

# Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Program 2024

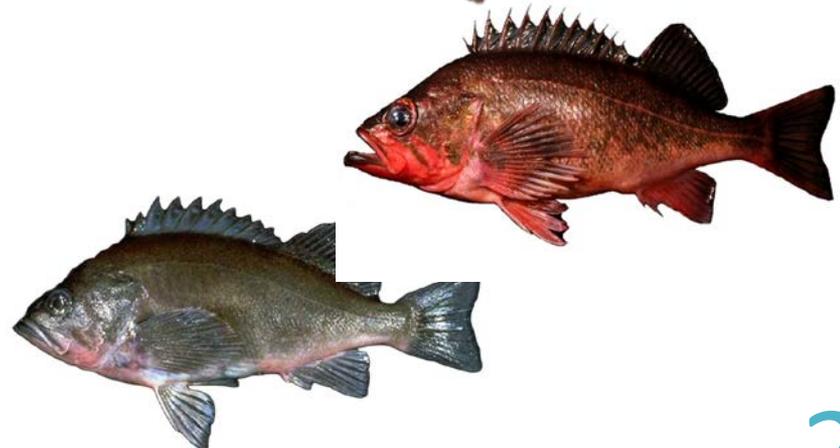
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# CGOA Rockfish Program

- Allocates Primary Rockfish (Pacific Ocean Perch, Northern Rockfish, and Dusky Rockfish), secondary species (Sablefish, Pacific Cod, and Thornyhead Rockfish), and halibut to catcher vessels.
- Bycatch cap with allocations to vessels and their cooperatives.
- Sector bycatch cap for Chinook that is shared among all vessels.
- Program created to slow the pace of the fishery, reduce PSC, and provide economic benefits to Kodiak by stabilizing the trawl fleet, processor workforce, and removing the processing time conflict with salmon.
- 100% Observer Coverage with 100% Retention Requirement (except Halibut).
- Catch Monitoring and Control Plans at the processing plants.
- Rockfish Program Review scheduled for this meeting.



# Impacts of Amendment 113 RP Adjustments

The four Adjustments that received Final Action in June 2022 were published in August 2024:

**1.) Change season start date from May 1<sup>st</sup> to April 1<sup>st</sup>:** Pollock is winding down and two or three processors will be going directly into Rockfish processing in April this year. There may also be some flatfish before moving into Rockfish.

**2.) Increase the processing cap from 30% to 40%:** Offered immediate relief in 2024. One processor wasn't buying at all until the very end of the year. Due to poor markets, other processors were particular about what species they could buy. We had more vessels deliver outside of their cooperative's affiliated processor than ever before.

If caps had remained at 30% in 2024:

- One processor would have gone over on the sablefish cap, or quota would have been stranded.
- One processor would have gone over on the Pacific cod cap and a second processor would have been close to exceeding the cap.
- It's unlikely another processor would have been able to buy the fish in each of those cases, so the alternative would be that quota would have been stranded and not harvested.



# Impacts of Amendment 113 RP Adjustments

## 3.) Modify the harvesting cap to 8% of POP, rather than 8% of primary rockfish.

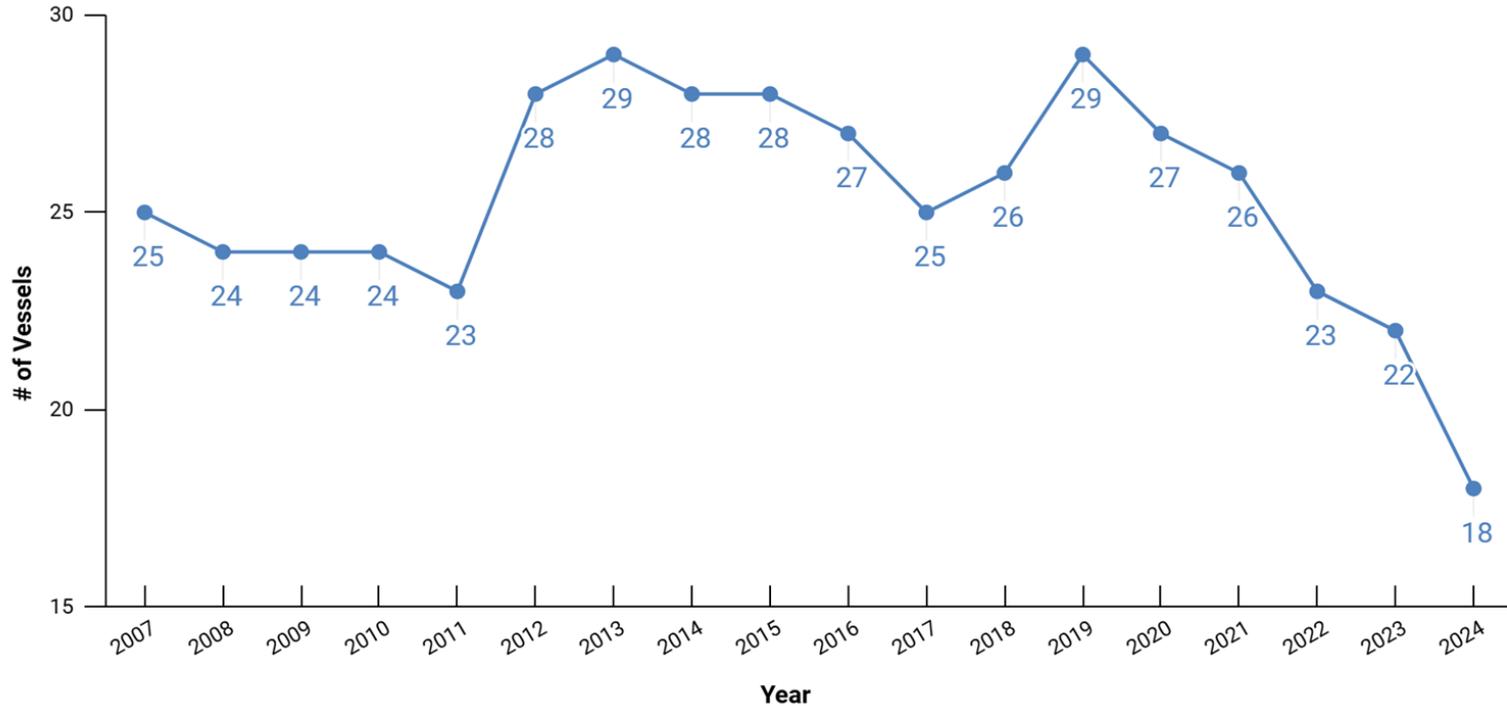
- In 2024, this actually had an unexpected slightly negative impact. However, 2024 was an unusual year and when markets improve for northern and dusky rockfish, it should still be a positive measure to increase harvest of those species.
- In 2024, an 8% cap based on all primary rockfish was 3,692,668 lbs. But when it moved to 8% of POP the cap was only 2,707,962 lbs.
- Processors only wanted POP, not NR and Dusky. When pollock closed early, vessels moved to Rockfish and LLP holders who wouldn't finish their quota released their POP to be caught by anyone for free to keep both vessels and processors working. Vessels were constrained at the lower POP only cap, whereas they would have been able to catch more POP when it was still a primary rockfish cap. Two vessels couldn't continue fishing free POP due to the cap.

## 4.) Remove the cooperative holding cap.

- Due to the 30% cooperative holding cap, there were two cooperatives associated with the same processor (Western Alaska Fisheries and Star of Kodiak). All WAF Cooperative members left WAF at the end of 2024 and have joined SOK coop, bringing our total shoreside cooperatives to 4.
- This improves efficiencies in applications and cooperative management, and also will offer some relief from challenges resulting from how the CQ holding and use cap is tracked (pg 77 & 78 of the CGOA Rockfish Program Review).

# Vessel Participation

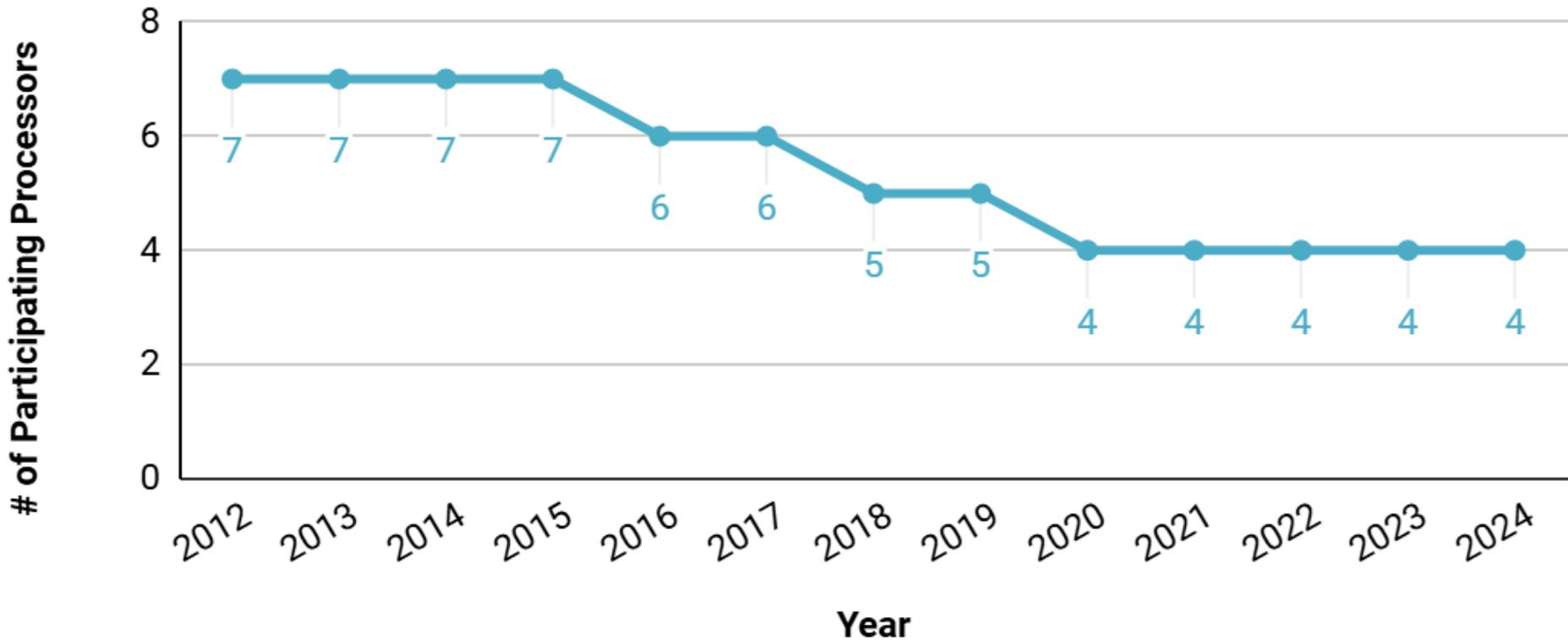
Number of Vessels that completed at least one RP trip, 2007-2024



- There are 46 CV LLPs in the program, and from 2014-2023 an average of 26 vessels participated each year.
- 2024 was the second consecutive year of the lowest participation in the history of the program.
- Two cooperatives didn't have a market and low ex-vessel price led vessels with other opportunities to fish elsewhere. Vessels that are reliant on Kodiak and rockfish caught as much as they could. The processor with the largest resident workforce took a lot of outside deliveries to keep vessels and their workforce busy.

# Processor Consolidation

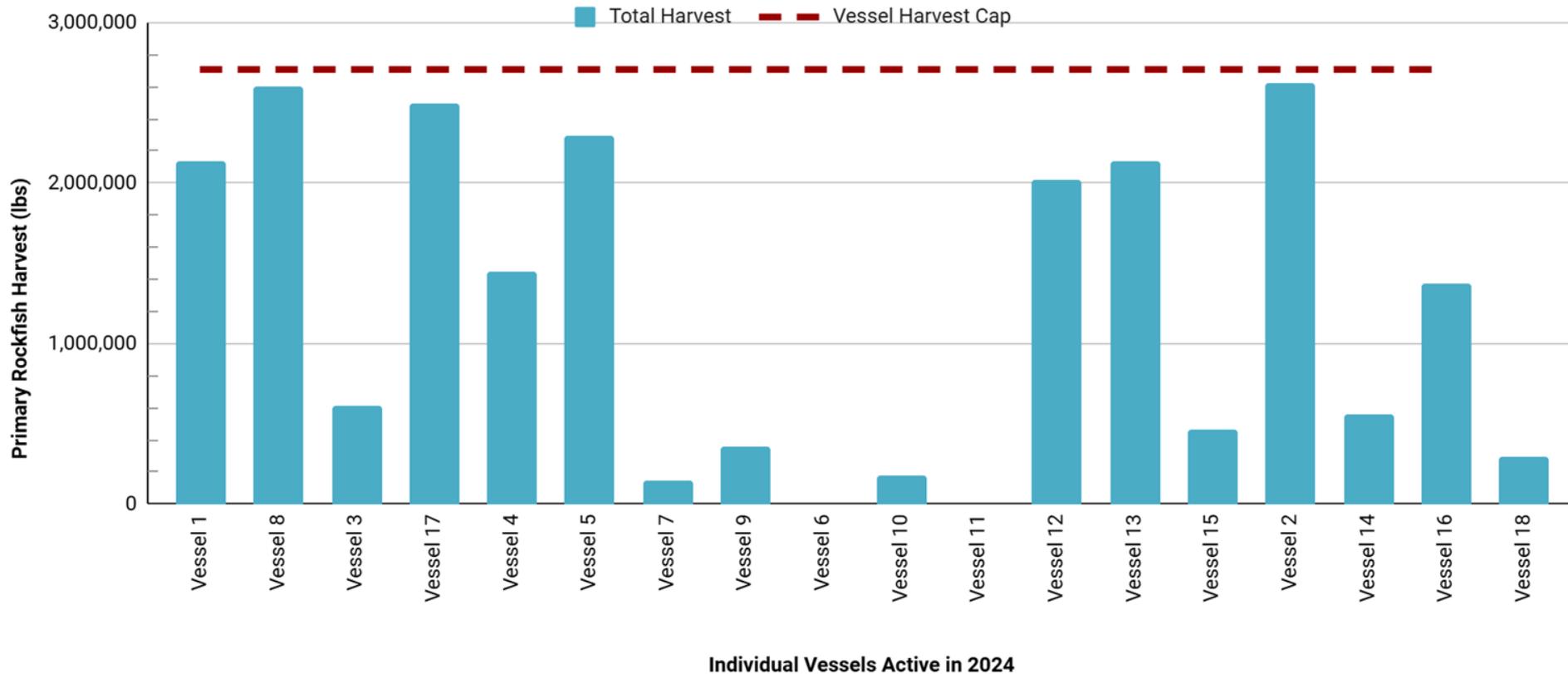
Number of active, qualified rockfish processors 2012-2024



- While the Fall had only three processors in 2022 and 2023, in 2024 all four processors decided to purchase after the early pollock closure (even the processor who hadn't bought all year).

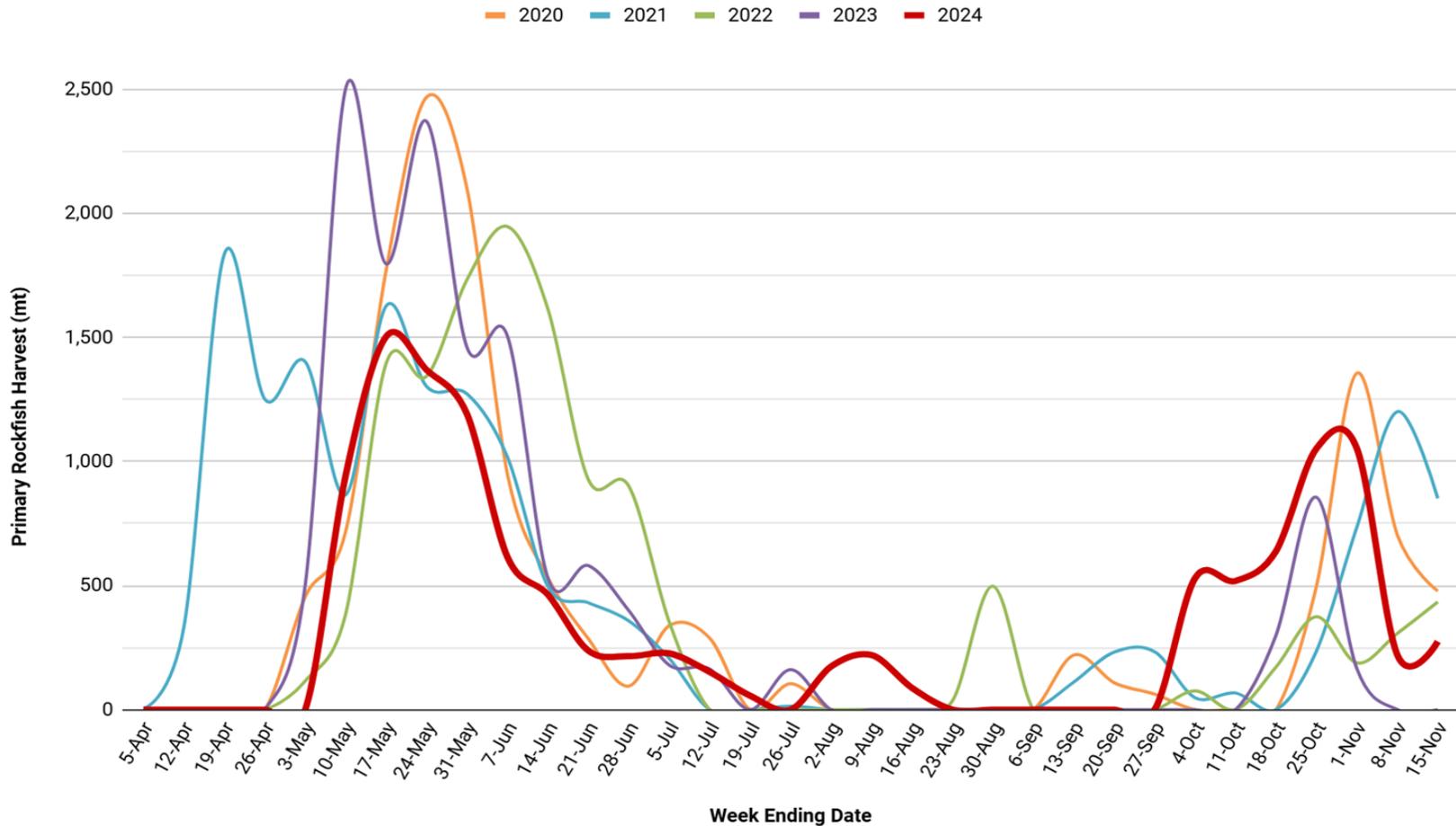
# 8% POP Vessel Harvest Cap

Vessel POP Harvests versus the 2,707,962 lbs Vessel Harvest Cap in 2024



- Two vessels that wanted to continue fishing were constrained by the 8% POP vessel harvest cap. This likely wouldn't have happened without the early pollock closure and free POP available to keep boats and plants operating.
- Of the 18 vessels that fished in 2024, two only caught secondary species (cod or sablefish), and four others only did one POP or less than one POP/secondary species trip at the end of the year. 12 vessels were fully engaged in the fishery, with varying levels of harvest.

# Primary Rockfish Landings by week, 2018-2024



- Less May and June harvest in 2024, but higher Fall harvest than we've had in the last couple years.
- Note: Season started on April 1 in 2021 due to Emergency Rule, but now opens by regulation on April 1.

# Salmon Bycatch Avoidance Agreement

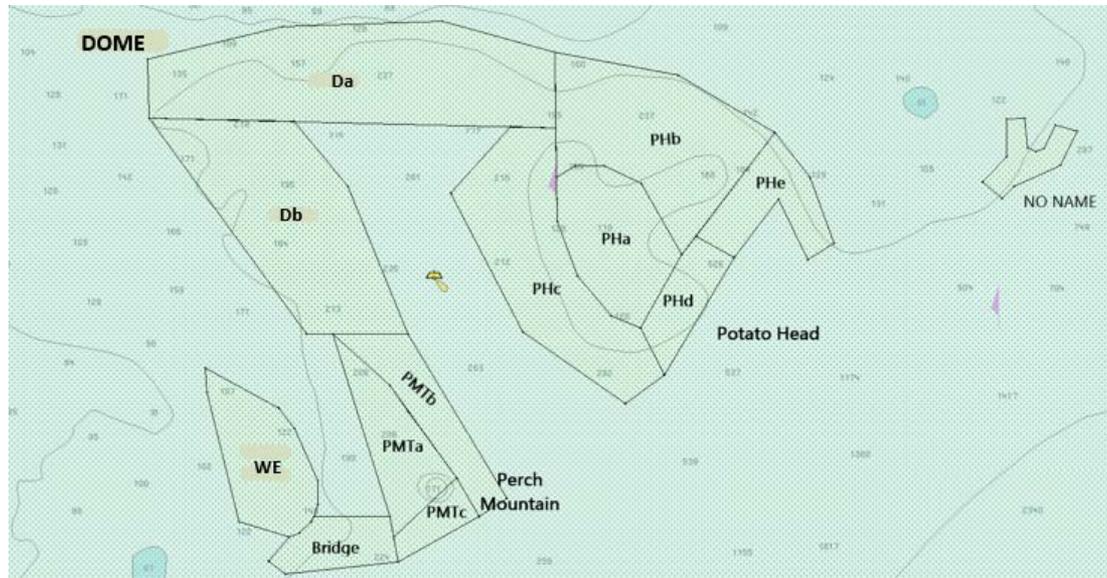
- The Salmon Bycatch Avoidance Agreement is part of the Inter-cooperative Agreement that all four cooperatives sign on to each year.
- The Agreement had largely been the same from 2015-2023, but underwent a major overhaul in 2024. This year's Agreement continues the changes made in 2024.
- The Agreement has three components:
  - Part One - General Provisions: These provisions apply to all fishing in the rockfish targets for the entire year. It includes the hotspot alerts, salmon excluder requirements (now required on all pelagic and non-pelagic rockfish tows), emergency meeting triggers, communication about sampled salmon, etc.
  - Part Two - Slow Start Provisions: Outlines how the fishery begins for each cooperative. Only two vessels per cooperative may be on the grounds, and the second may not begin fishing until the first one is full. Requires communication about salmon seen in bag dumps, and additional vessels may not enter the fishery until their cooperative members are green-lighted (i.e. salmon bycatch rate is at acceptable levels).
  - Part Three - Chinook Salmon Bycatch Performance Standard: Outlines how the fishery operates once the Slow Start period ends.
    - In 2024, we started using Rockfish Program Chinook Areas or RPCAs.
    - Rather than forcing vessels with high chinook rates to have costly stand downs like we did through 2023, the Agreement prioritizes keeping vessels fishing but moving away from areas of high PSC.

# Chinook Salmon Bycatch Performance Standard

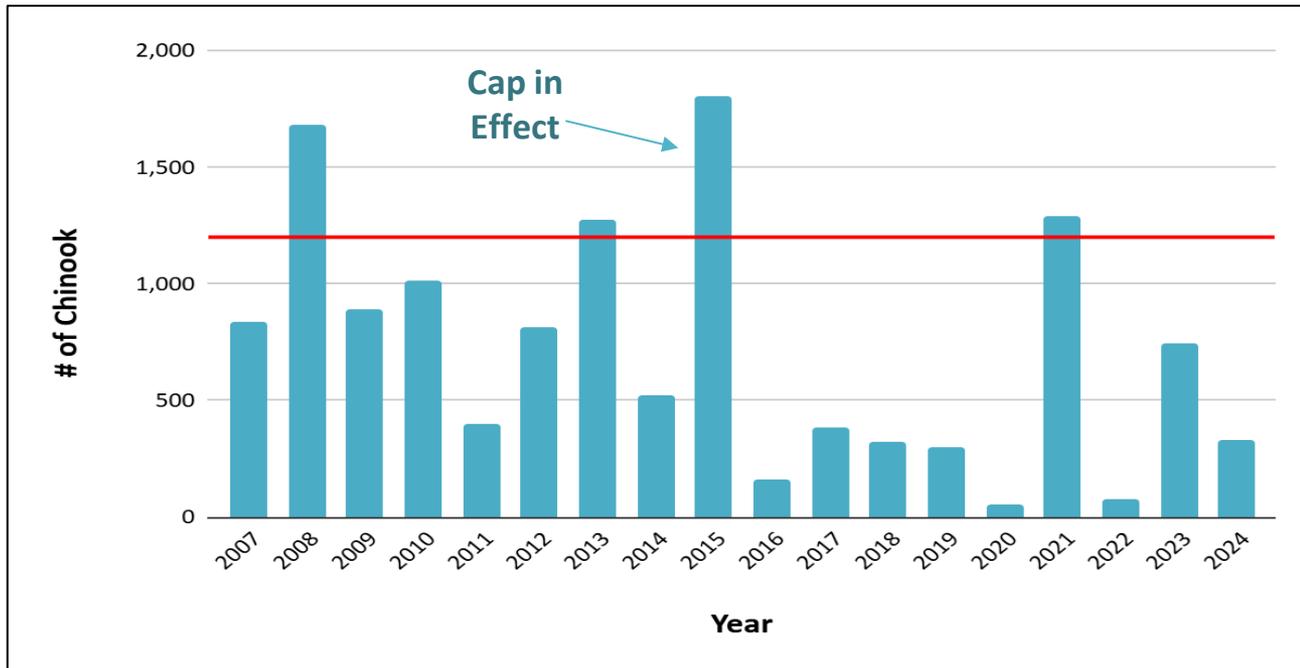
RATE LEVEL (#/mt)	RATE LEVEL (#/100,000 lbs)	REQUIRED ACTION
<p><b>RED LIGHT</b> ≥0.20 Chinook per MT of Rockfish</p>	<p><b>9 or more Chinook</b></p>	<p>The vessel is closed from targeting rockfish in that area with the same gear type used on the Red Standard trip, for one week from the time the offload ends.</p>
<p><b>YELLOW LIGHT</b> 0.10 - 0.20 Chinook per MT of Rockfish</p>	<p><b>Greater than 5 Chinook but less than 9 Chinook</b></p>	<p>If a vessel has two consecutive trips from the same area at the Yellow Standard (regardless of gear type), then the vessel is closed from targeting rockfish in that area with the same gear type for one week from the time the offload ends.</p> <p>Note: If the first Yellow Standard trip used one gear, and the second consecutive Yellow Standard trip used a different gear, it still counts as two consecutive trips, and the vessel would be closed out of that area with both gear types.</p>
<p><b>GREEN LIGHT</b> ≤0.10 Chinook per MT of Rockfish</p>	<p><b>5 or Less Chinook</b></p>	<p>The vessel can continue fishing as normal.</p>
<p><b>These standards (including stand-downs) apply only to directed rockfish trips (i.e., if a vessel must stand down due to high bycatch rate, they can still go out and do a cod or sablefish trip).</b></p>		

# Rockfish Program Chinook Areas (RPCAs)

- The Rockfish fishery operates in a way that actually makes it easier to establish boxes around the primary fishing grounds. A small working group of fishermen designed the boxes to break up an area into different subareas, using their experience about how different parts of an area may have different PSC outcomes.
- If a vessel receives a red-light rate (or two consecutive yellow light rates) in an RPCA, the vessel is closed from targeting rockfish in that area with that gear type, for one week from the time the offload ends.
- Since Rockfish grounds are limited, the Cooperatives opted for this approach so that one vessel's behavior didn't close everyone else out of an area. However, when it became clear that a particular area had too much PSC, all vessels avoided that area regardless of whether they got the high rate. All of this information (vessel hotspots, vessel closures, and overall RPCA rate information, was shared in Daily Chinook Updates).



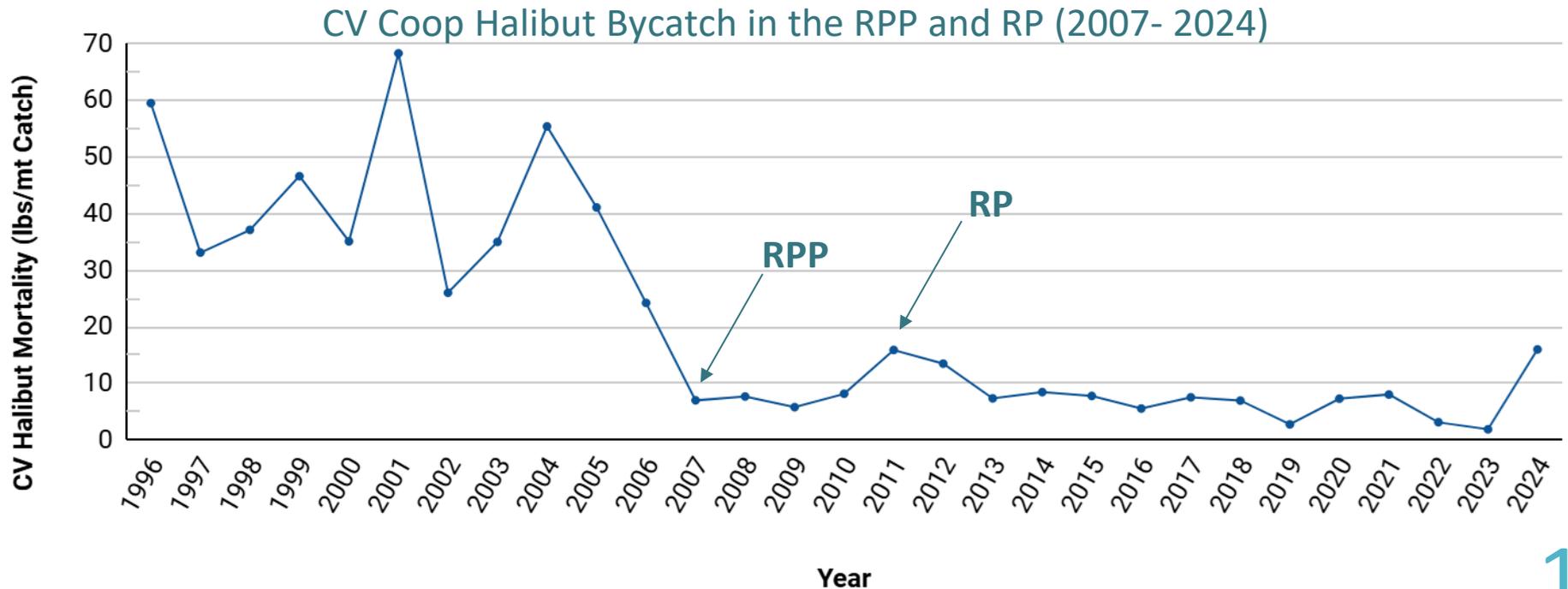
# CGOA RP CV Chinook PSC Catch, 2007-2024



Year	Chinook (no.)	Rockfish Harvest (mt)	Rate (Chinook/mt)
2015	1,802	10,768	0.167
2016	159	13,026	0.012
2017	387	9,444	0.041
2018	304	11,936	0.025
2019	297	12,644	0.023
2020	52	13,566	0.004
2021	1,290	16,138	0.080
2022	78	12,804	0.006
2023	743	13,556	0.055
2024	332	10,896	0.030
<b>Average</b>	<b>717</b>	<b>10,603</b>	<b>0.076</b>

# Halibut PSC Management

- A conservation goal in forming the Rockfish Program was to reduce halibut bycatch. The Inter-cooperative Halibut Bycatch Management Plan pools halibut allocations at the Cooperative level and sets acceptable Halibut bycatch rates by target fishery.
- Rates strike balance between ensuring RP allocations can be fully harvested while also minimizing halibut bycatch.
- Individual accountability: If a vessel exceeds halibut standards, they **must stop fishing** until the vessel's fishing practices can be assessed.



# RP Halibut PSC in 2024

- In 2024, the RP shoreside cooperative halibut PSC was 174,500 lbs or 79.2 mt. However, this was due to a sampling issue on one trip in the sablefish target.
- The RP has 100% monitoring and observers are required to sample all hauls, but they don't always (this case was due to seasickness). Halibut PSC rates also come from extrapolated at-sea basket samples. Samples can extrapolate in multiple ways.
- **Extrapolation #1:** For sampled hauls, the volume is not determined by the vessel, but rather by the observer's measurements of the codend and their volumetric calculations. If the calculations aren't accurate, this can also make the extrapolations more inaccurate since the observer's volumetric estimate determines how the sampled halibut in a haul extrapolate to the rest of that haul.
  - The first haul had a high halibut rate, which was sampled by the observer. The vessel moved to cleaner fishing. The total halibut actually sampled in the 3 of 7 sampled hauls was 16 halibut at 190 lbs.
  - When the observer entered their data into the system, this extrapolated to 877 halibut at 10,826 lbs for the sampled hauls (this is a back-end calculation, not an observer calculation).

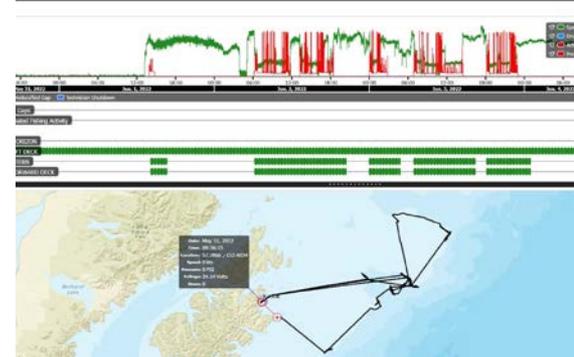
# RP Halibut PSC in 2024

- **Extrapolation #2**: This trip had seven hauls, and only three were sampled by the observer. The sampled hauls were then extrapolated to the unsampled hauls (also a back-end calculation).
- **Extrapolation #3**: A high flatfish discard rate for the trip also increased the halibut, because halibut is applied to the flatfish discard. The net result was that this single trip ended up with a calculation of 133,387 lbs of halibut in eFish, from only 190 lbs of sampled halibut (702% increase).
- If you remove this single sablefish trip from the Rockfish Program's 2024 data, there would only be 41,113 lbs or 18.6 mt of halibut taken for the year.
- Conversely, if you replaced that trip with the average amount of halibut taken per RP trip in 2024 (287.5 lbs), there would have been 41,400 lbs or 18.7 mt of halibut taken.
- The Catch Accounting System worked as intended, but it's important to remember that even when it functions as intended, basket samples for rare species can be inaccurate.

# Monitoring Improvements

## Testing Electronic Monitoring in the CGOA RP

- **Builds on Pelagic Pollock Trawl EM program** but includes both pelagic and non-pelagic gear, and all RP target species.
- **Collected Test Data in 2022**
- **First Pilot year in 2023 (3 Vessels only)**
- **2024 Pilot:** Continued vessel component, but could not expand to include the shoreside component due to lack of processor participation and market uncertainty.
- **2025 Pilot:** Will test protocols on 6 vessels (3 from each EM service provider) and test the shoreside component with certified observers acting as “shoreside samplers.”
  - Samplers will be collecting biological data to inform shoreside sampling protocols and how many observers will be needed.
  - Vessels will still be required to carry at-sea observers.
- Planning for an EFP in 2026 and a future regulated program.





Questions?

