have to close 50% of the corridor for the remainder of the June 10 – August 31 period. Failure to do so would result in a closure of the same areas in the following year for the entire period June 10 – August 31.

The cap is intended to directly change behavior. Vessels will use NOAA genetic data from previous seasons and newly available in-season genetic data from the Bristol Bay Science and Research Institute to try to avoid reaching the limit. By allowing each sector to choose areas to close if its bycatch limit is exceeded, the recommended measures are considered to provide some operational flexibility and more transparency in reporting by requiring greater communication among the pollock fishery, salmon users, Alaska Native Tribes, and Tribally authorized consortia and fish commissions.

The Western Alaska chum salmon bycatch limit and corridor closure would not be in effect if more than approximately 3,871,000 summer chum salmon and 1,390,300 fall chum salmon return to the Yukon River. The Council included this abundance index to acknowledge that, should Yukon River summer and fall chum salmon abundance increase such that returns meet or exceed these values (90$^{th}$ percentile of each stock's run reconstruction using data from 1992-2022), the Western Alaska chum salmon bycatch cap and corridor may be constraining for the pollock fishery and could be suspended.

Additionally, the start date of the Winter Herring Savings Area would be adjusted from September 1 to September 30 for the pollock trawl fishery. This start date will not change for any other BSAI groundfish trawl fishery. The herring bycatch limit is not apportioned among the pollock sectors, meaning any one sector's herring bycatch can trigger the herring savings area closures for all sectors. The Council included this recommended measure to avoid closing off fishing grounds for the catcher processor sector that have had historically low herring, Chinook salmon, and Western Alaska chum salmon bycatch during the month of September, in comparison to other areas. The next required step is for NOAA to respond to comments and prepare a final EIS and proposed regulations.

### 5.3.3 Chinook salmon bycatch in BS

ADFG reported that the combined, post-season sum of the run sizes from the rivers comprising the three-river index (Upper Yukon, Unalakleet, and Kuskokwim Rivers) of Chinook salmon is 176,334 and is below the threshold level of 250,000. Therefore, the performance standard for the BS pollock fishery will remain at 33,318 Chinook salmon, and the prohibited species catch (PSC) limit will remain at 45,000, for 2025 and 2026, as identified in 50 CFR 679.21.

### 5.3.4 Regulatory changes

Amendment 126 (BSAI) and Amendment 114 (GOA) Trawl Electronic Monitoring were fully implemented in 2025. Their purpose is to improve salmon accounting, reduce monitoring costs, improve the quality of monitoring data, and modify current retention and/or discard requirements by providing catcher vessels directing for pollock with pelagic trawl, along with associated tender vessels and processors, an option to integrate electronic monitoring (EM).

While operating on a Trawl EM (TEM) category trip, catcher vessel operators are required to retain all catch with a few minor exceptions (i.e., jellyfish, large sharks), or when the safety and stability of the vessel would be compromised. Unsorted catch is then delivered to an EM tender vessel, or an EM-approved shoreside processor or an EM-approved stationary floating processor where it is monitored by shoreside observers who have access to all catch.

The incentives for using EM includes: more accurate accounting of salmon numbers, the extrapolation of shoreside observer salmon counts has resulted in several pollock closures; not needing to have an observer; fishermen do not like to discard fish, using EM allows them to be exempt from prohibitions against exceeding Maximum Retainable Amounts (MRA), requirements to discard species categorized as Prohibited Species Catch (PSC), prohibitions against exceeding pollock trip and daily limits.

In 2025, in the BSAI, 112 vessels applied to be in the EM Trawl gear pool of which 72 were expected to fished (NOAA, 2025); and, in the GOA, all but 2 of the 61 pollock trawl catcher vessels participated in the TEM program (Bennett, 2026).

### 5.3.5 Pelagic trawl gear definition

As reported at last year's audit, the Council was in the process of reviewing the Federal pelagic trawl gear definition as part of ongoing efforts to minimize the impacts of pelagic trawl gear on bycatch, sensitive habitat, and unobserved mortality.

Pelagic trawl gear has evolved since the definition was last updated in 1993 due to Council actions focused on conservation and sustainability goals, e.g., salmon bycatch excluders. Therefore, it was agreed action was needed to ensure a clearer more accurate definition to reflect the gear currently being used in the fishery.

At the June 2025 Council meeting the Council recommended revising the definition of pelagic trawl gear by modifying the following limits: 1) remove outdated text related to parallel line trawls, 2) remove limits on use of flotation, 3) remove reference to metallic components, and 4) prohibit the use of metal chains in the middle section of the net, other than short lengths of chain used to prevent twisting. Additionally, the Council's clarified that the following components are not limited and/or subject to limits specified in the pelagic trawl gear definition: 1) the codend, 2) bycatch excluder devices, and 3) sensors and instruments that function in an observational capacity, and instruments that are designed to exclude bycatch or adjust the gear (including instruments that minimize seafloor contact).

### 5.3.6 Pelagic trawl gear innovation initiative and development

At the June 2025 Council meeting, the Council received research updates and reviewed a discussion paper to inform options to incentivise pelagic trawl gear innovation and identified a timeline for receiving the final research results and considering potential management measures.

The Council's interest in pelagic trawl gear innovation is to encourage modifications that can be expected to minimize bycatch, impacts to sensitive seafloor habitat and unobserved mortality, and improve gear efficiency and effectiveness. The staff discussion paper highlighted the current state of knowledge, including ongoing research, limitations to innovation, regulatory processes for gear revision, and management tools. The Council also received two presentations with updates on ongoing collaborative research under the Gear Innovation Initiative: first, from the FAST Lab at Alaska Pacific University, reviewing aspects of the Fishing Effects Model and updates on the academic, analytical portion of the Initiative; and second, from the Pelagic Trawl Industry Working Group with an update on the gear configurations, vessel information, and fishing practices the group has provided to the FAST Lab for analysis. The Council requested that staff develop a webpage on the Council's website to consolidate information and updates about ongoing research.

The Council intends to use the gear innovation research and other ongoing research to better quantify and understand current bottom contact by pelagic trawl gear types. The Council will use that to evaluate management measures to further minimize the impacts of pelagic trawl gear in areas that are currently closed to nonpelagic trawl gear and to address potential unobserved crab mortality, unless the industry can document, as described below, limited seafloor contact and/or impacts.

- 2026 Measures for Dynamic Spatial Closures in the Bering Sea: The Council requested the Bering Sea pollock industry to provide a report in December 2025 about their plans for using dynamic spatial closures for the 2026 pollock A season, to protect Bristol Bay red king crab while still avoiding salmon bycatch.
- Gear Innovation and other Research: The Council identified a specific timeframe of April 2026, to hear reports back on the progress with the Gear Innovation Initiative. During the same meeting, the Council also requested updates on Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation crab research and an EFP to test modifications to the footrope of pelagic trawl gear.
- Fishing Effects Model: the new baseline information on bottom contact estimates from Alaska fishing gears should be integrated into the peer-reviewed Fishing Effects model that the Council uses to assess the effects of commercial fishing on essential fish habitats.
- Potential management measures: Once the research is available, and specifically in 2026, the Council highlighted its intent to use the gear research and the updated bottom contact estimates in the Fishing Effects Model to develop options to revise the performance standard for pelagic trawl gear operations, or other appropriate measures.

## 5.4 Impacts of fishery on ecosystem

### 5.4.1 Associated and endangered, threatened, and protected (ETP) species

"The 'Main' and 'Minor' bycatch classification together makes up 95% of the associated species bycatch profile of a given target fishery. The top 95% is assessed, while the bottom 5% is not assessed. Of the 95% assessed, the top 80% is classified as Main Associated Species Catch, while the bottom 15% is classified as Minor Associated Species Catch" (RFM Guidance to Performance Evaluation v2.0). In the case of the Alaska pollock fishery, the target catch is above 300,000 tons so, as per the RFM requirements, the main associated species constitute 85% instead of 80%, and the minor associated species constitute the bottom 10% instead of 15%.

Additionally, "ETP species must be acknowledged as such when recognized by national legislation adopted at the state and federal level in Alaska, or when recognized through a binding international agreement. Alternatively, species listed under Appendix 1 of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) or under the International Union for the Conservation of Nature

(IUCN) Red List and impacted negatively[2] by the fishery (i.e., direct or indirect mortality) shall be assessed as ETP unless it can be proven that their status in Alaska waters is above the point where recruitment is impaired or where other similar proxies indicate that the species is not biologically depleted" (RFM Guidance to Performance Evaluation v2.0).

It is known that certain gear types have more impact on certain species (e.g., longline are more likely to catch seabirds than demersal trawl). Table 7 and Table 8 show catch data for the BSAI pollock and GOA pollock fisheries, respectively. None of the species are listed in CITES Appendix 1 or the IUCN Red List; however, the ones labeled as PSC (ETP) are protected by federal management measures limiting bycatch of these species. Overall, these catches and interactions are similar to previous years. See Section 6.1.4 for more details.

[2] "For ETP species, interactions with the stock under consideration shall not cause departure from agreed management measures, such as those designed to allow for species restoration across a given geographical area. In other words, any interaction with or bycatch of ETP species shall be minimal and not considered significant, and/or disruptive in terms of ensuring the effectiveness of agreed management measures set up in order to achieve the management and conservation objectives for the ETP species in question." (RFM's Guidance to Performance Evaluation v2.0)

**Table 7. Catch data of target, non-target, PSC/ETP, and habitat species for 2021-2025 by the BSAI pollock fishery. Blue = target species, green = main associated species, orange = minor associated species, yellow = PSC/ETP species, purple = habitats, white = other bycatch. Source: observer data**

| Species | Target, Main Associated, Minor Associated, Other Bycatch, PSC/ETP, or Habitat | Catch (mt) | | | | | | Percent of Total Average | Percent of Total Average Bycatch |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | Five-Year Average | | |
| Pollock | Target | 1,338,192.49 | 1,062,010.35 | 1,262,541.74 | 1,264,293.49 | 1,330,786.79 | 1,251,564.97 | 98.12% | NA |
| Alaska plaice | Minor associated | 125.73 | 136.41 | 93.04 | 173.64 | 48.02 | 115.37 | 0.01% | 0.48% |
| Alaska skate | Main associated | 703.96 | 452.64 | 251.49 | 230.81 | 292.07 | 386.19 | 0.03% | 1.61% |
| Aleutian skate | Minor associated | 6.72 | 5.69 | 14.04 | 5.81 | 0.00 | 6.45 | 0.00% | 0.03% |
| Arrowtooth flounder | Minor associated | 413.29 | 279.50 | 252.34 | 332.16 | 293.05 | 314.07 | 0.02% | 1.31% |
| Atka mackerel | Minor associated | 544.97 | 201.50 | 40.24 | 45.00 | 12.07 | 168.76 | 0.01% | 0.70% |
| Bairdi tanner crab* | PSC (ETP) | 8,417.00 | 4,758.00 | 11,997.30 | 10,119.57 | 4,822.00 | 8,022.77 | NA | NA |
| Benthic urochordata | Minor associated | 1.32 | 1.55 | 1.20 | 2.06 | 0.57 | 1.34 | 0.00% | 0.01% |
| Big skate | Minor associated | 7.50 | 1.62 | 7.90 | 7.77 | 0.00 | 4.96 | 0.00% | 0.02% |
| Birds, unidentified* | Other bycatch | 0.00 | 0.00 | 3.00 | 0.00 | 10.11 | 2.62 | NA | NA |
| Blue king crab* | PSC (ETP) | 0.44 | 59.00 | 0.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 12.29 | NA | NA |
| Butter sole | Minor associated | 31.01 | 11.34 | 23.56 | 23.80 | 0.00 | 17.94 | 0.00% | 0.07% |
| Chinook salmon* | PSC (ETP) | 13,852.00 | 6,415.00 | 11,874.00 | 8,054.40 | 19,825.00 | 12,004.08 | NA | NA |
| Corals bryozoans, unidentified | Habitat | 0.01 | 0.03 | 0.27 | 0.02 | 0.03 | 0.07 | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Dusky rockfish | Minor associated | 12.75 | 6.30 | 7.27 | 12.45 | 0.00 | 7.75 | 0.00% | 0.03% |
| Eelpouts | Minor associated | 0.67 | 0.43 | 0.58 | 2.71 | 13.62 | 3.60 | 0.00% | 0.01% |
| Flathead sole | Main associated | 1,529.81 | 948.11 | 843.77 | 960.38 | 1,812.90 | 1,218.99 | 0.10% | 5.08% |
| Giant grenadier | Minor associated | 54.94 | 0.00 | 86.34 | 17.87 | 5.02 | 32.84 | 0.00% | 0.14% |
| Golden king crab* | PSC (ETP) | 115.00 | 165.00 | 132.00 | 4.00 | 2.00 | 83.60 | NA | NA |
| Halibut | PSC (ETP) | 131.09 | 158.00 | 70.31 | 53.29 | 65.98 | 95.73 | 0.01% | 0.40% |
| Herring | PSC (ETP) | 1,708.27 | 1,708.00 | 3,087.08 | 1,280.61 | 3,030.00 | 2,162.79 | 0.17% | 9.01% |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kamchatka flounder | Minor associated | 49.38 | 158.44 | 35.33 | 13.62 | 44.07 | 60.17 | 0.00% | 0.25% |
| Kittiwakes* | Other bycatch | 7.01 | 0.00 | 3.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 2.00 | NA | NA |
| Laysan albatross* | Other bycatch | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | NA | NA |
| Misc. fish | Minor associated | 35.17 | 22.97 | 37.77 | 42.65 | 98.69 | 47.45 | 0.00% | 0.20% |
| Murre* | Other bycatch | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | NA | NA |
| Non-Chinook salmon* | PSC (ETP) | 546,472.00 | 242,375.00 | 112,512.42 | 35,151.57 | 151,457.00 | 217,593.60 | NA | NA |
| Northern fulmar* | Other bycatch | 103.15 | 128.00 | 56.00 | 93.06 | 198.08 | 115.66 | NA | NA |
| Northern rockfish | Minor associated | 83.82 | 46.44 | 40.76 | 44.82 | 53.19 | 53.81 | 0.00% | 0.22% |
| Opilio tanner crab* | PSC (ETP) | 4,668.00 | 1,952.00 | 4,100.00 | 10,553.12 | 14,423.85 | 7,139.39 | NA | NA |
| Other alcids* | Other bycatch | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | NA | NA |
| Pacific cod | Main associated | 9,103.60 | 3,786.17 | 3,820.84 | 2,923.14 | 3,314.74 | 4,589.70 | 0.36% | 19.12% |
| Pacific ocean perch | Main associated | 2,468.19 | 1,467.95 | 1,345.46 | 1,812.33 | 3,994.50 | 2,217.69 | 0.17% | 9.24% |
| Red king crab* | PSC (ETP) | 52.00 | 311.00 | 54.45 | 230.04 | 1,018.00 | 333.10 | NA | NA |
| Rex sole | Minor associated | 189.79 | 104.55 | 203.61 | 209.39 | 0.00 | 141.47 | 0.01% | 0.59% |
| Rock sole | Main associated | 830.40 | 677.50 | 549.37 | 888.31 | 556.67 | 700.45 | 0.05% | 2.92% |
| Rougheye rockfish | Minor associated | 0.47 | 3.09 | 1.10 | 0.94 | 15.35 | 4.19 | 0.00% | 0.02% |
| Sablefish | Main associated | 1,106.06 | 352.76 | 490.15 | 105.19 | 50.91 | 421.01 | 0.03% | 1.75% |
| Salmon shark | Minor associated | 128.00 | 41.91 | 206.27 | 110.49 | 0.00 | 97.33 | 0.01% | 0.41% |
| Sculpin | Minor associated | 70.83 | 48.77 | 42.36 | 49.74 | 45.84 | 51.51 | 0.00% | 0.21% |
| Scypho jellies | Main associated | 7,829.68 | 7,609.71 | 7,071.98 | 4,402.28 | 1,769.23 | 5,736.58 | 0.45% | 23.89% |
| Sea anemone, unidentified | Minor associated | 3.09 | 1.34 | 3.11 | 3.53 | 0.67 | 2.35 | 0.00% | 0.01% |
| Sea pens, whips | Habitat | 1.99 | 1.41 | 2.01 | 0.96 | 1.52 | 1.58 | 0.00% | 0.01% |
| Sea star | Minor associated | 19.99 | 184.56 | 27.90 | 15.63 | 8.34 | 51.29 | 0.00% | 0.21% |
| Shearwaters* | Other bycatch | 7.01 | 12.00 | 3.00 | 7.00 | 9.25 | 7.65 | NA | NA |
| Shortraker rockfish | Minor associated | 8.83 | 1.70 | 2.80 | 0.69 | 142.96 | 31.40 | 0.00% | 0.13% |
| Skate, unidentified | Minor associated | 190.46 | 100.20 | 123.01 | 125.61 | 146.03 | 137.06 | 0.01% | 0.57% |
| Sleeper shark | Minor associated | 40.92 | 13.63 | 62.73 | 19.26 | 0.00 | 27.31 | 0.00% | 0.11% |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sponge, unidentified | Habitat | 0.17 | 0.55 | 0.44 | 0.14 | 0.07 | 0.27 | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Squid | Main associated | 3,821.91 | 3,704.60 | 3,942.05 | 4,384.22 | 6,265.42 | 4,423.64 | 0.35% | 18.42% |
| Starry flounder | Minor associated | 17.07 | 3.26 | 8.47 | 12.76 | 0.00 | 8.31 | 0.00% | 0.03% |
| Thornyhead rockfish | Minor associated | 2.07 | 3.11 | 4.07 | 9.46 | 0.00 | 3.74 | 0.00% | 0.02% |
| Turbot | Minor associated | 40.27 | 23.43 | 37.97 | 16.73 | 33.17 | 30.32 | 0.00% | 0.13% |
| White blotched skate | Minor associated | 3.01 | 9.00 | 5.90 | 1.56 | 0.00 | 3.89 | 0.00% | 0.02% |
| Yellowfin sole | Main associated | 753.98 | 887.22 | 749.87 | 522.56 | 230.64 | 628.86 | 0.05% | 2.62% |
| Total** | | 1,370,264.79 | 1,085,176.51 | 1,286,137.18 | 1,283,158.77 | 1,353,134.93 | 1,275,574.44 | | |

Notes:
Associated and other bycatch species with percent of total average bycatch of ≤0.00% are not shown in table.
* Number of individuals instead of mt
** Does not include species with individual numbers instead of weight

**Table 8. Catch data of target, non-target, PSC/ETP, and habitat species for 2021-2025 by the GOA pollock fishery. Blue = target species, green = main associated species, orange = minor associated species, yellow = PSC/ETP species, purple = habitats, white = other bycatch. Source: observer data**

| Species | Target, Main Associated, Minor Associated, Other Bycatch, PSC/ETP, or Habitat | Catch (mt) | | | | | | Percent of Total Average | Percent of Total Average Bycatch |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | Five-Year Average | | |
| Pollock | Target | 96,725.00 | 127,866.84 | 132,687.32 | 125,151.34 | 134,584.93 | 123,403.09 | 94.09% | NA |
| Arrowtooth flounder | Main associated | 810.00 | 771.00 | 834.19 | 590.66 | 408.65 | 682.90 | 0.52% | 8.80% |
| Atka mackerel | Other bycatch | 4.09 | 0.59 | 0.09 | 0.20 | 0.14 | 1.02 | 0.00% | 0.01% |
| Bairdi tanner crab* | PSC (ETP) | 1,791.00 | 746.00 | 1,256.28 | 1,395.00 | 221.28 | 1,081.91 | NA | NA |
| Big skate | Minor associated | 53.37 | 58.00 | 59.53 | 15.44 | 188.30 | 74.93 | 0.06% | 0.97% |
| Butter sole | Other bycatch | 1.92 | 3.36 | 0.63 | 1.15 | 0.00 | 1.41 | 0.00% | 0.02% |
| Chinook salmon* | PSC (ETP) | 10,595.00 | 13,220.00 | 18,351.53 | 25,771.74 | 13,151.81 | 16,218.02 | NA | NA |
| Corals bryozoans, unidentified | Habitat | 0.00 | 0.03 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.01 | 0.00% | 0.00% |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dover sole | Other bycatch | 0.89 | 0.20 | 2.58 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.73 | 0.00% | 0.01% |
| Dusky rockfish | Minor associated | 37.00 | 47.37 | 46.58 | 11.20 | 28.71 | 34.17 | 0.03% | 0.44% |
| English sole | Other bycatch | 14.00 | 2.56 | 37.24 | 14.72 | 0.00 | 13.70 | 0.01% | 0.18% |
| Flathead sole | Minor associated | 109.00 | 70.22 | 133.50 | 152.97 | 123.64 | 117.87 | 0.09% | 1.52% |
| Giant grenadier | Other bycatch | 9.48 | 29.51 | 12.29 | 0.03 | 37.58 | 17.78 | 0.01% | 0.23% |
| Golden king crab* | PSC (ETP) | 0.15 | 0.12 | 0.12 | 25.99 | 0.00 | 5.28 | NA | NA |
| Halibut | PSC (ETP) | 81.00 | 59.88 | 44.05 | 11.52 | 16.76 | 42.64 | 0.03% | 0.55% |
| Herring | PSC (ETP) | 16.37 | 83.00 | 67.88 | 35.19 | 94.93 | 59.47 | 0.05% | 0.77% |
| Longnose skate | Other bycatch | 14.94 | 17.48 | 20.21 | 0.00 | 11.86 | 12.90 | 0.01% | 0.17% |
| Misc. fish | Minor associated | 58.47 | 65.88 | 67.93 | 13.50 | 32.97 | 47.75 | 0.04% | 0.62% |
| Non-Chinook salmon* | PSC (ETP) | 1,160.00 | 1,033.00 | 2,167.00 | 2,155.53 | 1,298.81 | 1,562.87 | NA | NA |
| Northern rockfish | Other bycatch | 1.88 | 1.15 | 0.69 | 0.45 | 0.49 | 0.93 | 0.00% | 0.01% |
| Octopus | Other bycatch | 0.35 | 0.12 | 0.70 | 0.75 | 0.31 | 0.45 | 0.00% | 0.01% |
| Opilio tanner crab* | PSC (ETP) | 0.13 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.03 | NA | NA |
| Other osmerids | Minor associated | 88.75 | 1.27 | 11.45 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 20.29 | 0.02% | 0.26% |
| Pacific cod | Main associated | 2,917.09 | 3,479.04 | 3,975.07 | 636.66 | 3,257.76 | 2,853.12 | 2.18% | 36.78% |
| Pacific ocean perch | Main associated | 779.00 | 2,251.67 | 2,217.57 | 817.54 | 1,159.32 | 1,445.02 | 1.10% | 18.63% |
| Rattail grenadier, unidentified | Minor associated | 46.71 | 58.76 | 33.74 | 1.58 | 3.33 | 28.82 | 0.02% | 0.37% |
| Red king crab* | PSC (ETP) | 3.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.51 | 0.03 | 0.71 | NA | NA |
| Rex sole | Minor associated | 51.00 | 16.00 | 66.36 | 9.53 | 11.72 | 30.92 | 0.02% | 0.40% |
| Rock sole | Main associated | 181.09 | 171.82 | 241.20 | 1,452.26 | 0.00 | 409.27 | 0.31% | 5.28% |
| Rockfish, unidentified | Other bycatch | 0.00 | 15.62 | 0.00 | 16.95 | 2.27 | 6.97 | 0.01% | 0.09% |
| Rougheye rockfish | Minor associated | 39.77 | 90.02 | 79.41 | 13.73 | 20.95 | 48.78 | 0.04% | 0.63% |
| Sablefish | Minor associated | 58.00 | 85.88 | 96.81 | 6.90 | 1.77 | 49.87 | 0.04% | 0.64% |
| Salmon shark | Minor associated | 42.63 | 50.19 | 18.31 | 138.13 | 0.00 | 49.85 | 0.04% | 0.64% |
| Sculpin | Other bycatch | 9.34 | 16.11 | 0.00 | 1.27 | 1.28 | 5.60 | 0.00% | 0.07% |
| Scypho jellies | Other bycatch | 9.75 | 3.37 | 12.57 | 14.81 | 1.07 | 8.31 | 0.01% | 0.11% |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Shark | Other bycatch | 1.63 | 1.83 | 1.07 | 0.90 | 0.00 | 1.09 | 0.00% | 0.01% |
| Sharpchin rockfish | Other bycatch | 0.00 | 2.35 | 0.00 | 16.97 | 0.00 | 3.86 | 0.00% | 0.05% |
| Shortraker rockfish | Minor associated | 28.02 | 115.47 | 140.23 | 39.22 | 303.18 | 125.22 | 0.10% | 1.61% |
| Skate, unidentified | Other bycatch | 2.84 | 3.08 | 3.87 | 11.89 | 0.00 | 4.34 | 0.00% | 0.06% |
| Sleeper shark | Minor associated | 25.38 | 23.53 | 23.74 | 95.74 | 0.00 | 33.68 | 0.03% | 0.43% |
| Smelt (Family Osmeridae) | Minor associated | 240.51 | 93.21 | 51.96 | 117.89 | 99.80 | 120.67 | 0.09% | 1.56% |
| Snails | Other bycatch | 0.02 | 0.00 | 22.84 | 0.00 | 0.14 | 4.60 | 0.00% | 0.06% |
| Spiny dogfish | Other bycatch | 13.00 | 5.45 | 11.99 | 5.34 | 0.00 | 7.15 | 0.01% | 0.09% |
| Sponge, unidentified | Habitat | 0.00 | 0.01 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00% | 0.00% |
| Squid | Main associated | 268.82 | 2,232.42 | 2,919.77 | 964.81 | 528.40 | 1,382.84 | 1.05% | 17.83% |
| Starry flounder | Other bycatch | 0.24 | 0.41 | 0.58 | 1.95 | 0.00 | 0.64 | 0.00% | 0.01% |
| Thornyhead rockfish | Other bycatch | 2.28 | 1.88 | 1.60 | 0.34 | 0.62 | 1.34 | 0.00% | 0.02% |
| Turbot | Other bycatch | 0.00 | 0.00 | 15.72 | 6.80 | 0.00 | 4.51 | 0.00% | 0.06% |
| Total** | | 102,745.39 | 137,797.74 | 143,961.57 | 130,371.33 | 140,920.86 | 131,159.38 | | |

Notes:
Associated and other bycatch species with percent of total average bycatch of ≤0.00% are not shown in table.
* Number of individuals instead of mt
** Does not include species with individual numbers instead of weight

### 5.4.2 Habitats and ecosystem

There have been no changes in where the fishery operates, its relative footprint, or how it impacts the habitat and ecosystem. See Section 6.1.4 for more details.

## 5.5 External factors (such as environmental issues) that may affect the fishery and its management

As stated in previous reports, the effects of environmental variation on production of pollock in the BSAI and GOA have been studied extensively in terms of physical oceanography, ecosystem variability, and fish production. NMFS and the regional offices coordinate the production of a vast amount of new environmental and other information expected to improve groundfish fishery management in Alaska. Several ecosystem-wide oceanographic phenomena have been identified. The Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO), with decadal changes in 'warm' and 'cold' phases has been correlated with a number of factors, including sea level pressure, precipitation, and salmon landing in the Pacific Ocean (https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/understanding-ocean-changes-and-climate-just-got-harder).

Groundfish species show interannual variability in recruitment that may be related to El Niño Southern Oscillation driven climate variability. Years of strong onshore transport, typical of warm years in the BS, often corresponds with strong recruitment. The extent and timing of the presence of sea ice in the BS also determines the area where cold bottom water temperatures will persist throughout the following spring and summer. This EBS area of cold water, known as the cold pool, varies with the annual extent and duration of the ice pack and can influence fish distributions.

Past conditions have been an unusually warm phase. In 2014-2016, sea surface temperatures were as much as 3° C (about 5.4° F) higher than average, lasted for months, and appeared on large-scale temperature maps as a red-orange mass of warm water many hundreds of miles across (aka 'the blob'). This appeared to be different from normal patterns of ocean conditions such as the El Niño Southern Oscillation or PDO. Figure 13 shows sea surface temperature changes in PDO for 1950-2021.

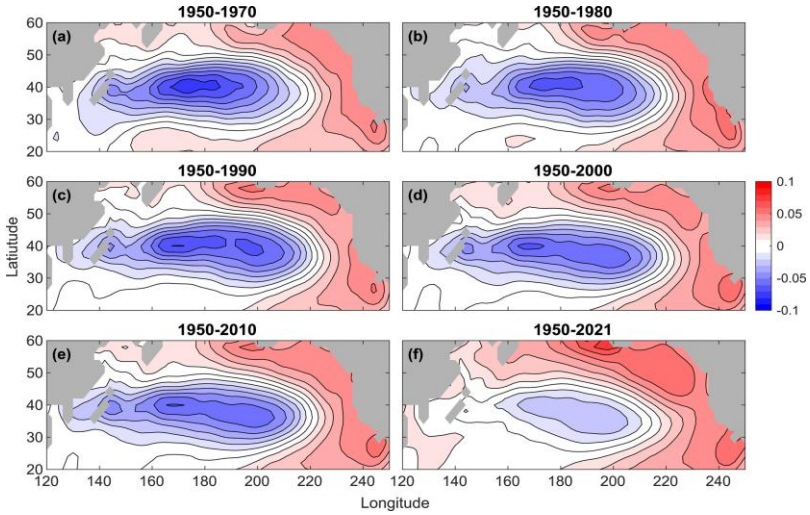


**Figure 13. Sea surface temperature changes within PDO for the period 1950-2021. Source: Werb and Rudnick 2023**

# 6 ASSESSMENT OUTCOME SUMMARY / FUNDAMENTAL CLAUSES SUMMARIES

According to the CSI RFM Fisheries Standard v2.2, the following fisheries management issues would cause a fishery to fail assessment:

- Dynamiting, poisoning, and other comparable destructive fishing practices.
- Significant illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities in the country jurisdiction.
- Shark finning (i.e., removal and retention of shark fins while the remainder of the shark is discarded in the ocean).
- Slavery and slave labor on board fishing vessels.
- Any significant lack of compliance with the requirements of an international fisheries agreement to which the United States is signatory. A fishery will have to be formally cited by the international governing body that has competence with the international treaty in question and that the United States has been notified of that citation of non-compliance.

As was the case during the second reassessment, there is no evidence that the fishery has undertaken such practices or has been non-compliant. At the last recertification, Supporting Clause 3.1 achieved a score of 7, owing to the lack of long-term management objectives within Alaska state-managed groundfish fisheries. This resulted in a medium confidence rating and application of a minor non-conformity. Prior to the first surveillance audit, action had been undertaken, and evidence was provided by the client that led to the rescoring at 10 of the Supporting Clause and the closing of the non-conformity. Table 9 shows the scores for each supporting clause at recertification and the scoring change. Additional information is provided in the sections below.

**Table 9. Scoring table**

| Key Component | Fundamental Clause | Supporting Clause | Applicable? | Score | Confidence Rating | Conformance Level | NC Number |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A – Fisheries Management System | 1 | 1.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 1.2 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 1.2.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 1.3 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 1.3.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 1.4 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 1.4.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 1.5 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 1.6 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 1.6.1 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 1.7 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 1.8 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 1.9 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | 2 | 2.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 2.1.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 2.1.2 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 2.2 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 2.3 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 2.4 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 2.5 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 2.6 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 2.7 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | 3 | 3.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 3.1.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 3.1.2 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 3.1.3 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 3.2 | NA | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 3.2.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 3.2.2 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 3.2.3 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 3.2.4 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| B – Science, Stock Assessment Activities, and the Precautionary Approach | 4 | 4.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 4.1.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 4.1.2 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 4.2 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 4.2.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 4.3 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 4.4 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 4.5 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 4.6 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 4.7 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 4.8 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 4.9 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 4.10 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 4.11 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | 5 | 5.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 5.1.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 5.1.2 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 5.2 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 5.3 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 5.4 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 5.5 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | 6 | 6.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 6.2 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 6.3 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 6.4 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 6.5 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | 7 | 7.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 7.1.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 7.1.2 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 7.2 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| C – Management Measures, Implementation, Monitoring, and Control | 8 | 8.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 8.1.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 8.1.2 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 8.2 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 8.3 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 8.4 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 8.4.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 8.5 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 8.5.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 8.6 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 8.7 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 8.8 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 8.9 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 8.10 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 8.11 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 8.12 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 8.13 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | 9 | 9.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 9.2 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 9.3 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | 10 | 10.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 10.2 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 10.3 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 10.3.1 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 10.4 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 10.4.1 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | 11 | 11.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 11.2 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 11.3 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 11.4 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| D – Serious Impacts of the Fishery on the Ecosystem | 12 | 12.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 12.2 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 12.2.1 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 12.2.2 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 12.2.3 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 12.2.4 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 12.2.5 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 12.2.6 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 12.2.7 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 12.2.8 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 12.2.9 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 12.2.10 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 12.2.11 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 12.3 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 12.4 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 12.5 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 12.6 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | | 12.7 | Yes | 10 | High | Full | |
| | 13 | 13.1 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 13.1.1 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 13.2 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 13.2.1 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 13.3 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 13.4 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 13.5 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 13.6 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 13.7 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 13.7.1 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 13.7.2 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 13.7.3 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 13.8 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 13.9 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 13.10 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 13.11 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 13.12 | No | NA | NA | NA | |
| | | 13.13 | No | NA | NA | NA | |

## 6.1 Update on consistency with Fundamental Clauses

### 6.1.1 Key Component A: The Fisheries Management System

| **Fundamental Clause 1. There shall be a structured and legally mandated management system based upon and respecting international, State, and local fishery laws, for the responsible utilization of the stock under consideration and conservation of the marine environment.** | |
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| 1.1 There shall be an effective legal and administrative framework established at international, State and local levels appropriate for fishery resource conservation and management. The management system and the fishery operate in compliance with the requirements of international, State, and local laws and regulations, including the requirements of any regional and/or international fisheries management agreement.<br>1.2 Management measures shall consider (1) stock status (i.e., overfished, biomass) and genetic diversity (stock structure) over its entire area of distribution, and (2) other biological characteristics of the fish stock (stock) including age of maturity and reproductive potential.<br>1.2.1 Previously agreed management measures established and applied in the same region is region shall be taken into account by management.<br>1.3 Where transboundary, shared, straddling, highly migratory, or high seas stocks are exploited by two or more States (neighboring or not), the applicant and appropriate management organizations concerned shall cooperate and take part in the formal fishery commission or arrangements appointed to ensure effective conservation and management of the stock(s) in question and their environment.<br>1.3.1 Conservation and management measures established for the *stock under consideration* within the jurisdiction of the relevant States for transboundary, shared, straddling, highly migratory, or high seas stocks, shall be compatible in a manner consistent with the rights, competence, and interests of the States concerned.<br>1.4 A State's fishery management organization not member or participant of a sub-regional or regional fisheries management organization shall cooperate, in accordance with relevant international agreements and law, in the conservation and management of the relevant fisheries resources by giving effect to any relevant measures adopted by such organization or arrangement.<br>1.4.1 A fishery management organization seeking to take any action through a non-fishery organization which may affect the conservation and management measures taken by a competent sub-regional or regional fisheries management organization or arrangement shall consult with the latter, in advance to the extent practicable, and take its views into account.<br>1.5 The applicant's fishery management system, when appropriate for the *stock under consideration*, shall actively foster cooperation between States with regard to (1) information gathering and exchange, (2) fisheries research, (3) fisheries management, and (4) fisheries development.<br>1.6 A fishery management organization and sub-regional or regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements, as appropriate, shall agree on the means by which the activities of such organizations and arrangements will be financed, bearing in mind, *inter alia*, the relative benefits derived from the fishery and the differing capacities of States to provide financial and other contributions. Where appropriate, and when possible, such organizations and arrangements shall aim to recover the costs of fisheries conservation, management, and research.<br>1.6.1 Without prejudice to relevant international agreements, States or fishery management organizations shall encourage banks and financial institutions not to require, as a condition of a loan or mortgage, fishing vessels or fishing support vessels to be flagged in a jurisdiction other than that of the State of beneficial ownership where such a requirement would have the effect of increasing the likelihood of non-compliance with international conservation and management measures.<br>1.7 Within the fishery management system, procedures shall be in place to keep the efficacy of current conservation and management measures and their possible interactions under continuous review, and to revise or abolish them in the light of new information.<br>1.8 The management arrangements and decision-making processes for the fishery shall be organized in a transparent manner.<br>1.9 Management organizations not party to the Agreement to Promote Compliance with International Conservation and Management Measures by Vessels Fishing in the High Seas shall be encouraged to accept the Agreement and to adopt laws and regulations consistent with the provisions of the Agreement. | |
| **Summary of relevant changes** | **Clause 1.6** |

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| | The NPFMC has had to shift meetings to an online-only format due to reduced federal travel/operational grants and the threat of government shutdowns. No significant negative repercussions owing to the partial government shutdown were reported at this audit.<br><br>**Clauses 1.1, 1.3, 1.3.1, 1.4, and 1.7**<br>No changes were reported with respect to bi-lateral cooperation between the United States and Russia and, in particular, the Intergovernmental Consultative Committee Fisheries Forum Agreement and The Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea ('The Donut Hole'). As indicated at the last surveillance, the audit team concluded that the changes in international cooperation provided by the Intergovernmental Consultative Committee are clearly beyond the control of the client and/or the responsible fishery management organizations and are unlikely to compromise the sustainable management of the pollock resource owing to the way the existing scientific monitoring and management approach are implemented by the U.S. fishery management organizations (i.e., separate stock assessments and management units).<br><br>**Clause 1.2, 1.2.1, 1.7, 1.8**<br>No relevant changes were reported.<br><br>**Clause 1.6.1 and 1.9**<br>Not applicable |
| **References** | NPFMC Newsletter, June 2025. https://www.npfmc.org/june-2025-newsletter/ |
| **Summary of consistency with CSI RFM Fisheries Standard** | The fishery continues to meet the requirements of this Fundamental Clause of the RFM Fisheries Standard. |

| **Fundamental Clause 2. Management organizations shall participate in coastal area management, decision making processes and activities related to the fishery and its users, supporting sustainable and integrated resource use, and conflict avoidance.** | |
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| 2.1 Within the fisheries management organization's jurisdiction, an appropriate policy, legal, and institutional framework shall be adopted in order to achieve sustainable and integrated use of living marine resources, (1) taking into account the fragility of coastal ecosystems and finite nature of their natural resources, (2) allowing for determination of the possible uses of coastal resources and governing access to them, and (3) recognizing the rights and needs of coastal communities and their customary practices to the extent compatible with sustainable development. In setting policies for the management of coastal areas, States shall take due account of the risks and uncertainties involved.<br>2.1.1 States shall establish mechanisms for cooperation and coordination in planning, development, conservation, and management of coastal areas.<br>2.1.2 The fisheries management organization shall ensure that the authority or authorities representing the fisheries sector and fishing communities in the coastal management process have the appropriate technical capacities and financial resources.<br>2.2 Representatives of the fisheries sector and fishing communities shall be consulted in the decision-making processes involving activities related to coastal area management planning and development. The public, as well as others affected, shall also be kept aware of the need for protection and management of coastal resources, and shall participate in the coastal management process.<br>2.3 Fisheries practices that avoid conflict among fishers and other users of the coastal area (e.g., fisheries enhancement facilities, tourism, energy) shall be adopted, and fishing shall be regulated in such a way as to avoid risk of conflict among fishers using different vessels, gear, and fishing methods. Procedures and mechanisms shall be established at the appropriate administrative level to settle conflicts that arise within the fisheries sector and between fisheries resource users and other coastal users.<br>2.4 States' fisheries management organizations and sub-regional or regional fisheries management organizations and arrangements shall give due publicity to conservation and management measures and ensure that laws, regulations, and other legal rules governing their implementation are effectively disseminated. The bases and purposes of such measures shall be explained to users of the resource in order to facilitate their application and thus gain increased support in the implementation of such measures.<br>2.5 The economic, social, and cultural value of coastal resources shall be assessed by the appropriate fisheries management organization in order to assist decision making on their allocation and use.<br>2.6 States shall cooperate to support and improve coastal area management, and in accordance with capacities, measures shall be taken to establish or promote (1) systems for research and monitoring of the coastal environment, and (2) multidisciplinary research of the coastal area using physical, chemical, biological, economic, social, legal, and institutional capabilities.<br>2.7 In the case of a States' activities that may have an adverse environmental effect on coastal areas of other States, States shall provide timely information and if possible, prior notification to potentially affected States, and consult with those States as early as possible. | |
| **Summary of relevant changes** | **Clause 2.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.2, 2.3.**<br>No relevant changes were reported.<br><br>**Clause 2.4, 2.5, 2.6**<br>As reported at the last two audits, NPFMC had initiated a Programmatic Evaluation June 2023 (i.e., a review of its management policies, goals, and objectives for all federally managed fisheries in the BSAI and GOA with the intent of ensuring the Council's management framework is adequate to address current and future challenges, including climate change, and to improve the council's ecosystem-based management approach). At the April 2025 Council, it was confirmed that the process would be paused, given the uncertainty regarding forthcoming changes to NMFS' priorities, funding, and other resources.<br><br>At the October 2025 Council meeting it was confirmed that the Council had received from NMFS the full $2.5 million in Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) funding it applied for to support climate readiness planning, whether through continuing the Programmatic Evaluation or through other processes. In a presentation (Latanich, 2025) two possible pathways for the Council's consideration were provided: resuming staff work on the Programmatic Evaluation or taking no further action at this time. The latter would require the Council to reinstitute the triennial process of reviewing Groundfish FMP Objectives.<br><br>The Council recommended taking no further action on the Programmatic Evaluation and expressed support for reinstituting the triennial comprehensive review of Groundfish FMP Objectives as a means for adaptive |

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| | management. This process, like the Programmatic Evaluation, will provide an opportunity for the Council to consider making changes to FMP policy guidance, but will focus on the Groundfish FMPs.<br><br>At the December 2025 Council meeting, in response to the Council's decision at the October 2025 meeting to take no further action on the Programmatic Evaluation (initially envisioned as one analytical vehicle for supporting the Council's grant objectives) an update on the IRA funding for climate resilience and workplan adaptations was provided. This included implementation of the Climate Resilience Workplan, reconstituting the Council's Ecosystem Committee, and plans to develop plain-language communication and outreach materials.<br><br>**Clause 2.7**<br>No relevant changes were reported. |
| **References** | Latanich. K., 2025, Presentation to North Pacific Fishery Management Council (October 2025) https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=f466f67d-743d-4036-a2f9-250055a26af2.pdf&fileName=PPT%20D4%20Programmatic%20Evaluation.pdf<br>NPFMC Newsletter, April 2025 Council, https://www.npfmc.org/april-2025-newsletter/<br>NPFMC Newsletter, October 2025 Council, https://www.npfmc.org/october-2025-newsletter/<br>NPFMC Newsletter, December 2025 Council, https://www.npfmc.org/december-2025-newsletter/ |
| **Summary of consistency with CSI RFM Fisheries Standard** | The fishery continues to meet the requirements of this Fundamental Clause of the RFM Fisheries Standard. |

| **Fundamental Clause 3. Management objectives shall be implemented through management rules and actions formulated in a plan or other framework.** | |
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| 3.1 Long-term management objectives shall be translated into a plan or other management document (taking into account uncertainty and imprecision) and be subscribed to by all interested parties.<br>3.1.1 There shall be management objectives seeking to ensure that ETP species are protected from adverse impacts resulting from interactions with the unit of certification and any fisheries enhancement activity, including recruitment overfishing or other impacts that are likely to be irreversible or very slowly reversible.<br>3.1.2 There shall be management objectives seeking to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts of the unit of certification on the *stock* under consideration's essential habitats, and on habitats that are highly vulnerable to damage by the unit of certification's fishing gear.<br>3.1.3 There shall be management objectives seeking to minimize adverse impacts of the unit of certification (including any fishery enhancement) on the structure, and function of the ecosystems that are likely to be irreversible or very slowly reversible.<br>3.2 Management measures shall provide, *inter alia,* that:<br>3.2.1 Excess fishing capacity shall be avoided, and exploitation of the stocks shall remain economically viable.<br>3.2.2 The economic conditions under which fishing industries operate shall promote responsible fisheries.<br>3.2.3 The interests of fishers, including those engaged in subsistence, small-scale, and artisanal fisheries shall be taken into account.<br>3.2.4 Biodiversity of aquatic ecosystems shall be conserved and ETP species shall be protected. Where relevant, there shall be management objectives, and as necessary, management measures. | |
| **Summary of relevant changes** | **Clause 3.1, 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.1.3, 3.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.2.3, 3.2.4**<br>No relevant changes were reported. |
| **References** | NA |
| **Summary of consistency with CSI RFM Fisheries Standard** | The fishery continues to meet the requirements of this Fundamental Clause of the RFM Fisheries Standard. |

### 6.1.2 Key Component B: Science and Stock Assessment Activities, and the Precautionary Approach

| **Fundamental Clause 4. There shall be effective fishery data (dependent and independent) collection and analysis systems for stock management purposes.** | |
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| 4.1 All significant fishery removals and mortality of the target species (shall be considered by management. Specifically, reliable and accurate data required for assessing the status of fishery(ies) and ecosystems—including data on retained catch, bycatch, discards, and waste—shall be collected. Data can include relevant traditional, fisher, or community knowledge, provided their validity can be objectively verified. These data shall be collected, at an appropriate time and level of aggregation, by relevant management organizations connected with the fishery, and provided to relevant States regional, and international fisheries organizations.<br>4.1.1 Timely, complete, and reliable statistics shall be compiled on catch and fishing effort and maintained in accordance with applicable international standards and practices, and in sufficient detail to allow sound statistical analysis for stock assessment. Such data shall be updated regularly and verified through an appropriate system. The use of research results as a basis for setting management objectives, reference points, and performance criteria, as well as for ensuring adequate linkage between applied research and fisheries management (e.g., adoption of scientific advice) shall be promoted. Results of analysis shall be distributed accordingly as a contribution to fisheries conservation, management, and development.<br>4.1.2 In the absence of specific information on the *stock under consideration*, generic evidence based on similar stocks can be used. However, the greater the risk of overfishing, the more specific evidence is necessary to ascertain the sustainability of intensive fisheries.<br>4.2 An observer scheme designed to collect accurate data for research and support compliance with applicable fishery management measures shall be established.<br>4.2.1 Where necessary, fisheries management organizations and regional fisheries management organizations and other such arrangements should strive to achieve a level and scope of observer programs sufficient to provide quantitative estimates of total catch, discards, and incidental takes of living aquatic resources.<br>4.3 A fisheries management organization, regional fisheries management organizations or arrangements shall compile data and make them available, in a manner consistent with any applicable confidentiality requirements, in a timely manner and in an agreed format to all members of these organizations and other interested parties in accordance with agreed procedures.<br>4.4 States shall stimulate the research required to support policies related to fish as food.<br>4.5 There shall be sufficient knowledge of the economic, social, marketing, and institutional aspects of fisheries collected through data gathering, analysis, and research, as well as comparable data generated for ongoing monitoring, analysis, and policy formulation.<br>4.6 The fisheries management organization shall investigate and document traditional fisheries knowledge and technologies—in particular those applied to small-scale fisheries—in order to assess their application to sustainable fisheries conservation, management, and development.<br>4.7 If a fisheries management organization is conducting scientific research activities in waters of another State, it shall ensure that their vessels comply with the laws and regulations of that State and international law.<br>4.8 Adoption of uniform guidelines governing fisheries research conducted on the high seas shall be promoted and, where appropriate, support the establishment of policies that include, *inter alia*, facilitating research at the international and sharing the research results with affected States.<br>4.9 If appropriate, the fisheries management organization and relevant international organizations shall promote and enhance the research capacities of developing countries, *inter alia*, in the areas of data collection and analysis, information, science and technology, human resource development, and provision of research facilities, in order for them to participate effectively in the conservation, management, and sustainable use of living aquatic resources.<br>4.10 Competent national organizations shall, where appropriate, render technical and financial support to States upon request and when engaged in research investigations aimed at evaluating stocks which have been previously unfished or very lightly fished.<br>4.11 Relevant technical and financial international organizations shall, upon request, support States in their research efforts, devoting special attention to developing countries – in particular the least developed among them and small developing island countries. | |
| **Summary of relevant changes** | In the Alaska pollock fishery, no substantive changes have been introduced in the core data collection and analytical systems supporting stock management. This continuity was confirmed during stakeholder discussions at the site visit, where participants stated that, aside from the disruption caused by the 2025 government shutdown, there had been no notable changes in routine data collection or stock-science inputs. The principal change in 2025 was therefore procedural rather than methodological: the shutdown |

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| | interrupted the normal assessment timetable, so the 2024 SAFE assessments remained the most recent fully reviewed assessments for EBS, AI, and GOA pollock (Ianelli et al., 2024a; Barbeaux et al., 2024; Monnahan et al., 2024; SSC, 2025b).<br><br>Fishery-independent data collection nevertheless remained robust in 2025. In the Bering Sea, the AFSC completed all 350 EBS bottom trawl survey stations and all but 7 of the 144 NBS stations, and collected extensive pollock biological data, including 30,862 pollock length measurements in the EBS and 8,311 in the NBS, together with age structures and stomach samples (AFSC, 2025a). In the Gulf of Alaska, the information available to the SSC for pollock continued to include bottom trawl survey results, Shelikof Strait winter acoustic-trawl survey results, and catch reports comparing recent catches with TACs, ABCs, and OFLs (SSC, 2025a; NPFMC, 2025a). These data streams continue to provide the essential fishery-independent and fishery-dependent inputs needed for biomass estimation, age structure characterization, and management review (Ianelli et al., 2024a; Monnahan et al., 2024).<br><br>The analytical framework also remained stable. For EBS pollock, the SSC described the 2025 changes as routine data updates, specifically the inclusion of updated survey biomass and age compositions using revised model-based approaches, including sdmTMB for survey biomass and tinyVAST for age compositions; the SSC noted that differences from the previous inputs were minimal and treated these updates as improvements in the use of best available survey information rather than as a model change (SSC, 2025a). For GOA pollock, the SSC considered the use of updated Shelikof Strait and summer acoustic survey data, an improved approach to estimating initial numbers at age, and additional priors to stabilize estimation. It concluded that these were either straightforward data updates or incremental refinements, with minimal impact on biological reference points and management advice relative to the previously accepted model (SSC, 2025a). In the AI region, no 2025 assessment was completed because of the shutdown, and the 2025 catch report explicitly states that values from the most recent full assessment were rolled over until data can be updated (Barbeaux et al., 2024; NPFMC, 2025b).<br><br>All data collection and analytical activities continue to operate within the established North Pacific peer-review framework. The December 2025 SSC report states that its review relied on the 2024 and 2023 SAFE reports, 2024–2025 catch reports, 2025 survey information, and preliminary ESR and ESP material, while also emphasizing that interim survey results provide important contextual information but cannot substitute for fully reviewed assessments (SSC, 2025b). Overall, the Alaska pollock fishery therefore continues to maintain a high standard of data collection and analysis, with the main change in 2025–2026 being a temporary disruption to assessment timing rather than any substantive methodological change in the underlying monitoring or analytical system (SSC, 2025b). |
| **References** | Barbeaux, S. J., Ianelli, J., Ortiz, I., Laman, N., and Spies, I. 2024. Assessment of the pollock stock in the Aleutian Islands. North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Anchorage, AK. https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/SAFE/2024/AIpollock.pdf.<br>Ianelli, J., Honkalehto, T., Wasserman, S., Lauffenburger, N., McGilliard, C., and Siddon, E. 2024a. Assessment of walleye pollock in the eastern Bering Sea. North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Anchorage, AK. https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/SAFE/2024/EBSpollock.pdf.<br>Monnahan, C. C., Ferriss, B. E., Shotwell, S. K., Oyafuso, Z., Levine, M., Thorson, J. T., Rogers, L., Sullivan, J., and Champagnat, J. 2024. North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Anchorage, AK. https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/SAFE/2024/GOApollock.pdf.<br>NPFMC. 2025a. *Catch Reports for the Groundfish Resources of the Gulf of Alaska.* November 2025. North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Anchorage, AK.<br>NPFMC. 2025b. *Catch Reports for the Groundfish Resources of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Regions.* November 2025. North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Anchorage, AK.<br>SSC. 2025a. Scientific and Statistical Committee Final Report to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, September 29–October 2, 2025.<br>SSC. 2025b. Scientific and Statistical Committee Final Report to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, December 2–3, 2025. |
| **Summary of consistency with CSI RFM Fisheries Standard** | The fishery continues to meet the requirements of this Fundamental Clause of the CSI RFM Fisheries Standard. |

| **Fundamental Clause 5. There shall be regular stock assessment activities appropriate for the fishery, its range, the species biology, and the ecosystem, undertaken in accordance with acknowledged scientific standards to support its optimum utilization.** | |
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| 5.1 An appropriate institutional framework shall be established to determine the applied research required and its proper use (i.e., assess/evaluate stock assessment model/practices) for fishery management purposes.<br>5.1.1 Less elaborate stock assessment methods are frequently used for small-scale or low-value capture fisheries resulting in greater uncertainty about the status of the *stock under consideration.*, A more precautionary approach to managing fisheries on such resources shall be required, including, where appropriate, a lower level of resource utilization. A record of good management performance may be considered as supporting evidence of the adequacy of the management system.<br>5.1.2 The fisheries management organization shall ensure that appropriate research is conducted into all aspects of fisheries including biology, ecology, technology, environmental science, economics, and fishery enhancement. Analysis results shall be distributed in a timely and readily understandable fashion in order that the best scientific evidence available contributes to fisheries conservation, management, and development. The fisheries management organization shall also ensure the availability of research facilities and provide appropriate training, staffing, and institution building to conduct the research.<br>5.2 There shall be established research capacity necessary to assess and monitor (1) the effects of climate or other environmental change on stocks and aquatic ecosystems, (2) the status of the stock under State jurisdiction, and (3) the impacts of ecosystem changes resulting from fishing activity, pollution, or habitat alteration.<br>5.3 Management organizations shall cooperate with relevant international organizations to encourage research in order to ensure optimum utilization of fishery resources.<br>5.4 The fishery management organizations shall directly, or in conjunction with other States, develop collaborative technical and research programs to improve understanding of the biology, environment, and status of transboundary, shared, straddling, highly migratory and high seas stocks.<br>5.5 Data generated by research shall be analyzed and the results of such analyses published in a way that ensures confidentiality is respected, where appropriate. | |
| **Summary of relevant changes** | Information for assessing the status of Alaska pollock (*Gadus chalcogrammus*) continues to come from the stock-specific SAFE assessments prepared by NOAA Fisheries and reviewed through the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) process for the three recognized management units: Eastern Bering Sea (EBS), Aleutian Islands (AI), and Gulf of Alaska (GOA) (Ianelli et al., 2024; Barbeaux et al., 2024; Monnahan et al., 2024). These annual assessments remain the core scientific basis for stock-status determination, harvest specifications, and precautionary management advice. In 2025, however, the lapse in federal appropriations from 1 October to 12 November prevented completion of the scheduled operational assessments and compilation of the 2025 SAFE reports. As a result, the 2024 SAFE reports, together with 2025 survey data, catch reports, and other supporting information, were used as the best scientific information available for the 2026–2027 harvest specification process (SSC, 2025; NPFMC, 2025a).<br><br>Across all three stocks, there were no major methodological changes to the assessment models themselves, although the 2025 assessment cycle experienced a clear procedural disruption. The assessments continue to rely on integrated, peer-reviewed population models informed by multiple fishery-dependent and fishery-independent data sources, including NMFS/AFSC bottom trawl surveys, acoustic-trawl surveys, observer catch and biological data, fishery catch per unit effort information, acoustic vessels of opportunity, and stock-structure information from genetics and other supporting studies (Ianelli et al., 2024; Barbeaux et al., 2024; Monnahan et al., 2024). For AI pollock, the assessment continues to use the AMAK model implemented in ADMB; for EBS and GOA pollock, integrated age-structured statistical assessment approaches continue to be applied, with model diagnostics, retrospective evaluation, and peer review through the Plan Team and SSC process (Barbeaux et al., 2024; Monnahan et al., 2024; NPFMC, 2026).<br><br>Ecosystem considerations remain an important part of the assessment framework. These include environmental indicators, prey fields, predator interactions, and stock-distribution patterns relevant to pollock productivity and availability. The EBS assessment framework continues to account for spatio-temporal variability and environmental drivers, including conditions associated with the cold pool and broader Bering Sea climate patterns (Ianelli et al., 2024). For GOA pollock, ecosystem linkages are also considered through risk tables and supplementary analyses, including recruitment-environment relationships discussed in the assessment documentation (Monnahan et al., 2024). In the absence of full 2025 SAFEs, the SSC explicitly considered 2025 survey results and ecosystem preview information |

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| | alongside the 2024 assessments when determining whether there was any additional risk that would justify more conservative harvest specifications (SSC, 2025a).<br><br>Management advice derived from these assessments remains precautionary and consistent with the NPFMC tier system, harvest control rules, and risk-table approach. EBS pollock remained in Tier 1a in the 2024 assessment, with projected 2025 spawning biomass of about 3.1 million t, above the estimated BMSY of 2.31 million t (Ianelli et al., 2024). AI pollock remained above B20%, with low exploitation rates, but continued to show substantial uncertainty and variable recruitment, so precautionary Tier 5 management remained appropriate (Barbeaux et al., 2024). GOA pollock remained in Tier 3a, with projected 2025 spawning biomass of about 243,000 t, above B40%, and the December 2025 SSC concluded that the available 2025 survey and ecosystem information did not indicate additional risk warranting a reduction from the preliminary maxABC-based advice (Monnahan et al., 2024; SSC, 2025a). More broadly, the SSC noted that catch in 2024 and 2025 remained below TAC and ABC for GOA pollock, and the same precautionary logic was applied across groundfish stocks when final 2026–2027 specifications were set (SSC, 2025a; NPFMC, 2025b).<br><br>Beyond stock-specific assessment outputs, management continues to apply complementary measures such as time-area closures, bycatch controls, ecosystem-based management tools, and Steller sea lion protection measures that affect the spatial and seasonal structure of pollock fisheries, particularly in the EBS and GOA (NPFMC, 2026). Collaboration remains central to the credibility of the assessment process: NOAA Fisheries scientists, NPFMC Plan Teams, SSC reviewers, Council staff, and industry participants continue to contribute data, review, and technical input. This cooperative framework supports transparency, independent peer review, and adaptive management, and helps ensure that the stock assessments remain scientifically robust and fit for precautionary decision-making even when the formal assessment cycle is disrupted (SSC, 2025a; NPFMC, 2026). |
| **References** | Barbeaux, S. J., Ianelli, J., Ortiz, I., Laman, N., and Spies, I. 2024. Assessment of the pollock stock in the Aleutian Islands. North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Anchorage, AK. https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/SAFE/2024/AIpollock.pdf.<br>Ianelli, J., Honkalehto, T., Wasserman, S., Lauffenburger, N., McGilliard, C., and Siddon, E. 2024a. Assessment of walleye pollock in the eastern Bering Sea. North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Anchorage, AK. https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/SAFE/2024/EBSpollock.pdf.<br>Monnahan, C. C., Ferriss, B. E., Shotwell, S. K., Oyafuso, Z., Levine, M., Thorson, J. T., Rogers, L., Sullivan, J., and Champagnat, J. 2024. North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Anchorage, AK. https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/SAFE/2024/GOApollock.pdf.<br>NPFMC. 2025a. *Groundfish Final Harvest Specifications Process in December 2025: Adaptations for 2026–2027 Groundfish Harvest Specifications Based on Available Information.* North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Anchorage, AK.<br>NPFMC. 2025b. *Catch Reports for the Groundfish Resources of the Gulf of Alaska.* November 2025. North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Anchorage, AK.<br>NPFMC. 2026. *Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands; 2026 and 2027 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish.* Federal Register 91(46): 11750–11751 and following.<br>SSC. 2025a. *Scientific and Statistical Committee Final Report to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, December 2–3, 2025.* Anchorage, AK. |
| **Summary of consistency with CSI RFM Fisheries Standard** | The fishery continues to meet the requirements of this Fundamental Clause of the CSI RFM Fisheries Standard. |

| **Fundamental Clause 6. The current state of the stock shall be defined in relation to reference points, relevant proxies, or verifiable substitutes that allow effective management objectives and targets to be set. Remedial actions shall be available and taken where reference points or other suitable proxies are approached or exceeded.** | |
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| 6.1 The fishery management organization shall establish safe target reference point(s) for management. Management targets are consistent with achieving maximum sustainable yield (MSY), a suitable proxy, or a lesser fishing mortality—if that is optimal in the circumstances of the fishery (e.g., multispecies fisheries) or is needed to avoid adverse impacts on dependent predators.<br>6.2 The fishery management organization shall establish appropriate limit reference point(s) for exploitation (i.e., consistent with avoiding recruitment overfishing or other impacts that are likely to be irreversible or very slowly reversible; CSI RFM v2.2 Guidance Appendix 1, Part 1[3]). When a limit reference point is approached, measures shall be taken to ensure that it will not be exceeded. For instance, if fishing mortality (or its proxy) is above the associated limit reference point, actions should be taken to decrease the fishing mortality (or its proxy) below that limit reference point.<br>6.3 Data and assessment procedures that measure the position of the fishery in relation to the reference points shall be established. Accordingly, the *stock under consideration* shall not be overfished (i.e., above limit reference point or proxy) and the level of fishing permitted shall be commensurate with the current state of the fishery resources, maintaining its future availability, and taking into account that long-term changes in productivity can occur due to natural variability and/or impacts other than fishing (CSI RFM v2.2 Guidance Appendix 1, Part 1[4]).<br>6.4 Accordingly, contingency plans shall be agreed in advance to allow an appropriate management response to serious threats to the resource as a result of overfishing, adverse environmental changes, or other phenomena that may have adverse impacts on the fishery resource (CSI RFM v2.2 Guidance Appendix 1, Part 2[5]). Such measures may be temporary and shall be based on best scientific evidence available.<br>6.5 Measures shall be introduced to identify and protect depleted stocks and those stocks threatened with depletion, and to facilitate the sustained recovery/restoration of such stocks. Also, efforts shall be made to ensure that resources and habitats critical to the well-being of such stocks, which have received adverse impacts by fishing or other human activities, are restored. | |
| **Summary of relevant changes** | Based on the 2024 SAFE reports for the Eastern Bering Sea (EBS), Aleutian Islands (AI), and Gulf of Alaska (GOA), Alaska pollock stocks remained in a positive biological condition, with biomass above relevant reference levels and exploitation rates below overfishing thresholds (Ianelli et al., 2024; Barbeaux et al., 2024; Monnahan et al., 2024). Because the 2025 lapse in federal appropriations prevented completion of updated 2025 SAFE reports, the SSC in December 2025 reviewed the best scientific information available, including the 2024 SAFE reports, 2025 catch reports, 2025 survey information, and available ecosystem information, and concluded that the preliminary harvest specifications remained the best available scientific advice for 2026–2027 (SSC, 2025a).<br><br>For EBS pollock, Ianelli et al. (2024) report that the stock remained highly productive and continued to benefit from the strong 2018 year class. The stock was assessed in Tier 1a, with projected 2025 spawning biomass of about 3.10 million t, well above the estimated BMSY of 2.31 million t. Fishing mortality remained below the overfishing threshold, and the stock was neither overfished nor subject to overfishing (Ianelli et al., 2024). In its December 2025 review, the SSC noted that although the EBS bottom trawl survey biomass declined by about 30% from 2024 to 2025, other information, including increased biomass in the Northern Bering Sea, indicated that the observed fluctuation remained within the normal range of variability for the stock; accordingly, the SSC did not identify a basis for reducing the preliminary ABC for 2026 (SSC, 2025a).<br><br>For AI pollock, Barbeaux et al. (2024) indicate that the stock remained above its biomass reference level, with low recent exploitation rates and continued precautionary management. The assessment shows that, despite historical fluctuations driven by recruitment variability and environmental conditions, the stock had increased from earlier lows and remained above B20%. Because no updated 2025 assessment was completed, the 2025 catch report states that values from the previous stock assessment were rolled over for specifications. Thus, management in 2025–2026 continued to rely on the most recent peer-reviewed assessment, and no information presented through the December 2025 harvest specification process indicated a material deterioration in stock status (Barbeaux et al., 2024; NPFMC, 2025a; SSC, 2025a).<br><br>For GOA pollock, Monnahan et al. (2024) report that the stock remained in sub-tier “a” of Tier 3, with projected 2025 female spawning biomass of about 243,078 t, above the B40% threshold of 214,000 t. The assessment concluded that the stock was not overfished and that overfishing was not occurring. In addition, |

[3] Guidance to Performance Evaluation for the Certification of Wild Capture and Enhanced Fisheries v2.2)
[4] Guidance to Performance Evaluation for the Certification of Wild Capture and Enhanced Fisheries v2.2)
[5] Guidance to Performance Evaluation for the Certification of Wild Capture and Enhanced Fisheries v2.2)

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| | 2025 fishery-independent survey information was positive: the GOA bottom trawl survey estimated pollock biomass at about 1.214 million t, an increase of 32.1% from 2023, while the Shelikof Strait winter survey estimated biomass at 327.2 thousand t, 13% above 2024, with abundance estimated at 903.1 million fish, 146% above 2024 (AFSC, 2025b; Monnahan et al., 2024). In December 2025, the SSC considered these new survey signals and concluded that they were consistent with the earlier assessment conclusion that GOA pollock remained above conservation thresholds, and that no additional reduction from the preliminary ABC was warranted (SSC, 2025).<br><br>Overall, the most recent SAFE assessments, together with the December 2025 SSC review, support the conclusion that all three Alaska pollock stocks remained in a safe biological condition, with biomass above relevant reference points and fishing pressure below OFLs. While the absence of updated 2025 SAFE reports increased uncertainty, the SSC concluded that the available catch, survey, and ecosystem information did not indicate new risk factors requiring more conservative adjustments for pollock, and that the precautionary, science-based management framework remained effective (SSC, 2025a). |
| **References** | AFSC. 2025b. *2025 Gulf of Alaska Biennial Bottom Trawl Survey: Biomass trends.* Adapted from GOA Groundfish Plan Team presentation (September 2025) with additional information from AFSC (25 November 2025).<br>Barbeaux, S. J., Ianelli, J., Ortiz, I., Laman, N., and Spies, I. 2024. Assessment of the pollock stock in the Aleutian Islands. North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Anchorage, AK. https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/SAFE/2024/AIpollock.pdf.<br>Ianelli, J., Honkalehto, T., Wasserman, S., Lauffenburger, N., McGilliard, C., and Siddon, E. 2024a. Assessment of walleye pollock in the eastern Bering Sea. North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Anchorage, AK. https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/SAFE/2024/EBSpollock.pdf.<br>Monnahan, C. C., Ferriss, B. E., Shotwell, S. K., Oyafuso, Z., Levine, M., Thorson, J. T., Rogers, L., Sullivan, J., and Champagnat, J. 2024. North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Anchorage, AK. https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/SAFE/2024/GOApollock.pdf.<br>NPFMC. 2025a. *Groundfish Final Harvest Specifications Process in December 2025: Adaptations for 2026–2027 Groundfish Harvest Specifications Based on Available Information.* North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Anchorage, AK.<br>NPFMC. 2025b. *Catch Reports for the Groundfish Resources of the Gulf of Alaska.* November 2025. North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Anchorage, AK.<br>NPFMC. 2026. *Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands; 2026 and 2027 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish.* Federal Register 91(46): 11750–11751 and following.<br>SSC. 2025a. *Scientific and Statistical Committee Final Report to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, December 2–3, 2025.* Anchorage, AK. |
| **Summary of consistency with CSI RFM Fisheries Standard** | The fishery continues to meet the requirements of this Fundamental Clause of the CSI RFM Fisheries Standard. |

| **Fundamental Clause 7. Management actions and measures for the conservation of stock and the ecosystem shall be based on the precautionary approach. Where information is deficient a suitable method using risk management shall be adopted to consider uncertainty.** | |
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| 7.1 The precautionary approach shall be applied widely to conservation, management, and exploitation of ecosystems to protect them and preserve the ecosystem. This should take due account of fishery enhancement procedures, where appropriate. Absence of scientific information shall not be used as a reason for postponing or failing to take conservation and management measures. Relevant uncertainties shall be taken into account through a suitable method of risk management, including those associated with the use of introduced or translocated species.[6]<br>7.1.1 In implementing the PA, the fishery management organization shall take into account, *inter alia*, uncertainties relating to the size and productivity of the stocks, reference points, stock condition in relation to such reference points, levels and distribution of fishing mortality, the impact of fishing activities (including discards) on non-target and associated or dependent predators, and environmental and socioeconomic conditions.<br>7.1.2 In the absence of adequate scientific information, appropriate research shall be initiated in a timely fashion.<br>7.2 In the case of new or exploratory fisheries, the fishery management organization shall adopt, as soon as possible, cautious conservation and management measures, including, *inter alia*, catch limits and effort limits. Such measures should remain in force until there are sufficient data to allow assessment of the impact of the fisheries on the long-term sustainability of the stocks, whereupon conservation and management measures based on that assessment should be implemented. Management measures should, if appropriate, allow for the gradual development of the fisheries. | |
| **Summary of relevant changes** | The Alaska pollock fishery continues to operate under a comprehensive and precautionary management framework, and there have been no material changes in the core management regime, fishing strategy, harvest strategy, or catch-recording system since the previous audit. The fishery is still operating on the basis of the 2024 SAFE assessments for the three recognized pollock stocks, Eastern Bering Sea (EBS), Aleutian Islands (AI), and Gulf of Alaska (GOA), and continues to use the same science-based management architecture of stock-specific assessments, SSC review, annual or biennial harvest specifications, observer/electronic monitoring, and ecosystem review (Ianelli et al., 2024; Barbeaux et al., 2024; Monnahan et al., 2024).<br><br>The precautionary approach remains central to Alaska pollock management. In 2025, the lapse in federal appropriations prevented completion of the normal assessment cycle and compilation of the 2025 SAFE reports; however, this did not result in a relaxation of management. Instead, the SSC and Council explicitly relied on the best scientific information available, including the 2024 stock assessments, stock-specific risk tables, catch reports, 2025 survey information, and ESR previews, to recommend the 2026–2027 harvest specifications (SSC, 2025a; NPFMC, 2025a; NMFS, 2026). This is fully consistent with Clause 7, because uncertainty was addressed through a structured risk-management process rather than used as a reason to postpone conservation measures. The December 2025 process document further notes that the groundfish harvest control rules are inherently precautionary, that the OFL control rule includes automatic rebuilding below the relevant biomass thresholds, and that risk tables are used to determine whether reductions from maximum permissible ABC are warranted (NPFMC, 2025a).<br><br>The stock-specific information continues to support the conclusion that pollock management remains precautionary and effective. For EBS pollock, the 2024 assessment projected 2025 spawning biomass at about 3.1 million t, above BMSY (2.31 million t), and the stock was assessed as not overfished and not subject to overfishing (Ianelli et al., 2024). In December 2025, the SSC concluded that, although EBS bottom-trawl biomass declined in 2025, the variability remained within the normal historical range for the stock, catches in 2024 and 2025 remained well below ABC, and no additional risk factors justified a reduction from the preliminary ABC (SSC, 2025a). For AI pollock, the 2024 assessment indicated that the stock remained above B20%, with low exploitation rates and continued management under precautionary Tier 5 guidelines; the stock therefore remained in a positive status condition despite persistent uncertainty in recruitment (Barbeaux et al., 2024). For GOA pollock, the 2024 assessment projected 2025 spawning biomass at about 243,000 t, roughly 45% of unfished biomass and above B40%, placing the stock in Tier 3a; in December 2025, the SSC found that recent catches remained below TAC and ABC and that new survey information did not indicate additional risk requiring a reduction from maxABC (Monnahan et al., 2024; SSC, 2025a).<br><br>Key precautionary management measures also remain in place. Catch limits continue to be set through the NPFMC/SSC harvest-specification process using peer-reviewed stock assessments and stock-specific |

[6] FAO Technical Guidelines for Responsible Fisheries No. 2 – Precautionary approach to capture fisheries and species introductions. http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/w3592e/w3592e00.htm

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| | control rules (NPFMC, 2025a; NMFS, 2026). Monitoring and data collection remain robust: the pollock fishery continues with e-logbook reporting and observer/electronic monitoring, and the trawl EM program for BSAI and GOA pollock catcher vessels became effective in 2024 and was implemented in fishing operations from January 2025 to improve salmon accounting and monitoring precision. Spatial and temporal controls continue to be used where appropriate, including seasonal apportionments and stock- or area-based measures linked to ecosystem protection and Steller sea lion considerations (Barbeaux et al., 2024; NPFMC, 2025a).<br><br>Overall, no deficiencies were identified in the operation of the precautionary framework itself. The main development since the previous audit was procedural, the interruption of the 2025 SAFE cycle, not substantive. Management continued to apply conservative harvest controls, stock-specific risk evaluation, and ecosystem-based review, while stakeholder input continued to be considered through the normal Council, Plan Team, and SSC processes (SSC, 2025a; NMFS, 2026). Accordingly, the Alaska pollock fishery continues to meet the intent of Clause 7: management remains precautionary, adaptive, and explicitly responsive to uncertainty rather than weakened by it. |
| **References** | AFSC. 2025b. *2025 Gulf of Alaska Biennial Bottom Trawl Survey: Biomass trends.* Adapted from GOA Groundfish Plan Team presentation (September 2025) with additional information from AFSC (25 November 2025).<br>Barbeaux, S. J., Ianelli, J., Ortiz, I., Laman, N., and Spies, I. 2024. Assessment of the pollock stock in the Aleutian Islands. North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Anchorage, AK. https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/SAFE/2024/AIpollock.pdf.<br>Ianelli, J., Honkalehto, T., Wasserman, S., Lauffenburger, N., McGilliard, C., and Siddon, E. 2024a. Assessment of walleye pollock in the eastern Bering Sea. North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Anchorage, AK. https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/SAFE/2024/EBSpollock.pdf.<br>Monnahan, C. C., Ferriss, B. E., Shotwell, S. K., Oyafuso, Z., Levine, M., Thorson, J. T., Rogers, L., Sullivan, J., and Champagnat, J. 2024. North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Anchorage, AK. https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/SAFE/2024/GOApollock.pdf.<br>NPFMC. 2025a. *Groundfish Final Harvest Specifications Process in December 2025: Adaptations for 2026–2027 Groundfish Harvest Specifications Based on Available Information.* North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Anchorage, AK.<br>NPFMC. 2025b. *Catch Reports for the Groundfish Resources of the Gulf of Alaska.* November 2025. North Pacific Fishery Management Council, Anchorage, AK.<br>NPFMC. 2026. *Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands; 2026 and 2027 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish.* Federal Register 91(46): 11750–11751 and following.<br>SSC. 2025a. *Scientific and Statistical Committee Final Report to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, December 2–3, 2025.* Anchorage, AK. |
| **Summary of consistency with CSI RFM Fisheries Standard** | The fishery continues to meet the requirements of this Fundamental Clause of the CSI RFM Fisheries Standard. |

### 6.1.3 Key Component C: Management Measures, Implementation, Monitoring, and Control

| **Fundamental Clause 8. Management shall adopt and implement effective management measures designed to maintain stocks at levels capable of producing maximum sustainable yields, including harvest control rules and technical measures applicable to sustainable utilization of the fishery, and based upon verifiable evidence and advice from available objective scientific and traditional sources.** |
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| 8.1 Conservation and management measures shall be designed to ensure the long-term sustainability of fishery resources at levels which promote optimum utilization and are based on verifiable and objective scientific and/or traditional, fisher, or community sources. |
| 8.1.1 When evaluating alternative conservation and management measures, the fishery management organization shall consider their cost-effectiveness and social impact. |
| 8.1.2 Responsible fisheries management organizations shall adopt and implement measures necessary to ensure the management of bycatch and reduction of discards as part of fisheries management (1) in accordance with the PA, as reflected in Article 6 of the UN Fish Stocks Agreement, and as set out in Article 6.5 and 7.5 of the Code; (2) in accordance with the responsible use of fish as set out in the Code; and (3) based on the best scientific evidence available, taking into account fishers' knowledge. |
| 8.2 The fishery management organization shall prohibit dynamiting, poisoning, and other similar destructive fishing practices. |
| 8.3 The fishery management organization shall seek to identify domestic parties having a legitimate interest in the use and management of the fishery. When deciding on use, conservation, and management of the resource, due recognition shall be given, where relevant, in accordance with national laws and regulations, to the traditional practices, needs, and interests of indigenous people and local fishing communities which are highly dependent on these resources for their livelihood. Arrangements shall be made to consult all the interested parties and gain their collaboration in achieving responsible fisheries. |
| 8.4 Where excess capacity exists, mechanisms shall be established to reduce capacity to levels commensurate with sustainable use of the resource. Fleet capacity operating in the fishery shall be measured and monitored. The fishery management organization shall maintain, in accordance with recognized international standards and practices, statistical data, updated at regular intervals, on all fishing operations and a record of all authorizations to fish allowed by them. |
| 8.4.1 Studies shall be promoted that provide an understanding of the costs, benefits, and effects of alternative management options designed to rationalize fishing, especially options relating to excess fishing capacity and excessive levels of fishing effort. |
| 8.5 Technical measures regarding the *stock under consideration* shall be taken into account, where appropriate, in relation to fish size, mesh size, gear, closed seasons or areas, areas reserved for particular (e.g., artisanal fisheries), and protection of juveniles or spawners. |
| 8.5.1 Appropriate measures shall be applied to minimize catch, waste, and discards of non-target species (both fish and non-fish species), and impacts on associated, dependent, or endangered species. |
| 8.6 Gear marking requirements shall take into account uniform and internationally recognizable gear marking systems. |
| 8.7 The fishery management organization and relevant groups from the fishing industry shall measure performance and encourage the development, implementation, and use of selective, environmentally safe, and cost-effective gear, technologies, and techniques that are sufficiently selective as to minimize catch, waste, discards of non-target species (both fish and non-fish species) and impacts on associated or dependent predators. The use of fishing gear and practices that lead to discarding the catch shall be discouraged, and the use of fishing gear and practices that increase survival rates of escaping fish shall be promoted. Inconsistent methods, practices, and gears shall be phased out accordingly. |
| 8.8 Technologies, materials, and operational methods or measures—including, to the extent practicable, the development and use of selective, environmentally safe, and cost-effective fishing gear and techniques—shall be applied to minimize the loss of fishing gear, the ghost fishing effects of lost or abandoned fishing gear, pollution, and waste. |
| 8.9 The intent of fishing selectivity and fishing impacts-related regulations shall not be circumvented by technical devices. Information on new developments and requirements shall be made available to all fishers. |
| 8.10 Assessment and scientific evaluation shall be carried out on the impacts of habitat disturbance on the fisheries and ecosystems prior to the commercial-scale introduction of new fishing gear, methods, and operations. Accordingly, the impacts of such introductions shall be monitored. |
| 8.11 International cooperation shall be encouraged for research programs involving fishing gear selectivity, fishing methods and strategies, dissemination of the results of such research programs, and the transfer of technology. |
| 8.12 The fishery management organization and relevant institutions involved in the fishery shall collaborate in developing standard methodologies for research into fishing gear selectivity, fishing methods and strategies, and on the behavior of |

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| | target and non-target species regarding such fishing gear—as an aid for management decisions and with a view to minimizing non-utilized catches.<br>8.13 Where appropriate, policies shall be developed for increasing stock populations and enhancing fishing opportunities through the use of artificial structures. The fishery management organization shall ensure that, when selecting the materials to be used in the creation of artificial reefs, as well as when selecting the geographical location of such artificial reefs, the provisions of relevant international conventions concerning the environment and the safety of navigation are observed. |
| **Summary of relevant changes** | **Clauses 8.1, 8.1.1, 8.1.2, 8.5, and 8.7**<br>Chum salmon bycatch in BS<br>At the February 2026 Council meeting, the Council received the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Regulatory Impact Review for a Proposed Amendment to the FMP for Groundfish of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Management Area - Bering Sea Chum Salmon Bycatch Management and testimony from more than 170 people, including Tribal leaders and members, CDQ groups, Alaska communities dependent on pollock, and pollock fishery participants, which helped inform the Council's final recommendation to the Secretary of Commerce.<br><br>As reported in the February Council Newsletter, available science indicates recent declines in chum salmon populations across many regions of the North Pacific, including Canada, Japan, Russia, Korea, and the U.S., appear to be driven by warmer water temperatures in both the marine and freshwater environments which impact juvenile survival, prey availability and quality, metabolism and growth rates, and reproductive rates. However, Western Alaska chum salmon are also taken as bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock trawl fishery. While responsible for less than 2% of Western Alaska chum mortality from all sources annually, bycatch reduces the amount of salmon that return to western and interior Alaska rivers. Public testimony highlighted that even small increases in the number of salmon returning back to these rivers and the communities that rely on them represents a substantial benefit.<br><br>As a result, the Council made final recommendations to establish a bycatch limit and corridor closure, and additional avoidance measures, to minimize Western Alaska chum salmon in the BS pollock fishery.<br><br>The Council recommended a bycatch cap of 45,000 Western Alaska chum salmon with a corridor closure for the BS pollock fishery. The Western Alaska chum salmon bycatch cap was considered to be critical to the Council's approach because approximately 80% of the chum salmon in the overall bycatch are not from Western Alaska. The majority of the pollock fishery's chum salmon bycatch are Russian and Asian hatchery chum, as reported in NOAA's annual genetics analyses.<br><br>The corridor includes 40 ADF&G groundfish statistical areas (stat areas) north of Unimak Pass. The corridor covers the area where consistently more than 80% of the Western Alaska chum bycatch is caught (see Figure 12).<br><br>All western Alaska chum salmon caught as bycatch in the corridor would count towards the bycatch cap during a migration period identified as critical for Western Alaska chum salmon (June 10 – August 31), which overlaps with the pollock fishery B season.<br><br>The Western Alaska chum salmon bycatch cap (by number and %) would be divided among the four pollock fishing sectors:<br>• CDQ: 4,410 (9.8%)<br>• Catcher vessels delivering to shoreside plants: 31,950 (71%)<br>• Catcher vessels delivering to motherships: 4,365 (9.7%)<br>• Catcher processors: 4,275 (9.5%)<br><br>If a sector reaches its portion of the corridor bycatch cap, it would have to close 50% of the corridor for the remainder of the June 10 – August 31 period. Failure to do so would result in a closure of the same areas in the following year for the entire period June 10 – August 31.<br><br>The cap is intended to directly change behavior. Vessels will use NOAA genetic data from previous seasons and newly available in-season genetic data from the Bristol Bay Science and Research Institute to try to avoid reaching the limit. By allowing each sector to choose areas to close if its bycatch limit is exceeded, the recommended measures are considered to provide some operational flexibility and more transparency |

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| | in reporting by requiring greater communication among the pollock fishery, salmon users, Alaska Native Tribes, and Tribally authorized consortia and fish commissions.<br><br>The Western Alaska chum salmon bycatch limit and corridor closure would not be in effect if more than approximately 3,871,000 summer chum salmon and 1,390,300 fall chum salmon return to the Yukon River. The Council included this abundance index to acknowledge that, should Yukon River summer and fall chum salmon abundance increase such that returns meet or exceed these values (90th percentile of each stock's run reconstruction using data from 1992–2022), the Western Alaska chum salmon bycatch cap and corridor may be constraining for the pollock fishery and could be suspended.<br><br>Additionally, the start date of the Winter Herring Savings Area would be adjusted from September 1 to September 30 for the pollock trawl fishery. This start date will not change for any other BSAI groundfish trawl fishery. The herring bycatch limit is not apportioned among the pollock sectors, meaning any one sector's herring bycatch can trigger the herring savings area closures for all sectors. The Council included this recommended measure to avoid closing off fishing grounds for the catcher processor sector that have had historically low herring, Chinook salmon, and Western Alaska chum salmon bycatch during the month of September, in comparison to other areas.<br><br>The next required step is for NOAA to respond to comments and prepare a final EIS and proposed regulations.<br><br>Chinook salmon bycatch in BS<br>ADFG reported that the combined, post-season sum of the run sizes from the rivers comprising the three-river index (Upper Yukon, Unalakleet, and Kuskokwim Rivers) of Chinook salmon is 176,334 and is below the threshold level of 250,000. Therefore, the performance standard for the BS pollock fishery will remain at 33,318 Chinook salmon, and the prohibited species catch (PSC) limit will remain at 45,000, for 2025 and 2026, as identified in 50 CFR 679.21.<br><br>EM in the pollock fishery<br>Amendment 126 (BSAI) and Amendment 114 (GOA) Trawl Electronic Monitoring were fully implemented in 2025. Their purpose is to improve salmon accounting, reduce monitoring costs, improve the quality of monitoring data, and modify current retention and/or discard requirements by providing catcher vessels directing for pollock with pelagic trawl, along with associated tender vessels and processors, an option to integrate electronic monitoring (EM).<br><br>While operating on a Trawl EM (TEM) category trip, catcher vessel operators are required to retain all catch with a few minor exceptions (i.e., jellyfish, large sharks), or when the safety and stability of the vessel would be compromised. Unsorted catch is then delivered to an EM tender vessel, or an EM-approved shoreside processor or an EM-approved stationary floating processor where it is monitored by shoreside observers who have access to all catch.<br><br>The incentives for using EM includes: more accurate accounting of salmon numbers, the extrapolation of shoreside observer salmon counts has resulted in several pollock closures; not needing to have an observer; fishermen do not like to discard fish, using EM allows them to be exempt from prohibitions against exceeding Maximum Retainable Amounts (MRA), requirements to discard species categorized as Prohibited Species Catch (PSC), prohibitions against exceeding pollock trip and daily limits.<br><br>In 2025, in the BSAI, 112 vessels applied to be in the EM Trawl gear pool of which 72 were expected to fished (NOAA, 2025); and, in the GOA, all but 2 of the 61 pollock trawl catcher vessels participated in the TEM program (Bennett, 2026). |
| **References** | February 2026 Council Newsletter https://www.npfmc.org/february-2026-newsletter/<br>Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Regulatory Impact Review<br>https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/bering-sea-non-chinook-chum-salmon-bycatch-reduction-environmental-impact<br>NPFMC Council Meeting (on-line meeting), Anchorage February 6-11<br>https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/bering-sea-non-chinook-chum-salmon-bycatch-reduction-environmental-impact<br>Amendment 126 (BSAI) and Amendment 114 (GOA) Trawl Electronic Monitoring |

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| | NOAA, 2025. 2025 annual Deployment plan for observers and Electronic Monitoring in the Groundfish and Halibut Fisheries off Alaska. NOAA Fisheries. https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/s3/2024-11/Final_2025_ADP.pdf.<br>Bennet, D., Gulf of Alaska Trawl Electronic Monitoring Incentive Plan and Agreement. https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/s3/2024-11/Final_2025_ADP.pdf. |
| **Summary of consistency with CSI RFM Fisheries Standard** | The fishery continues to meet the requirements of this Fundamental Clause of the CSI RFM Fisheries Standard. |

| Fundamental Clause 9. Fishing operations shall be carried out by fishers with appropriate standards of competence in accordance with international standards, guidelines and regulations. | |
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| 9.1 States shall advance, through education and training programs, the education and skills of fishers and, where appropriate, their professional qualifications. Such programs shall take into account agreed international standards and guidelines.<br>9.2 States, with the assistance of relevant international organizations, shall endeavor to ensure, through education and training, that all those engaged in fishing operations be given information on the most important provisions of the FAO CCRF (1995), as well as provisions of relevant international conventions and applicable environmental and other standards that are essential to ensure responsible fishing operations.<br>9.3 The fishery management organization shall, as appropriate, maintain records of fishers which shall, whenever possible, contain information on their service and qualifications, including certificates of competency, in accordance with their State's laws. | |
| **Summary of relevant changes** | **Clause 9.1, 9.2, 9.3**<br>No relevant changes were reported. |
| **References** | NA |
| **Summary of consistency with CSI RFM Fisheries Standard** | The fishery continues to meet the requirements of this Fundamental Clause of the RFM Fisheries Standard. |

| **Fundamental Clause 10. An effective legal and administrative framework shall be established and compliance ensured, through effective mechanisms for monitoring, surveillance, control, and enforcement for all fishing activities within the jurisdiction.** | |
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| 10.1 Effective mechanisms shall be established for fisheries monitoring, surveillance, control, and enforcement measures including, where appropriate, observer programs, inspection schemes, and vessel monitoring systems, to ensure compliance with the conservation and management measures for the fishery in question. This could include relevant traditional, fisher, or community approaches, provided their performance could be objectively verified.<br>10.2 Fishing vessels shall not be allowed to operate on the stock under consideration in question without specific authorization.<br>10.3 States involved in the fishery shall, in accordance with international law, and within the framework of fisheries management organizations or arrangements, cooperate to establish systems for monitoring, control, surveillance, and enforcement of applicable measures with respect to fishing operations and related activities in waters outside the States jurisdiction.<br>10.3.1 Fishery management organizations which are members of or participants in fisheries management organizations or arrangements, shall implement internationally agreed measures adopted in the framework of such organizations or arrangements and consistent with international law to deter the activities of vessels flying the flag of non-members or non-participants engaging in activities that undermine the effectiveness of conservation and management measures established by such organizations or arrangements. In that respect, port States shall also proceed, as necessary, to assist other States in achieving the objectives of the FAO CCRF (1995) and should make known to other States details of regulations and measures they have established for this purpose without discrimination for any vessel of any other State.<br>10.4 jurisdiction of other States, unless such vessels have been issued with a Certificate of Registry and have been authorized to fish by the competent authorities. Such vessels shall carry on board the Certificate of Registry and their authorization to fish.<br>10.4.1 Fishing vessels authorized to fish on the high seas or in waters under the jurisdiction of a State other than the flag State shall be marked in accordance with uniform and internationally recognizable vessel marking systems such as the FAO Standard Specifications and Guidelines for Marking and Identification of Fishing Vessels. | |
| **Summary of relevant changes** | **Clause 10.1, 10.2**<br>The following infringements and penalties against pollock vessels were reported in 2025:<br>• AK2207388; F/V Ocean Invictus – Owners Ocean Bay, Inc. and Kilokak, Inc. and Operator Robert Graham were charged jointly and severally under the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Management and Conservation Act with failing to retain pollock, an IR/IU species, up to the maximum retainable amount. A $5,750 NOVA was issued, and the case settled for $5,175.<br>• AK2202348; F/V Northern Eagle – As previously reported, Owners American Seafoods Company, LLC and Northern Eagle, LLC were charged jointly and severally under the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Management and Conservation Act with failing to ensure no salmon of any species passed the observer collection point. A $15,000 NOVA was issued. During this reporting period, the case settled for $13,500.<br><br>**Clause 10.3, 10.3.1, 10.4, 10.4.1**<br>Not applicable. |
| **References** | Office of Law Enforcement, Alaska Enforcement Division, June 2025 Report to the NPFMC. https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=b88ea379-5221-46a9-8c3b-36745275c490.pdf&fileName=B5%20NOAA%20Enforcement%20Report.pdf.<br>Office of Law Enforcement, Alaska Enforcement Division, October 2025 Report to the NPFMC. https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=ddaf96fe-32fc-4b14-a044-9cf3cd5f4b51.pdf&fileName=B5%20NOAA%20OLE%20Report.pdf. |
| **Summary of consistency with CSI RFM Fisheries Standard** | The fishery continues to meet the requirements of this Fundamental Clause of the RFM Fisheries Standard. |

| **Fundamental Clause 11. There shall be a framework for sanctions for violations and illegal activities of adequate severity to support compliance and discourage violations.** | |
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| 11.1 States laws of adequate severity shall be in place that provide for effective sanctions.<br>11.2 Sanctions applicable to violations and illegal activities shall be adequate in severity to be effective in securing compliance and discouraging violations wherever they occur. Sanctions shall also be in force to affect authorization to fish and/or to serve as masters or officers of a fishing vessel in the event of noncompliance with conservation and management measures.<br>11.3 Fisheries management organizations shall ensure that sanctions for IUU fishing by vessels and, to the greatest extent possible, nationals under its jurisdiction are of sufficient severity to effectively prevent, deter, and eliminate IUU fishing and to deprive offenders of the benefits accruing from such fishing. This may include the adoption of a civil sanction regime based on an administrative penalty scheme. Fisheries management organizations shall ensure the consistent and transparent application of sanctions.<br>11.4 Flag States shall take enforcement measures towards fishing vessels entitled to fly their flag, which have been found by the State to have contravened applicable conservation and management measures. The State shall, where appropriate, make the contravention of such measures an offense under national legislation. | |
| **Summary of relevant changes** | **Clause 11.1, 11.2, 11.3**<br>No relevant changes were reported.<br>**Clause 11.4**<br>Not applicable. |
| **References** | NA |
| **Summary of consistency with CSI RFM Fisheries Standard** | The fishery continues to meet the requirements of this Fundamental Clause of the RFM Fisheries Standard. |

### 6.1.4 Key Component D: Serious Impacts of the Fishery on the Ecosystem

| **Fundamental Clause 12. Considerations of fishery interactions and effects on the ecosystem shall be based on the best scientific evidence available, local knowledge where it can be objectively verified, and a risk assessment-based management approach for determining most probable adverse impacts. Adverse impacts of the fishery on the ecosystem shall be appropriately assessed and effectively addressed.** |
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| 12.1 The fishery management organization shall assess the impacts of environmental factors on target stocks and associated or dependent species in the same ecosystem, and the relationship among the populations in the ecosystem. |
| 12.2 The most probable adverse impacts from human activities, including fishery effects on the ecosystem/environment, shall be assessed and, where appropriate, addressed and or/corrected, taking into account available scientific information and local knowledge. This may take the form of an immediate management response or a further analysis of the identified risk. In this context, full consideration should be given to the special circumstances and requirements in developing fisheries, including financial and technical assistance, technology transfer, training, and scientific cooperation. In the absence of specific information on the ecosystem impacts of fishing on the unit of certification, generic evidence based on similar fishery situations can be used for fisheries with low risk of severe adverse impact. However, the greater the risk, the more specific evidence shall be necessary to ascertain the adequacy of mitigation measures. |
| 12.2.1 The fishery management organization shall consider the most probable adverse impacts of the unit of certification on main associated species (CSI RFM v2.2 Guidance Appendix 1, Parts 3 and 7[7]), by assessing and, where appropriate, addressing and or/correcting them, taking into account the best scientific evidence available and local knowledge. Accordingly, these catches (including discards) shall be monitored and shall not threaten these non-target species with serious risk of extinction, recruitment overfishing, or other impacts that are likely to be irreversible or very slowly reversible. If such impacts arise, effective remedial action shall be taken. |
| 12.2.2 The fishery management organization shall consider the most probable adverse impacts of the unit of certification on minor associated species (CSI RFM v2.2 Guidance Appendix 1, Parts 3 and 7[8]), by assessing and, where appropriate, addressing and or/correcting them, taking into account the best scientific evidence available and local knowledge. Accordingly, these catches (including discards) shall be monitored and shall not threaten these non-target species with serious risk of extinction, recruitment overfishing, or other impacts that are likely to be irreversible or very slowly reversible. If such impacts arise, effective remedial action shall be taken. |
| 12.2.3 There shall be outcome indicator(s) consistent with achieving management objectives for non-target species (i.e., avoiding overfishing and other impacts that are likely to be irreversible or very slowly reversible). |
| 12.2.4 The fishery management organization shall consider the most probable adverse impacts of the unit of certification on ETP species (CSI RFM v2.2 Guidance Appendix 1, Parts 4 and 7[9]), by assessing and, where appropriate, addressing and or/correcting them, taking into account the best scientific evidence available and local knowledge. |
| 12.2.5 There shall be outcome indicator(s) consistent with achieving management objectives seeking to ensure that ETP species are protected from adverse impacts resulting from interactions with the unit of certification and any associated enhanced fishery activity, including recruitment overfishing or other impacts that are likely to be irreversible or very slowly reversible. |
| 12.2.6 The fishery management organization shall consider the most probable adverse impacts of the unit of certification on habitats (CSI RFM v2.2 Guidance Appendix 1, Parts 5 and 7[10]), by assessing and, where appropriate, addressing and or/correcting them, taking into account the best scientific evidence available and local knowledge. |
| 12.2.7 There shall be knowledge of the essential habitats for the *stock under consideration* and potential fishery impacts on them. Impacts on essential habitats, and on habitats that are highly vulnerable to damage by the fishing gear involved, shall be avoided, minimized, or mitigated. In assessing fishery impacts, the full spatial range of the relevant habitat shall be considered, not just the part of the spatial range that is potentially affected by fishing. |
| 12.2.8 There shall be outcome indicator(s) consistent with achieving management objectives for avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating the impacts of the unit of certification on essential habitats for the *stock under consideration* and on habitats that are highly vulnerable to damage by the fishing gear of the unit of certification. |
| 12.2.9 The fishery management organization shall consider the most probable adverse impacts of the fishery under assessment on the ecosystem (CSI RFM v2.2 Guidance Appendix 1, Part 6[11]), by assessing and, where appropriate, addressing and or/correcting them, taking into account available scientific information and local knowledge. |

[7] Guidance to Performance Evaluation for the Certification of Wild Capture and Enhanced Fisheries v2.2
[8] Guidance to Performance Evaluation for the Certification of Wild Capture and Enhanced Fisheries v2.2
[9] Guidance to Performance Evaluation for the Certification of Wild Capture and Enhanced Fisheries v2.2
[10] Guidance to Performance Evaluation for the Certification of Wild Capture and Enhanced Fisheries v2.2
[11] Guidance to Performance Evaluation for the Certification of Wild Capture and Enhanced Fisheries v2.2

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| 12.2.10 There shall be outcome indicator(s) consistent with achieving management objectives seeking to minimize adverse impacts of the unit of certification (including any fishery enhanced activities) on the structure, processes, and function of aquatic ecosystems that are likely to be irreversible or very slowly reversible. Any modifications to the habitat for enhancing the stock under consideration must be reversible and not cause serious or irreversible harm to the natural ecosystem's structure, processes, and function.<br>12.2.11 The fishery management organization shall consider the most probable adverse human impacts on the stock/ecosystem under consideration, by assessing and, where appropriate, addressing and or/correcting them, taking into account available scientific information and local knowledge.<br>12.3 The role of the *stock under consideration* in the food web shall be considered, and if it is a key prey species[12] in the ecosystem, management objectives and measures shall be in place to avoid severe adverse impacts on dependent predators.<br>12.4 There shall be outcome indicator(s) consistent with achieving management objectives seeking to avoid severe adverse impacts on dependent predators resulting from the unit of certification fishing on a *stock under consideration* that is a key prey species.[13]<br>12.5 States shall introduce and enforce laws and regulations based on the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto (MARPOL 73/78).<br>12.6 Research shall be promoted on the environmental and social impacts of fishing gear especially on the impact of such gear on biodiversity and coastal fishing communities.<br>12.7 The fishery management organization shall make use, where appropriate, of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). The general objectives for establishing MPAs shall include ensuring sustainability of fish stocks and fisheries and protecting marine biodiversity and critical habitats. | |
| **Summary of relevant changes** | **Clauses 12.1, 12.3, and 12.4**<br>NOAA and NOAA Fisheries continue to have a series of programs monitoring and modelling oceanographic processes in Alaska and adjoining waters. The data, together with a range of other environmental monitoring information such as plankton, low trophic level fish species, fish populations, and population dynamics of higher predators are all assembled through NMFS. The relationship between environmental factors (biotic and abiotic) and BSAI and GOA pollock are evaluated annually in the SAFE process (Ianelli et al. 2024a, b; Barbeaux et al. 2024; Monnahan et al. 2024). (Note that updated SAFE reports were not produced in late 2025 due to the U.S. government shutdown.) All significant and commercial species are assessed individually according to the SAFE Tier system. Most of the species' SAFE reports contain details on ecosystem effects on the species (e.g., prey availability) and fishery effects on the ecosystem. The SAFE evaluations provide a process by which a wide range of relevant environmental information is assembled and evaluated in relation to its potential effects. Ecosystem Status Reports are done annually for EBS, AI, and GOA, updating the climate, biological, and fishing effects in each region (Siddon 2024, Ortiz and Zador 2024, Ferriss 2024). (Note that updated Ecosystem Status Reports were not produced in late 2025 due to the U.S. government shutdown.) In addition, the relationship between different populations in the ecosystem is evaluated through ongoing ecosystem and multi-species modelling programs within NMFS. These information sources are presented and considered annually at Council meetings.<br><br>TAC-setting within the Council demonstrably follows the precautionary principle. This is also informed by the range of ecosystem indicators reported to the plan teams as part of the SAFE process. These indicators include mammalian predators of groundfish (e.g., Northern fur seals, Seller sea lions), which are considered by the stock assessment plan teams, SSC, and the Council in setting TACs. For mammalian predators of groundfish (e.g., pollock), outcome indicators of direct mortality are required by the Marine Mammal Protection Act and the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in terms of allowable mortalities.<br><br>As noted in Section 5.5, recent conditions have been unusually warm with sea surface temperatures as much as 3° C (about 5.4° F) higher than average. Additionally, in recent years, the annual ice cover in the BS has decreased dramatically, which has likely affected several species' survivability and reproductive success. These changes have been and continue to be investigated. The Council's SSC and the Groundfish Plan Teams are considering these factors on an ongoing basis as they assess the groundfish stocks (e.g., Ianelli et al. 2024a, b; Barbeaux et al. 2024; Monnahan et al. 2024).<br><br>**Clauses 12.2, 12.2.1, 12.2.2, and 12.2.3** |

[12] See Appendix 1 page 150 of the Guidance to Performance Evaluation for the Certification of Wild Capture and Enhanced Fisheries v2.2.
[13] See Appendix 1 page 150 of the Guidance to Performance Evaluation forthe Certification of Wild Capture and Enhanced Fisheries v2.2.

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| | There is a comprehensive set of measures in place to minimize catch, waste, and discards of non-target species, as described above. Each of the BSAI and GOA pollock fisheries have limited non-target catches with pollock making up more than 93% in both regions. In the case of the Alaska pollock fishery, the target catch is above 300,000 tons so, as per the RFM requirements, the main associated species constitute 85% of the bycatch profile (Table 7 and Table 8).<br><br>BSAI pollock fishery<br>For the BSAI fishery, there are some main associated species with all (in total) making up less than 2% of the total average catch. The main associated species include:<br>• Alaska skate – According to Tribuzio et al. (2024), the stock is not overfished.<br>• Flathead sole – RFM and MSC certified; not overfished<br>• Pacific cod – RFM and MSC certified; not overfished<br>• Pacific ocean perch – RFM and MSC certified; not overfished<br>• Rock sole –MSC certified; not overfished<br>• Sablefish – RFM and MSC certified; not overfished<br>• Scypho jellies – Grouping makes up 0.45% of total catch and 23.89% of total bycatch; however, this is a complex that is made up of several scypho jelly species so it is unlikely that the pollock fishery is negatively impacting the species.<br>• Squid – Grouping makes up 0.35% of total catch and 18.42% of total bycatch; however, this is a complex that is made up of several squid species so it is unlikely that the pollock fishery is negatively impacting the species.<br>• Yellowfin sole – RFM and MSC certified; not overfished<br><br>There are several minor associated species with each of them making up ≤0.02% of the total average catch. Given the large number of minor associated species but the low catch rate, the audit team has determined that it is unnecessary to list each one of them here. Refer to Table 7 for more details. None of the minor associated species are overfished so none are likely to be negatively impacted by the pollock fishery.<br><br>Overall, these main and minor associated species and their catch amounts are similar to previous years. Therefore, this combined with operational measures employed by industry to meet the specific targets are effective at achieving the specified management objectives.<br><br>GOA pollock fishery<br>For the GOA fishery, there are some main associated species with each making up less than 2% of the total average catch. The main associated species include:<br>• Arrowtooth flounder – MSC certified; not overfished<br>• Pacific cod – RFM and MSC certified; not overfished<br>• Pacific ocean perch – RFM and MSC certified; not overfished<br>• Rock sole –MSC certified; not overfished<br>• Squid – Grouping makes up 1.05% of total catch and 17.83% of total bycatch; however, this is a complex that is made up of several squid species so it is unlikely that the pollock fishery is negatively impacting the species.<br><br>There are several minor associated species with each of them making up ≤0.10% of the total average catch. Given the large number of minor associated species but the low catch rate, the assessment team has determined that it is unnecessary to list each one of them here. Refer to Table 8 for more details. None of the minor associated species are overfished so none are likely to be negatively impacted by the pollock fishery.<br><br>Overall, these main and minor species and their catch amounts are similar to previous years. Therefore, this combined with operational measures employed by industry to meet the specific targets are effective at achieving the specified management objectives.<br><br>**Clauses 12.2.4 and 12.2.5**<br>There continues to be a process in place for the development of management objectives to ensure that endangered species are protected from adverse impacts from interactions with the unit of certification. The endangered species inhabiting the BSAI and GOA are primarily under the responsibility of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for seabird species and NOAA Fisheries for other protected species. For these fisheries, these are primarily marine mammals. |

NMFS annually categorizes all U.S. commercial fisheries under the List of Fisheries according to the levels of marine mammal mortality and serious injury (https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/marine-mammal-protection/list-fisheries-summary-tables). (Note that the List of Fisheries was not updated in late 2025 or early 2026 due to the U.S. government shutdown.) Category III fisheries interact with marine mammal stocks with annual mortality and serious injury <1% of the marine mammal's potential biological removal (PBR) level and total fishery-related mortality <10% of PBR. Any fishery in Category III is considered to have achieved the target level of mortality and serious injury. Category II fisheries have a level of mortality and serious injury that is >1% but is <50% of the stock's PBR level, if total fishery related mortality is >10% of the PBR. Category I fisheries have frequent mortality and serious injury of marine mammal resulting in annual mortality >50% of PRB. The BSAI pollock trawl fishery is a Category II (occasional interactions), and the GOA pollock trawl is Category III (remote likelihood or no known interaction). (As of 2021, the other gears were no longer classified due to the lack of any interactions.) Observer program data continue to provide annual estimates of takes of endangered species – fish, seabirds, and marine mammals in the BSAI and GOA pollock fisheries.

BSAI pollock trawl fishery
The following species are listed on the List of Fisheries as relevant to this fishery:

- Bearded seal (Beringia)
- Harbor seal (Bristol Bay)
- Humpback whale (Hawai'i)
- Humpback whale (Mexico-North Pacific)
- Humpback whale (Western North Pacific)
- Pacific white-sided dolphin (North Pacific)
- Ribbon seal
- Ringed seal (Arctic)
- Steller sea lion (western US)

Marine mammals are rarely taken incidentally in the BSAI pollock trawl fishery. Of these species, five are also ESA-listed species: bearded seal, humpback whale (Mexico-North Pacific), and ringed seal are all threatened and humpback whale (Western North Pacific) and Steller sea lion are both endangered. The humpback whale is also listed in CITES Appendix I. According to available observer data for the most recent five-year period (2018-2022), the fishery has had 2 bearded seal, 1 fin whale (Northeast Pacific stock), 1 harbor seal, 4 humpback whale, 1 killer whale (Eastern North Pacific Alaska Resident stock), 2 Pacific white-sided dolphin, and 31 Steller sea lion mortalities (Brower et al. 2024). Overall, all of these catch numbers are significantly less than the species' PBRs (Young et al. 2026). Considering the cumulative impacts of all certified BSAI fisheries, the catch numbers are also below PBRs.

Regarding Steller sea lions, BSAI and GOA cod fisheries have a negligible impact on the species. Additionally, mitigation measures are in place to limit interactions (e.g., closed areas for Steller sea lion breeding; https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/species/steller-sea-lion/conservation-management).

Seabird interactions with fishing gear are recorded through the NMFS Observer Program (summarized in Tide and Eich 2022), and population trends are monitored by USFWS (summarized in Dragoo et al. 2020). The catch numbers of seabird species in this fishery are minimal, and data show no significant changes to the amount of bycatch. The only recent seabird bycatch are kittiwakes, Laysan albatross, murres, northern fulmar, and shearwaters; none of these are ESA-listed species. Short-tailed albatross remains the main endangered bird species of concern in the Alaska fisheries, and this fishery has not caught any in at least the last 10 years.

Three ESA-threatened salmon stocks that migrate to Alaskan waters include Lower Columbia River Chinook salmon, upper Willamette River Chinook salmon, and Lower Columbia River Chinook, spring. The bycatch of ESA-listed Chinook salmon by the BSAI pollock fishery increased in 2020. However, the 2021-2024 catch decreased again, and all recent catch totals remain within the 45,000 PSC limit. Data continue to be collected, and the bycatch numbers are analyzed annually (NOAA Fisheries 2023, 2024). Cumulatively, the catch numbers are also below limits.

GOA pollock trawl fishery
The following species are listed on the List of Fisheries as relevant to this fishery:

- Steller sea lion (western US)

Marine mammals are rarely taken incidentally in the GOA pollock trawl fishery. The Steller sea lion is the only List of Fisheries species caught by the fishery. According to available observer data for the most recent five-year period (2018-2022), the fishery has had 1 Steller sea lion mortalities (Brower et al. 2024). The Steller sea lion is not listed in CITES Appendix 1. These catch numbers are significantly less than the species' PBR (Young et al. 2026). Cumulatively, the catch numbers are also below the PBR. Recent surveys indicate that in the GOA pup and non-pup numbers have increased, showing positive population trends.

According to observer data, this fishery catches no seabirds. Also, as with the BSAI pollock fishery, the GOA pollock fishery is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of endangered Chinook stock. The bycatch of ESA-listed Chinook salmon by the GOA pollock fishery has increased since 2022. Nevertheless, Chinook prohibited species limits have been imposed. The limits appear unlikely to be exceeded, but measures such as closed areas of high bycatch are in place to minimize this bycatch. Cumulatively, the catch numbers are also below limits.

**Clauses 12.2.6, 12.2.7, 12.2.8, and 12.7**
In April 2022, a new five-year review of essential fish habitat (EFH) was announced. The review evaluated:

1) published scientific literature
2) unpublished scientific reports
3) information solicited from interested parties
4) previously unavailable or inaccessible data

In 2023, the Council revised the EFH sections of its FMPs to address the results of the five-year review, and the results of the review led to improved species distribution mapping using a more uniform approach as well as an update to the fishing effects model to remove a coding error that omitted unobserved catch events (https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/habitat-conservation/alaska-essential-fish-habitat-reviews). All groundfish species had EFH impacts that were determined to be minimal and temporary.

There were two key issues regarding pelagic trawl gear:

1.) The Council chose not to take action to close the Red King Crab Savings Area due to concerns that fishing effort by pot, longline, and pelagic trawl gear could be having adverse effects on the recovery of the severely depleted Bristol Bay red king crab stock. However, the Council established an unobserved mortality working group for crab that has met and will provide a report to Council at their June 2025 meeting.
2.) A discussion paper was produced for the Council looking at the pelagic trawl gear definition to both align current regulations with objectives of the Council, which are to promote gear innovation and improvements as well as fixing more straightforward regulatory items (fix the codend not intended as part of the pelagic trawl/floats in salmon excluders, etc.). There is some interest in removing outdated regulations and improving the definition to meet the future needs of innovation and development particularly regarding benthic habitat impacts of pelagic trawl gear.

**Clauses 12.2.9, 12.2.10, and 12.2.11**
Management measures continue to be in place, based on sound, fishery-related evidence platforms and extensive evaluations designed to achieve the stated objectives for relevant ecosystem components. These specifically include marine mammals, seabirds, prohibited species, target and bycatch species, EFH, habitat areas of particular concern, and food-web effects. Also, ongoing monitoring and ecosystem modelling are in place to meet the overarching objective of effective ecosystem-based management (NPFMC 2007; 2019; 2024a, b).

**Clause 12.5**
All fishing vessels operating in federal waters are required to comply with MARPOL Annex V, which specifically prohibits the at-sea disposal of all plastics. Vessels operating in the North Pacific therefore have three options: 1) non-plastics can be disposed of at sea within the legal restrictions, 2) they can incinerate wastes onboard the vessel, or 3) they can hold the wastes for shoreside disposal at port. Vessels are required to post oil pollution and garbage placards; have a written solid waste management plan that describes procedures for collecting, processing, storing, and discharging garbage; and have a designated person in charge of carrying out the plan. The BSAI and GOA pollock fishing vessels continue to be

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| | compliant with MARPOL Annex V as confirmed by regular vessel inspections and onboard observers (Austin Estabrooks, APA, pers. comm.).<br><br>**Clause 12.6**<br>The Council's overarching policy continues to include the objective of applying judicious and responsible fisheries management practices, based on sound scientific research and analysis. Also, all management measures are to be based on the best scientific information available. Key to delivering this scientific evidence base remains the work of the AFSC and their five-year strategic plan (NOAA Fisheries 2022). Research is often promoted and encouraged by academic institutions, furthering the aim of the Council. Research continues into community development associated with fisheries. Industry is also regularly involved in research. |
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| **Summary of consistency with CSI RFM Fisheries Standard** | The fishery continues to meet the requirements of this Fundamental Clause of the CSI RFM Fisheries Standard. |

## 7 NON-CONFORMANCES

No non-conformances were raised during this surveillance audit.

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# 9 APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Stakeholder submissions

No stakeholder comments were received during the announced consultation opportunities.

# ABOUT DNV

DNV is a global independent certification, assurance and risk management provider, operating in more than 100 countries. Through its broad experience and deep expertise, DNV advances safety and sustainable performance, sets industry benchmarks, drives innovative solutions.

Whether certifying a company's management system or products, providing training, assessing supply chains or digital assets, DNV enables customers and stakeholders to make critical decisions with confidence, continually improve and realize long-term strategic goals sustainably.

DNV draws on its wide technical and industry expertise to help companies worldwide build consumer and stakeholder trust. Driven by its purpose, to safeguard life, property, and the environment, DNV helps tackle the challenges and global transformations facing its customers and the world today and is a trusted voice for many of the world's most successful and forward-thinking companies.



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