



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
P.O. Box 21668
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September 26, 2025

Agenda B-2: NMFS Management Report

Status of Actions Report Online

Updated daily at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/akro/amendments.pdf>

Progress on Rulemaking

Highlights on progress since the December 2024 meeting include:

- On **June 17, 2025**, NMFS published the Cook Inlet 2025 final harvest specifications for salmon ([90 FR 25508](#)). The fishery opened on June 19, 2025, and closed on August 15, 2025.
- On **July 7, 2025**, NMFS published the final rule to implement the Recreational Quota Entity charter halibut stamp program ([90 FR 29774](#)). This rule is effective on January 1, 2026 for the 2026 charter fishing season.
- On **August 25, 2025**, NMFS published a correction to the Bering Sea Aleutian Islands (BSAI) 2025/2026 Groundfish Harvest Specifications ([90 FR 41344](#)).
- On **August 27, 2025**, NMFS published a [notice seeking public comment \(90 FR 41818\)](#) on suggestions to improve fisheries management and science outlined in the [Executive Order on Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness](#). The public comment period closes on **October 14, 2025**.
- On **September 3, 2025**, NMFS approved Amendment 125 to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea Aleutian Islands Management Area (BSAI FMP). The comment period on the proposed rule to implement Amendment 125 ended on **September 5, 2025** and NMFS is developing a final rule with the intent to implement Amendment 125 for the 2026 fishing year.
- On **September 25, 2025**, NMFS prohibited directed fishing for pollock by vessels using trawl gear in the Winter Herring Savings Area of the BSAI ([90 FR 46358](#)). This action is necessary to prevent exceeding the 2025 herring bycatch allowance specified for the midwater pollock fishery. This action includes prohibiting directed fishing for pollock in the Winter Herring Savings Area by vessels participating in the Community Development Quota Program and will remain in effect until March 1, 2026. More information on herring bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery is in the NMFS Inseason Management Report under the NMFS B2 Report.
- A proposed rule to modify the timing of haul designation for trawl catcher/processors in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Groundfish Fisheries is under review.
- The cost recovery fee notice for the Pacific Cod Trawl Cooperative (PCTC) Program for the 2025 fishing season is under review. 50 CFR 679.135(c)(2) states that each year NMFS shall calculate and publish the fee percentage following the fishing season in the Federal Register.



- NMFS staff are working on preparing a proposed rule to implement the Council's April 2025, recommended changes to the halibut vessel use caps in Area 4. Because this action re-implements a vessel use cap in Area 4, this action would need to be in effect at the start of the fishing season and would not be implemented mid-season. We do not expect this to be effective for the 2026 IFQ fishing year.
- **The Status of Actions Report** provides additional detail.

Additional NMFS Documents

In addition to this B2 NMFS Management Report, NMFS also posted the following documents under this agenda item:

1. 2025 Halibut and Groundfish Seabird Working Group Report
2. NMFS Cost Recovery memorandum
3. Alaska Region Guidance on Tracking Incremental Costs for Cost Recovery.
4. NMFS Inseason Update
5. NMFS Tribal Engagement Report
6. Protected Resources Presentation on ESA Section 7 Consultations and BSAI FMP BiOp
7. Status of Amendments

Juneau Flood

On August 13, 2025 flooding in Juneau, Alaska damaged a fiber optic cable, resulting in a loss of internet service to NOAA Fisheries facilities in the area and causing several fishery accounting and permitting systems to be unavailable. On August 15, 2025, NOAA Fisheries notified the public that the internet service provider was working to restore connectivity and had crews on site working to repair the damage in coordination with local authorities. Services were restored on Sunday August 17, 2025.

Systems impacted by the outage include:

- eFISH: out of service, with no features available.
- eLandings: system available, not all features are accessible.
- IFQ landings: call 1-800-304-4846, option 1, for assistance on reporting IFQ landings.

Though we shared updates as soon as information became available, we recognize the disruption in services affected key systems. We greatly appreciate the patience and understanding demonstrated by many fishery participants. We are evaluating options for system redundancy to reduce the likelihood of such outages in the future.

Chum Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Regulatory Impact Review

On September 12, 2025, NMFS released the Draft Environmental Impact Statement and Regulatory Impact Review (DEIS) on chum salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery for public comment. The public comment period will end on January 5, 2026. All comments will then be made available to the Council for review. To review the DEIS and for information on how to submit comments, please see the [NMFS Alaska Region webpage](#).

Executive Order (EO) 14276 Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness

On August 27, 2025, NOAA Fisheries published a [notice seeking public comment \(90 FR 41818\)](#) on suggestions to improve fisheries management and science outlined in the [Executive Order on](#)

[Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness](#). We invite the public to share input on how to improve fisheries management and science. The public comment period closes on Tuesday, October 14, 2025.

In response to the EO, the Department of Commerce, through NOAA Fisheries, is launching a bold, coordinated effort to revitalize the U.S. seafood sector. We are committed to addressing the recent decline in fisheries landings and revenue, boosting sustainable aquaculture, reducing the seafood trade deficit, and strengthening supply chain resilience.

We are looking for public input on the following issues:

- Regulations that govern fishing activities that may be suspended, revised, or rescinded
- Challenges specific fisheries are facing, suggestions for innovative improvements, and examples of existing federal fishery regulations that could be modified to enhance U.S. fishing businesses
- Ways to improve fisheries management and science, including supporting fisheries assessments through less expensive and more reliable technologies and cooperative research; increasing responsiveness of fisheries management to real-time ocean conditions through modernization of data collection and analysis; and developing and disseminating data, forecasting tools, or information products to help U.S. fishing businesses adapt to changing economic and environmental conditions
- How to expand exempted fishing permit programs to promote fishing opportunities nationwide

Additionally, NOAA Fisheries hosted two public listening sessions during the comment period (September 25, and October 1, 2025). Details are available on the [NOAA Fisheries website](#).

RQE Funding Implementation

NMFS staff have been collaborating with ADF&G to implement the new recreational quota entity halibut stamp requirement for the 2026 charter halibut fishing season. Charter halibut permit (CHP) holders will be able to purchase charter halibut stamps in their eFISH accounts starting in January 2026. NMFS has finalized a contract with ADF&G to support needed modifications to ADF&G's saltwater charter logbooks and data sharing for the program. Staff are meeting to complete development of the interface that will allow stamp validations made in the logbook to be deducted from the stamp balance in the CHP holder's eFISH account. NMFS and ADF&G are also planning outreach activities to alert the charter fishery participants. More information will be provided at the December Council meeting and an informational webinar prior to the beginning of the 2026 charter halibut season.

Use Cap Calculations under the BSAI Crab Rationalization Program and CGOA Rockfish Program (See the separate attachment on the eAgenda)

Recently, we have received questions about how we administer holding and use caps implemented under our limited access privilege programs. There have been certain situations that arose where a fishery participant requested to transfer cooperative held harvester privileges to another cooperative, and we were not able to process those transfers due to a use cap. If the Council wishes to receive additional information about use cap calculations, the Council could request a discussion

paper to explore potential changes to how use caps are calculated and verified by NMFS. Any change to these processes would require programming changes to existing software used to administer these programs and, depending upon the scope of the potential change, could include regulatory changes.

Ketchikan Rural Status

In April, 2025, the US Department of Interior's Federal Subsistence Board decided to recognize Ketchikan Area as rural in Federal subsistence regulations. In July, the U.S. Forest Service amended their subsistence regulations to change the status of Ketchikan from nonrural to rural (90 FR 34152). The U.S. Forest Service's regulation change does not change NMFS's regulations governing subsistence halibut fishing specified at 50 CFR 300.65(g). Under NMFS's regulations, Ketchikan is not a rural community and Ketchikan residents are not eligible for subsistence halibut fishing, unless the person is a member of an Alaska Native tribe that qualifies for subsistence halibut fishing.

The International Pacific Halibut Commission and NMFS manage halibut under the Halibut Act. The Halibut Act authorizes the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) to develop regulations that are in addition to, and not in conflict with, IPHC regulations. The Council developed a subsistence halibut program that recognizes the Alaska subsistence halibut fishery. Regulations that carry out this program have been in effect since May 15, 2003.

A regulatory change would be necessary to add Ketchikan to the list of eligible communities for halibut subsistence fishing. If the Council is interested in recommending a regulatory change, the Council may initiate a discussion paper.

For additional information, see questions 26 and 27 in our Alaska Subsistence Halibut Program Frequently Asked Questions at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/sustainable-fisheries/frequently-asked-questions-alaska-subsistence-halibut-program#26-ketchikan-alaska-was-recently-granted-rural-status-under-the-federal-subsistence-board-as-a-ketchikan-resident-am-i-now-eligible-to-apply-for-a-subsistence-halibut-permit>

Cost Recovery for the Crab Rationalization Program and Pacific Cod Trawl Cooperative Program

In response to the Council's April 2025 motion, NMFS AKR sent a memorandum to organizations that submit incremental costs under cost recovery informing them of improvements to the 2025 cost recovery process and conducted informational meetings with organizations that submit costs under cost recovery. This memorandum included revised Alaska Region Guidance on Tracking Incremental Costs for Cost Recovery. These documents are posted to the eAgenda under this NMFS B2 Report.

Since then, we've completed two cost recovery processes: the Crab Rationalization Program and the Pacific Cod Trawl Cooperative Program. In response to growing interest from the Council and public for more timely information, the attached tables provide a synopsis of agency costs and resulting fee percentages for these programs, reflecting our ongoing commitment to transparency and timely communication of cost recovery outcomes. NMFS will provide a complete annual cost recovery report to the Council at the June 2026 meeting.

Crab Rationalization Program Direct Program Costs by Year and Agency:

Year	NMFS AKR	NMFS AFSC	NOAA OLE	NMFS FSD	ADF&G	PSMFC	TOTAL COSTS	FEE %*
2025	\$344,949.00	\$20,433.00	\$480,948.00	\$349.00	\$706,199.00	\$107,605.00	\$1,660,483.00	1.2%
2024	\$849,544.00	\$13,153.00	\$447,681.00	\$8,187.00	\$1,367,426.00	\$160,967.00	\$2,846,958.00	3.0%
Difference	-\$504,595.00	\$7,280.00	\$33,267.00	-\$7,838.00	-\$661,227.00	-\$53,362.00	-\$1,186,475.00	

*The billed fee percentage was limited by the Magnuson-Stevens Act statutory cap of 3.0 percent of the ex-vessel value of the fishery in a Program year.

Pacific Cod Trawl Cooperative Program Direct Program Costs by Year and Agency:

Year	NMFS AKR	NMFS AFSC	NOAA OLE	ADF&G	TOTAL COSTS	FEE %*
2025	\$217,174.00	\$2,897.00	\$145,200.00	\$4,705.00	\$369,976.00	3.0%
2024	\$296,568.00	\$1,958.00	\$65,133.00	-	\$363,659.00	1.92%
Difference	-\$79,394.00	\$939.00	\$80,067.00	\$4,705.00	\$6,317.00	

*The billed fee percentage was limited by the Magnuson-Stevens Act statutory cap of 3.0 percent of the ex-vessel value of the fishery in a Program year.

Disposition of Prohibited Species Catch at Shoreside Processors

NMFS has become aware of an issue related to the ability of shoreside processors to convert prohibited species catch (PSC) to fishmeal. PSC that is required to be retained by vessel operators participating in the trawl electronic monitoring program (trawl EM) has been processed into fishmeal, however current regulations do not allow for this practice, resulting in uncertainty about how to handle PSC delivered to shoreside processors.

Under trawl EM, PSC is required to be retained so that observers at shoreside processing facilities can count and sample these PSC for management purposes. Under the prohibited species donation (PSD) program, salmon and halibut delivered by catcher vessels using trawl gear to shoreside and stationary floating processors may be processed for donation under the direction of an authorized distributor. Offal from salmon or halibut that has been retained pursuant to the PSD program may be processed into fish meal, fish oil, or bone meal, and processors are allowed to sell or trade these products. During the development of trawl EM, processing PSC species into fishmeal was allowed under the exempted fishing permit (EFP 2019-03)¹. EFP 2019-03 allowed trawl EM processors to process PSC through a meal plant rather than loading the PSC back onto a vessel to be transported and discarded at sea.

Current regulations under trawl EM prohibit PSC harvested or delivered by a vessel in the trawl EM category from being sold, purchased, bartered, or traded (50 CFR 679.7(j)(2)(ii)(F)). The Council may wish to consider whether PSC delivered to shoreside processors, and not donated to the PSD program, should be allowed to be processed into fishmeal similar to how the fishery operated under the EFP and other provisions that apply to species that cannot enter commerce such

¹ EFPs issued in Alaska are available from: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/resources-fishing/exempted-fishing-permits-alaska>.

as rockfish full retention (§ 679.20(j)) and forage fish (§ 679.20(i)). These regulations limit the amount of certain species that can enter commerce through barter, sale, or trade and include an exception that allows these species to be processed into fishmeal or other similar value products. If the Council wishes to allow PSC delivered under trawl EM to be processed into fishmeal, a regulatory change would be necessary. Absent a change to the regulations, processors and vessel operators will likely incur greater cost to dispose of PSC. These costs include storing PSC, loading PSC onto vessels, and costs to vessel operators to transport these fish for disposal several miles offshore.

2025 Halibut and Groundfish Seabird Working Group Report

On May 19, 2025, NMFS held a virtual meeting for members of the Alaska Groundfish and Halibut Seabird Working Group. For the 2024 fishing year, there were no takes of ESA-listed seabirds in the groundfish and halibut fisheries off Alaska. The working group discussed current seabird bycatch data, reviewed the status of ESA-listed seabirds, and received updates on current monitoring in the fisheries with an emphasis on recent Electronic Monitoring developments. There was substantial discussion about staffing changes in the participating agencies and the resources available for seabird monitoring. Not all of the agencies that have historically participated in the working group were able to allocate resources to it this year. In light of these constraints, discussion focused on how existing data, monitoring, and review processes could be better focused on the specific times and places fishery interactions with ESA-listed seabirds are most likely. Membership in the working group was also updated. The working group intends to return to its normal schedule and meet again in March 2026. A written meeting report is provided to the Council under the NMFS B-2 Report agenda item.

Protected Resource Updates

ESA Section 7 Consultations and BSAI FMP BiOp

SFD prepared a Biological Assessment and submitted it to PRD to reinstate consultation on the groundfish fisheries managed under BSAI FMP, including State of Alaska parallel groundfish fisheries. PRD is completing a Biological Opinion on the effects of the BSAI groundfish FMP on ESA-listed species and designated critical habitat. PRD will present on the status of the BSAI FMP Biological Opinion and [NMFS Policy Directive 01-117](#): Integration of Endangered Species Act Section 7 with MSA Processes.

Gray whale listing petition

On August 24, 2025, NMFS received a petition to list the eastern North Pacific gray population as an endangered or threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). [Link to petition](#).

Pursuant to section 4 of the ESA, NMFS must determine whether the petition presents substantial scientific or commercial information indicating that the petitioned action may be warranted. To the maximum extent practicable, this decision must be made within 90 days of receiving the petition. If the 90-day finding is that the petition presents substantial information, NMFS will commence a review of the status of the species concerned and will make, within 12 months of receipt of the petition, a determination as to whether the petitioned action is warranted. If the 90-day finding concludes the petition does not present substantial information indicating the petitioned action may be warranted, then the petition will be denied and no further action will be taken. In either case, NMFS will announce the decision and how we intend to proceed in the *Federal Register*.

St. George, Pribilof Islands, Saxitoxin Results in Fur Seals

In August 2025, NOAA Fisheries conducted necropsies on multiple dead stranded fur seals in St. George, Alaska. Results from fecal analysis indicate exposure to saxitoxin in all eight fur seals sampled, at varying levels. Additional analysis of other tissue samples such as liver and kidney from four of the seals also detected saxitoxin, providing strong evidence for saxitoxin poisoning in these animals. Histopathology will also be conducted to rule out other abnormalities that may have contributed to these deaths. NMFS notified the Alaska Division of Public Health, the state veterinarian at the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, and the wildlife veterinarian at the Alaska Department of Fish and Game about these fur seal mortalities and test results.

Chinook Salmon Endangered Species Act (ESA) Listing Petition Update

NMFS received a petition from the Wild Fish Conservancy on January 11, 2024, asking that we delineate and list one or more evolutionarily significant units (ESUs) of Chinook salmon in southern Alaska as threatened or endangered under the ESA, and that we designate critical habitat concurrently with the listing. On May 24, 2024, NMFS announced a positive 90-day finding on a petition to list Chinook salmon in the GOA as threatened or endangered under the ESA, concluding that the petitioned actions may be warranted. As a result, under the ESA, NMFS must complete a status review and issue a 12-month finding. We convened a team of federal scientists to review the species' status and extinction risk, and we invited experts from ADF&G and a tribal member to participate as advisors to the team. The SRT's report has undergone external peer review and NMFS is currently developing the 12-month finding. On May 8, 2025, Wild Fish Conservancy filed suit for NMFS' failure to issue a timely 12-month finding on the petition to list.

Personnel Changes

Sustainable Fisheries Division (SFD)

Devanie White supported the SFD as a Sea Grant fellow for the past year. Devanie worked on a range of projects including assisting in developing the infographic presented at the June Council meeting titled Sustainable Fisheries by the Numbers 2024 and supporting AKR's Tribal Engagement efforts as well as working on numerous other fishery management projects. We greatly appreciate her contributions to the work we do and wish her well as she navigates her next career move.

Protected Resources Division (PRD)

Dr. Mandy Keogh served as AKR's stranding coordinator for the past 5.5 years. Mandy came to us from ADF&G where she focused on the physiology of both marine and terrestrial mammals. She accepted a tenure-track faculty position as an Assistant Professor of Wildlife Biology with Bemidji State University in northern Minnesota. U of M were excited for Mandy's real world experience from her work in conservation and management at the Federal level. Much of her workload will be teaching and she will be able to take on Master's students and develop a research program there so we are hoping to continue to collaborate with her. Since her departure Dr. Jenna Malek and Dr. Carley Lowe have taken over stranding coordinator duties.

Michelle Dutro spent the last two years as a Sea Grant fellow in the PRD with a focus on helping with stranding, vessel strikes, sea lions, the Ocean Guardian program and getting numerous tech memos to the finish line. At this time she is unsure of her next career move but we are confident she will flourish wherever she lands.

Information Services / Operations Management Divisions (ISD/OMD)

Colton Welch - Colton Welch was OMD and ISD's administrative assistant. He provided invaluable support in the managing inventory, procurement, software licenses, travel, and a myriad of other administrative duties that helped the division function. Aside from that, he was curious to support in any way he could, and had learned to perform the webmaster duties for the region. He had even gone so far as to apply for and be posted to a detail performing the regional webmaster duties. Colton's administrative work and willingness to learn and help where he could made him invaluable and impossible to replace. We are already missing his help.

Habitat Conservation Division (HCD)

Dr. Skylar Bayer joined HCD in the Juneau office in 2022. Skylar's applied research background has emphasized scallop population dynamics and habitat as a professor at Roger Williams University, a Fulbright Fellow at the Iceland Marine and Freshwater Research Institute, and PhD program at the University of Maine, and with a marine policy nexus as a Knauss Fellow. Among her many contributions to HCD, Skylar also served on the Council's Scallop Team, fostered applied habitat science with NMFS and partners, hosted early career fellows, and coached the art of science communication, in particular through her love of storytelling; she is the co-editor of the book [Uncharted](#). Skylar joined the faculty of the University of Alaska Southeast in August 2025. We are excited for Skylar in her career transition back to academia, and we will miss her greatly within NMFS.