

Draft SSC Report February 2025



Balance of SSC Report

SSC Election of Officers

- The SSC **re-elected** Sherri Dressel and **elected** Jason Gasper and Ian Stewart to be co-chairs for 2025.
- Dr. Gasper will chair the April meeting, Dr. Dressel the June and December meetings, and Dr. Stewart the October meeting
- The SSC **re-elected** Alison Whitman to serve as vice-chair for 2025.
- The SSC **appreciates** the appointments of and welcomes new members Sarah Wise and Jennifer Burns to the SSC.
 - Jennifer Burns will join the SSC in April

SSC General Comments

- For previously reviewed analyses, the SSC **supports** focusing on responses to SSC comments, additions and key revisions
- The SSC **encourages** the use of social indicators and human well-being frameworks that are well-established in social science literature to better characterize qualitative approaches to impact descriptions across Council documents
- The SSC **supports** the inclusion of LKTKS in Council documents and notes the concrete progress towards providing this type of information to decision-makers on a regular basis, using C2 DEIS chum salmon bycatch as a potential model

C2 PEIS Bering Sea Chum Salmon Bycatch Management – Initial Review

- This is the 2nd Initial Review. The focus of this review was on: 1) responses to general SSC comments, 2) responses to SSC comments on Economic and Social Impacts, 3) the new AEQ analysis, and 4) the new Alternative 5.
- The SSC ***finds*** the document adequate to allow the Council to understand the fishery and policy impacts of the alternatives.
- The SSC ***recommends*** the document be advanced to public review.
 - The SSC provides general comments and recommends a number of revisions prior to advancing to public review.

C2 PEIS Bering Sea Chum Salmon Bycatch Management – Initial Review

General Comments/Responses to SSC Comments.

- The SSC **highlights** 2 comments from the April 2024 minutes.
 - “[...] the SSC recommends scheduling a performance review of any new management measures to reduce chum bycatch relatively soon after implementation [...]”
 - “The SSC recognizes, however, that establishing new management lines based on historical data can be problematic for many reasons, particularly when climate change is leading to changes in migration and distribution for many marine species.”

C2 PEIS Bering Sea Chum Salmon Bycatch Management – Initial Review

General Comments/Responses to SSC Comments (cont).

- The SSC **recommends** that all comparisons with Alt 1 (Status quo) clearly state that they are based on data from 2011 - 2023 and likely mask marked changes to IPAs following high bycatch in 2021.
- The SSC **recommends** caution when interpreting results that rely on later years of the retrospective analyses
- The SSC **recommends** that the authors further refine, consolidate and present chum removals in one place (including Area M).
- The SSC **recommends** that authors reduce, revise, and clarify all text and figures to improve the accessibility of this report, with a focus on the executive summary.

C2 PEIS Bering Sea Chum Salmon Bycatch Management – Initial Review

General Comments/Responses to SSC Comments (cont).

- The SSC **supports** the revisions to more fully incorporate LKTKS, acknowledging the breadth and depth of information now included in the main body of the DEIS.
- The SSC **recommends** that the authors include a table or figure summarizing the potential benefits to WAK communities and long-term impacts on chum salmon.
- The SSC **recommends** further discussion of vessel level impacts that references, where appropriate, the quantitative analysis in Appendix 6.

C2 PEIS Bering Sea Chum Salmon Bycatch Management – Initial Review

Simplified AEQ and Impacts

- The SSC **supports** the use of simplified AEQ analyses to inform the Council's decision-making
 - SSC agrees that AEQ estimates of chum salmon removals due to bycatch and associated impact rates are helpful in developing realistic expectations of salmon savings associated with the alternatives
 - SSC agrees and highlights that they are not a complete assessment of the potential impact bycatch may have on WAK chum salmon populations

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Simplified AEQ and Impacts

- The SSC **supports** the use of simplified AEQ analyses to inform the Council's decision-making *with the following additions*.
 - Incorporate the available run size uncertainty information into the Upper/Middle Yukon AEQ impacts analyses and graphics.
 - Provide figures or tables with AEQ, commercial and subsistence catch as a proportion of total removals (both reporting groups) and as proportion of run size for the Upper/Middle Yukon group.
 - Explore AEQ assumptions regarding when B-season bycatch savings would return to river systems (same year or later).

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Alternative 5 Methodology

- The SSC **appreciates** the thorough discussion of the benefits and potential costs of Alternative 5, which would implement spatial corridors triggered by area-specific PSC limits
- The SSC **appreciates** the exploration of a fleet movement model for assessing impacts of effort redistribution on PSC, similar to the BBRKC EA/RIR
- The SSC **supports** the analysts decision to provide a descriptive analysis, rather than utilize the fleet movement model
 - Given limitations in available data for shoreside and mothership sectors to generate realistic predictions for effort redistribution

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Alternative 5 Methodology

- The SSC **highlights** that
 - Behavioral responses to potential spatial closures will be sector- and vessel-specific
 - Delays in B season fishing until after August 31 could impact Chinook salmon PSC
 - Future utility of static spatial management measures is uncertain in a dynamic marine environment

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Alternative 5 Methodology

- The SSC **suggests** that the DEIS consider
 - Potential limitation of Alternative 5 (corridors) on conservation benefits provided by Alternative 4 (IPAs)
 - Cumulative impacts of static closures, including the Summer Herring Savings Areas

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Economic and Social Impacts

- The SSC **highlights** concerns about potential unintended adverse consequences of higher cap levels on WAK chum bycatch in Alternatives 2 and 3, as well as the corridor designs in Alternative 5.
 - Additionally, there are concerns across all alternatives regarding potential increases in Chinook and/or herring bycatch compared to the status quo.
- The SSC **recommends** a new report section to enhance discussion of these potential impacts across alternatives.

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Economic and Social Impacts

- The SSC **recommends** minor changes to the report to:
 - Describe how incentives to reduce total chum bycatch and associated uncertainty interact such that WAK chum savings should only be anticipated at low caps.
 - Provide further context on the impacts of different alternatives by considering the vulnerability and resilience of pollock-dependent communities.
 - Interpret Alternative 4 as eliminating the option to modify or remove any of its provisions.