DE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 250312-0036]

RTID 0648-XE346

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands; Final 2025 and 2026 Harvest Specifications for Groundfish

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Final rule; harvest specifications and closures.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces the final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications, apportionments, and prohibited species catch (PSC) allowances for the groundfish fishery of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). This action is necessary to establish harvest limits for groundfish during the remainder of the 2025 and the start of the 2026 fishing years and to accomplish the goals and objectives of the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the BSAI (FMP). The intended effect of this action is to conserve and manage the groundfish resources in the BSAI in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act).

DATES: Harvest specifications and closures are effective from 1200 hours, Alaska local time (A.l.t.), [INSERT DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER], through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 18, 2026.

ADDRESSES: Electronic copies of the Alaska Groundfish Harvest Specifications Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS), Record of Decision (ROD), and the annual Supplementary Information Reports (SIR) to the Final EIS prepared for this action are available from *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/region/alaska*. The 2024 Stock Assessment

and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) report for the groundfish resources of the BSAI, dated November 2024, as well as the SAFE reports for previous years, are available from the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) at 1007 West Third Ave, Suite 400 Anchorage, AK 99501, phone 907-271-2809, or from the Council's website at *https://www.npfmc.org/*, and the Alaska Fisheries Science Center website at *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/population-assessments/north-pacific-groundfish-stock-assessments-and-fishery-evaluation.*

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steve Whitney, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Federal regulations at 50 CFR part 679 implement the FMP and govern the groundfish fisheries in the BSAI. The Council prepared, and NMFS approved, the FMP pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Act. General regulations governing U.S. fisheries also appear at 50 CFR part 600.

The FMP and its implementing regulations require NMFS, after consultation with the Council, to specify annually the overfishing limit (OFL), acceptable biological catch (ABC), and total allowable catch (TAC) for each target species. The sum of all TACs for target groundfish species in the BSAI must be within the optimum yield (OY) range of 1.4 million to 2.0 million metric tons (mt) (see § 679.20(a)(1)(i)(A) and 679.20(a)(2)). This final rule specifies the sum of the TACs at 2.0 million mt for 2025 and 2.0 million mt for 2026. NMFS also must specify: (1) apportionments of TACs; (2) PSC limits and prohibited species quota (PSQ) reserves established by § 679.21; (3) seasonal allowances of pollock, Pacific cod, and Atka mackerel TAC; (4) American Fisheries Act (AFA) allocations; (5) Amendment 80 allocations; (6) Community Development Quota (CDQ) reserve amounts established by § 679.20(b)(1)(ii); (7) ABC surpluses and ABC reserves for CDQ groups and any Amendment 80 cooperatives for flathead sole, rock sole, and yellowfin sole; and (8) halibut discard mortality rates (DMR). The final harvest specifications set forth in tables 1 through 25 of this action satisfy these requirements.

Section 679.20(c)(3)(i) further requires that NMFS consider public comment on the proposed harvest specifications and, after consultation with the Council, publish final harvest specifications in the **Federal Register**. The proposed 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications for the groundfish fishery of the BSAI were published in the **Federal Register** on December 4, 2024 (89 FR 96186). Comments were invited and accepted through January 3, 2025. As discussed in the **Response to Comments** section below, NMFS received three letters raising 19 distinct comments during the public comment period for the proposed BSAI groundfish harvest specifications. NMFS's responses are included in the **Response to Comments** section below.

NMFS consulted with the Council on the final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications during the December 2024 Council meeting. After considering public comments during public meetings and submitted for the proposed rule (89 FR 96186, December 4, 2024), as well as current biological, ecosystem, socioeconomic, and harvest data, NMFS implements in this final rule the final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications as recommended by the Council.

ABC and TAC Harvest Specifications

The final ABC amounts for BSAI groundfish are based on the best available biological information, including projected biomass trends, information on assumed distribution of stock biomass, and revised technical methods used to calculate stock biomass. In general, the development of OFLs and ABCs involves sophisticated statistical analyses of fish populations. The FMP specifies a series of six tiers to define OFL and ABC amounts based on the level of reliable information available to fishery scientists. Tier 1 represents the highest level of information quality available, while Tier 6 represents the lowest.

In December 2024, the Council, its Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC), and its Advisory Panel (AP) reviewed current biological, ecosystem, socioeconomic, and

harvest information about the condition of the BSAI groundfish stocks. The Council's BSAI Groundfish Plan Team (Plan Team) compiled and presented this information in the 2024 SAFE report for the BSAI groundfish fisheries, dated November 2024 (see **ADDRESSES**). The SAFE report contains a review of the latest scientific analyses and estimates of each species' biomass and other biological parameters, as well as summaries of the available information on the BSAI ecosystem and the economic condition of groundfish fisheries off Alaska. NMFS notified the public of the comment period for these harvest specifications—and of the publication of the 2024 SAFE report—in the proposed harvest specifications (89 FR 96186, December 4, 2024). From the data and analyses in the SAFE report, the Plan Team recommended an OFL and ABC for each species and species group at the November 2024 Plan Team meeting.

In December 2024, the SSC, AP, and Council reviewed the Plan Team's recommendations. The final TAC recommendations were based on the ABCs recommended by the SSC, and were adjusted for other biological and socioeconomic considerations, including the maintenance of the sum of all the TACs within the required OY range of 1.4 million to 2.0 million mt. As required by National Standard 1 regulations (50 CFR 600.310) and the annual catch limit rules for all fisheries (74 FR 3178, January 16, 2009) and consistent with the FMP, none of the Council's recommended 2025 or 2026 TACs exceed the final 2025 or 2026 ABCs for any species or species group. NMFS finds that the Council's recommended OFLs, ABCs, and TACs are consistent with the preferred harvest strategy outlined in the FMP, as well as the Final EIS and ROD, and the biological condition of groundfish stocks as described in the 2024 SAFE report that was approved by the Council, while accounting for ecosystem, socioeconomic, and harvest information presented in the 2024 SAFE report (which includes the Ecosystem Status Reports (ESR)).

NMFS has reviewed the recommendations of the SSC and Council for OFLs, ABCs, and TACs for target species and species groups in the BSAI as well as any other

relevant information. Based on that review, NMFS is specifying the OFLs, ABCs, and TACs set forth in the tables of this final rule as consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the FMP, and other applicable law. Therefore, this final rule provides notification that the Secretary of Commerce approves the final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications as recommended by the Council.

The 2025 harvest specifications set in this final action supersede the 2025 harvest specifications previously set in the final 2024 and 2025 harvest specifications (89 FR 17287, March 11, 2024). Pursuant to this final action, the 2025 harvest specifications are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t, [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2025, and the 2026 harvest specifications are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2026, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 18, 2026.

Other Actions Affecting the 2025 and 2026 Harvest Specifications

Amendment 125 to the FMP: Pacific Cod Small Boat Access

NMFS is developing a proposed rule to implement Amendment 125 to the FMP, which, if approved, would revise the BSAI Pacific cod jig sector during the A-season (January 1–April 30) to include hook-and-line or pot CV less than or equal to 55 feet (ft) (16.8 meters (m)) length overall (LOA). All harvest from the revised A-season jig sector would be deducted from the jig sector's 1.4 percent allocation currently set in regulation (§ 679.20(a)(7)(ii)). In addition, the current hook-and-line or pot CV less than 60 ft (18.3 m) LOA sector would be redefined from January 1 to April 30 so that harvest only from hook-and-line or pot CVs with a LOA more than 55 ft (16.8 m) and less than 60 ft LOA (55–59 ft) (16.8–18.0 m) would be deducted from the hook-and-line or pot CV less than 60 ft (18.3 m) LOA sector's 2.0 percent allocation currently set in regulation (§ 679.20(a)(7)(ii)). If amendment 125 and its implementing regulations are approved by the Secretary of Commerce, NMFS would incorporate the changes in a future harvest

specifications action, and any such changes are anticipated for the 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications.

State of Alaska Guideline Harvest Levels

For 2025 and 2026, the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) established the guideline harvest level (GHL) for vessels using pot, longline, jig, and hand troll gear in the State of Alaska's (State) Aleutian Islands (AI) sablefish registration area that includes all State waters west of Scotch Cap Light (164° 44.72′ W longitude) and south of Cape Sarichef (54° 36′ N latitude). The 2025 AI GHL is set at 5 percent (1,238 mt) of the combined 2025 Bering Sea subarea (BS) and AI subarea ABC (mt). The 2026 AI GHL is set at 5 percent (1,223 mt) of the combined 2026 BS subarea and AI subarea ABC. The State's AI sablefish registration area includes areas adjacent to parts of the Federal BS subarea. The Council and its Plan Team, SSC, and AP recommended that the sum of all State and Federal waters sablefish removals from the BS and AI not exceed the ABC recommendations for sablefish in the BS and AI. Accordingly, after reviewing the Council recommendations, NMFS approves that the 2025 and 2026 sablefish TACs in the BS and AI account for the State's GHLs for sablefish caught in State waters.

For 2025 and 2026, the BOF for the State established the GHL for vessels using pot gear in State waters in the BS equal to 13 percent of the Pacific cod ABC in the BS. Under the State's management plan, the BS GHL will increase by 1 percent if 90 percent of the GHL is harvested by November 15 of the preceding year for two consecutive years but may not exceed 15 percent of the BS ABC. If 90 percent of the GHL is not harvested by November 15 of the preceding year for two consecutive years, the GHL will decrease by 1 percent, but the GHL may not decrease below 10 percent of the BS ABC. For 2025, the BS Pacific cod ABC is 153,617 mt, and for 2026, it is 141,520 mt. Based on the preceding years' harvests in the State fishery, the GHL in the BS for pot gear will be 13 percent for 2025 (19,970 mt) and is projected to be 13 percent for 2026 (18,398 mt). For

2025 and 2026, the BOF established an additional GHL for vessels using jig gear in State waters in the BS equal to 45 mt of Pacific cod in the BS. The Council and its Plan Team, SSC, and AP recommended that the sum of all State and Federal waters Pacific cod removals from the BS not exceed the ABC recommendations for Pacific cod in the BS. Accordingly, after reviewing the Council recommendations, NMFS approves that the 2025 and 2026 Pacific cod TACs in the BS account for the State's GHLs for Pacific cod caught in State waters in the BS.

For 2025 and 2026, the BOF established the GHL for Pacific cod in State waters in the AI equal to 35 percent of the AI ABC. Under the State's management plan, the AI GHL will increase annually by 4 percent of the AI ABC if 90 percent of the GHL is harvested by November 15 of the preceding year, but may not exceed 39 percent of the AI ABC or 15 million pounds (6,804 mt). If 90 percent of the GHL is not harvested by November 15 of the preceding year for two consecutive years, the GHL will decrease by 4 percent, but the GHL may not decrease below 15 percent of the AI ABC. Based on the preceding years' harvests in the State fishery, for 2025 the GHL in the AI will be 35 percent of the AI ABC, which is 4,682 mt, and for 2026 is projected to be 35 percent of the AI ABC, which is 4,541 mt. The Council and its Plan Team, SSC, and AP recommended that the sum of all State and Federal waters Pacific cod removals from the AI not exceed the ABC recommendations for Pacific cod in the AI. Accordingly, after reviewing the Council's recommendations, NMFS approves that the 2025 and 2026 Pacific cod TACs in the AI account for the State's GHLs for Pacific cod caught in State waters in the AI.

Changes from the Proposed 2025 and 2026 Harvest Specifications for the BSAI

In October 2024, the Council's recommendations for the proposed 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications (89 FR 96186, December 4, 2024) were based on information contained in the 2023 SAFE report for the BSAI groundfish fisheries, dated November

2023. In October 2024, the Council recommended that proposed 2025 and 2026 OFLs and ABCs be based on rollovers of the 2025 amounts from the final 2024 and 2025 harvest specifications (89 FR 17287, March 11, 2024). In making this recommendation, the Council used the best information available from the 2023 stock assessments until the 2024 SAFE report could be completed.

In December 2024, the Council's recommendations for the final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications were based on information contained in the 2024 SAFE report for the BSAI groundfish fisheries, dated November 2024. The SAFE report contains a review of the latest scientific analyses and estimates of each species' biomass and other biological parameters, as well as summaries of the available information on the BSAI ecosystem, including the stock-specific risk tables and information from the BS ESR and AI ESR.

The ESRs compile and summarize information about the status of the Alaska marine ecosystems for the Plan Team, SSC, AP, Council, NMFS, and the public. These ESRs are updated annually and include ecosystem report cards, ecosystem assessments, and ecosystem status indicators (*i.e.*, climate indices, sea surface temperature), which together provide context for ecosystem-based fisheries management in Alaska. The ESRs inform stock assessments and are integrated in the annual harvest recommendations through inclusion in stock assessments, including stock-specific risk tables. The ESRs provide context for the SSC's recommendations for OFLs and ABCs, as well as for the Council's TAC recommendations. The SAFE reports and the ESRs are presented to the Plan Team and at the October and December Council meetings before the SSC, AP, and Council make groundfish harvest recommendations and they aid NMFS in implementing these annual groundfish harvest specifications.

The SAFE report also includes information on the economic condition of the groundfish fisheries off Alaska through the Economic Status Report. The SAFE report provides information to the Council and NMFS for recommending and setting,

respectively, annual harvest levels for each stock, and documenting significant trends or changes in the resource, marine ecosystems, and fisheries over time. From these data and analyses, the Plan Team recommends, and the SSC sets, an OFL and ABC for each species and species group.

The AP and Council review the recommended OFLs and ABCs and recommend TACs for each species and species group such that TACs do not exceed ABCs and ABCs do not exceed OFLs. The Council recommended a final 2025 BS pollock TAC that is an increase of 50,000 mt from the proposed 2025 BS pollock TAC. The Council recommended a final 2026 BS pollock TAC that is an increase of 50,000 mt from the proposed 2026 BS pollock TAC. The Council also recommended to increase the BS Pacific cod TAC by 2,385 mt in 2025 and to decrease the TAC by 8,140 mt in 2026 from the proposed TAC to match changes in ABC for BS Pacific cod. The largest reduction was for yellowfin sole, which was reduced from the proposed rule by 60,000 mt in 2025 and by 50,000 mt in 2026 due to weakening market demand for yellowfin sole. In terms of tonnage, the Council reduced their recommended final TACs from the proposed TACs for several species of lower economic value to maintain an overall total TAC within the required OY range of 1.4 to 2.0 million mt. Some species, such as Atka mackerel, are economically valuable species whose ABC increased in 2025, which allowed most of the 2025 TACs to increase as well. Others, such as Alaska plaice and skates, have decreased TACs due to anticipated decreased incidental catches in other fisheries. Central Aleutian Island (CAI) Atka mackerel had the largest increase in 2025 in terms of percentage, while Greenland turbot had the largest decrease in 2025 and 2026 due to a declining ABC. The changes to TACs between the proposed and final harvest specifications are based on the most recent scientific, biological, and socioeconomic information and are consistent with the FMP, regulatory obligations, and the harvest strategy from the Final EIS and ROD as described in the proposed and final harvest specifications, including the required OY

range of 1.4 million to 2.0 million mt. These changes are compared in table A.

Table 1 lists the final 2025 OFL, ABC, TAC, initial TAC (ITAC), CDQ reserve allocations, and non-specified reserves of the BSAI groundfish species and species groups; and table 2 lists the final 2026 OFL, ABC, TAC, ITAC, CDQ reserve allocations, and non-specified reserves of the BSAI groundfish species and species groups. These final 2025 and 2026 TAC amounts for the BSAI are within the OY range established for the BSAI and do not exceed the ABC for any species or species group. These final 2025 and 2026 ABCs do not exceed the OFL for any species or species group. The apportionment of TAC amounts among fisheries and seasons is discussed below.

Table 1–Final 2025 Overfishing Level (OFL), Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), Total Allowable Catch (TAC), Initial TAC (ITAC), CDQ Reserve Allocation, and Nonspecified Reserves of Groundfish in the BSAI[1]

[Amounts are in metric tons]

Species	Area	2025					
		OFL	ABC	TAC	ITAC[2]	CDQ[3]	Nonspecified Reserves
Pollock[4]	BS	2,957,000	2,417,000	1,375,000	1,237,500	137,500	-
	AI	55,728	46,051	19,000	17,100	1,900	-
	Bogoslof	77,354	58,015	250	250	-	-
Pacific cod[5]	BS	183,509	153,617	133,602	119,306	14,295	-
	AI	16,782	13,376	8,694	7,764	930	-
Sablefish[6]	Alaska-wide	58,532	47,605	n/a	n/a	n/a	
	BS	n/a	13,203	8,496	7,009	1,168	319
	AI	n/a	11,566	7,940	6,451	1,340	149
Yellowfin sole	BSAI	299,247	262,557	135,000	120,555	14,445	-
Greenland turbot	BSAI	2,598	1,678	1,678	1,426	n/a	
	BS	n/a	1,415	1,415	1,203	151	61
	AI	n/a	263	263	224	-	39
Arrowtooth flounder	BSAI	104,428	88,683	14,000	11,900	1,498	602
Kamchatka flounder	BSAI	8,019	6,800	6,800	5,780	-	1,020
Rock sole[7]	BSAI	165,444	157,487	75,000	66,975	8,025	-
Flathead sole[8]	BSAI	101,621	83,807	36,000	32,148	3,852	-
Alaska plaice	BSAI	34,576	28,745	15,903	13,518	-	2,385
Other flatfish[9]	BSAI	26,083	19,562	4,500	3,825	-	675
Pacific ocean perch	BSAI	44,594	37,375	33,458	29,443	n/a	

	BS	n/a	10,121	10,121	8,603	-	1,518
	EAI	n/a	6,278	6,278	5,606	672	-
	CAI	n/a	5,559	5,559	4,964	595	-
	WAI	n/a	15,417	11,500	10,270	1,231	-
Northern rockfish	BSAI	22,848	18,694	12,000	10,200	-	1,800
Blackspotted/Rougheye rockfish[10]	BSAI	838	706	706	600	-	106
	BS/EAI	n/a	408	408	347	-	61
	CAI/WAI	n/a	298	298	253	-	45
Shortraker rockfish	BSAI	631	473	473	402	-	71
Other rockfish[11]	BSAI	1,406	1,054	1,054	896	-	158
	BS	n/a	639	639	543	-	96
	AI	n/a	415	415	353	-	62
Atka mackerel	BSAI	122,622	103,247	82,000	73,226	8,774	-
	BS/EAI	n/a	46,650	39,000	34,827	4,173	-
	CAI	n/a	26,511	24,443	21,828	2,615	-
	WAI	n/a	30,087	18,557	16,571	1,986	-
Skates	BSAI	44,086	36,523	27,646	23,499	-	4,147
Sharks	BSAI	689	450	400	340	-	60
Octopuses	BSAI	6,080	4,560	400	340	-	60
TOTAL		4,334,715	3,588,065	2,000,000	1,790,454	196,367	13,166

Note: Regulatory areas and districts are defined at § 679.2 (BSAI=Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area, BS=Bering Sea subarea, AI=Aleutian Islands subarea, EAI=Eastern Aleutian district, CAI=Central Aleutian district, WAI=Western Aleutian district). The 2025 harvest specifications are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t, [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2025.

[1] These amounts apply to the entire BSAI management area unless otherwise specified. With the exception of pollock, and for the purpose of these harvest specifications, the Bering Sea subarea (BS) includes the Bogoslof District.

[2] Except for pollock, the portion of the sablefish TAC allocated to fixed gear, and Amendment 80 species (Atka mackerel, yellowfin sole, rock sole, flathead sole, Pacific cod, and AI Pacific ocean perch), 15 percent of each TAC is placed into a non-specified reserve (§ 679.20(b)(1)(i)). The ITAC for these species is the remainder of the TAC after the subtraction of these reserves. For pollock and Amendment 80 species, ITAC is the non-CDQ allocation of TAC (see footnotes 3 and 4).

[3] For the Amendment 80 species (Atka mackerel, yellowfin sole, rock sole, flathead sole, Pacific cod, and AI Pacific ocean perch), 10.7 percent of the TAC is reserved for use by CDQ participants (see § 679.20(b)(1)(ii)(C)). Twenty percent of the sablefish TAC allocated to fixed gear, 7.5 percent of the sablefish TAC allocated to trawl gear, and 10.7 percent of the TACs for BS Greenland turbot and arrowtooth flounder are reserved for use by CDQ participants (see § 679.20(b)(1)(ii)(B) and (D)). AI Greenland turbot, "other flatfish," Alaska plaice, BS Pacific ocean perch, Kamchatka flounder, northern rockfish, blackspotted/rougheye rockfish, shortraker rockfish, "other rockfish," skates, sharks, and octopuses are not allocated to the CDQ Program.

[4] Under § 679.20(a)(5)(i)(A), the annual BS pollock TAC, after subtracting first for the CDQ directed fishing allowance (10 percent) and second for the incidental catch allowance, is further allocated by sector for a pollock directed fishery as follows: inshore - 50 percent; catcher/processor (CP) - 40 percent; and motherships - 10 percent. Section 679.20(a)(5)(iii)(B)(*1*) requires the AI pollock TAC to be set at 19,000 mt when the AI pollock ABC equals or exceeds 19,000 mt. Under § 679.20(a)(5)(iii)(B)(*2*), the annual AI pollock TAC, after subtracting first for the CDQ directed fishing allowance (10 percent) and second for the incidental catch allowance, is allocated to the Aleut Corporation for a pollock directed fishery. The Bogoslof pollock TAC is set to accommodate incidental catch amounts.

[5] The BS Pacific cod TAC is set to account for the 13 percent, plus 45 mt, of the BS ABC for the State of Alaska's (State) guideline harvest level in State waters of the BS. The AI Pacific cod TAC is set to account for 35 percent of the AI ABC for the State guideline harvest level in State waters of the AI.

[6] The sablefish OFL and ABC are Alaska-wide and include the Gulf of Alaska. The Alaska-wide sablefish OFL and ABC are included in the total OFL and ABC. The BS and AI sablefish TACs are set to account for the 5 percent of the BS and AI ABC for the State of Alaska's (State) guideline harvest level in State waters of the BS and AI.

[7] "Rock sole" includes *Lepidopsetta polyxystra* (northern rock sole) and *Lepidopsetta bilineata* (southern rock sole).

[8] "Flathead sole" includes *Hippoglossoides elassodon* (flathead sole) and *Hippoglossoides robustus* (Bering flounder).

[9] "Other flatfish" includes all flatfish species, except for halibut (a prohibited species), Alaska plaice, arrowtooth flounder, flathead sole, Greenland turbot, Kamchatka flounder, rock sole, and yellowfin sole.

[10] "Blackspotted/Rougheye rockfish" includes *Sebastes melanostictus* (blackspotted) and *Sebastes aleutianus* (rougheye).

[11] "Other rockfish" includes all *Sebastes* and *Sebastolobus* species except for dark rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish, blackspotted/rougheye rockfish, and shortraker rockfish.

Table A–Comparison of Final 2025 and 2026 With Proposed 2025 and 2026 Total Allowable Catch in the BSAI

[Amounts are in metric tons]

Species	Area[1]	2025 and 2026 proposed TAC	2025 final TAC	2025 difference from proposed	2025 percentage difference from proposed	2026 final TAC	2026 difference from proposed	2026 percentage difference from proposed
Pollock	BS	1,325,000	1,375,000	50,000	3.8	1,375,000	50,000	3.8
	AI	19,000	19,000	-	-	19,000	-	0.0
	Bogoslof	250	250	-	-	250	-	0.0
Pacific cod	BS	131,217	133,602	2,384.79	1.8	123,077	(8,139.60)	(6.2)
	AI	8,080	8,694	614.25	7.6	8,432	352.30	4.4
Sablefish	BS	9,500	8,496	(1,004)	(10.6)	8,996	(504)	(5.3)
	AI	8,440	7,940	(500)	(5.9)	7,440	(1,000)	(11.8)
Yellowfin sole	BSAI	195,000	135,000	(60,000)	(30.8)	145,000	(50,000)	(25.6)
Greenland turbot	BS	2,310	1,328	(982)	(42.5)	1,120	(1,190)	(51.5)

	AI	430	263	(167)	(38.8)	208	(222)	(51.6)
Arrowtooth flounder	BSAI	14,000	14,000	-	-	14,000	-	0.0
Kamchatka flounder	BSAI	7,360	6,800	(560)	(7.6)	6,606	(754)	(10.2)
Rock sole	BSAI	66,000	75,000	9,000	13.6	75,000	9,000	13.6
Flathead sole	BSAI	35,500	36,000	500	1.4	36,000	500	1.4
Alaska plaice	BSAI	20,000	15,903	(4,097)	(20.5)	16,200	(3,800)	(19.0)
Other flatfish	BSAI	4,500	4,500	-	-	4,500	-	0.0
Pacific ocean perch	BS	11,430	10,121	(1,309)	(11.5)	9,905	(1,525)	(13.3)
	EAI	7,828	6,278	(1,550)	(19.8)	6,144	(1,684)	(21.5)
	CAI	5,423	5,559	136	2.5	5,441	18	0.3
	WAI	12,500	11,500	(1,000)	(8.0)	12,000	(500)	(4.0)
Northern rockfish	BSAI	15,000	12,000	(3,000)	(20.0)	12,000	(3,000)	(20.0)
Blackspotted and Rougheye rockfish	BS/ EAI	412	408	(4)	(1.0)	441	29	7.0
	CAI/ WAI	195	298	103	52.8	325	130	66.7
Shortraker rockfish	BSAI	530	473	(57)	(10.8)	473	(57)	(10.8)
Other rockfish	BS	880	639	(241)	(27.4)	639	(241)	(27.4)
	AI	380	415	35	9.2	415	35	9.2
Atka mackerel	EAI/ BS	30,000	39,000	9,000	30.0	41,731	11,731	39.1
	CAI	14,877	24,443	9,566	64.3	23,716	8,839	59.4
	WAI	21,288	18,557	(2,731)	(12.8)	17,494	(3,793.90)	(17.8)
Skates	BSAI	30,361	27,646	(2,715)	(8.9)	27,646	(2,715)	(8.9)
Sharks	BSAI	400	400	-	-	400	-	0.0
Octopuses	BSAI	400	400	-	-	400	-	0.0
TOTAL	BSAI	1,998,491	2,000,000	1,509	0.1	2,000,000	1,508.85	0.1

[1] Bering Sea subarea (BS), Aleutian Islands subarea (AI), Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI), Eastern Aleutian District (EAI), Central Aleutian District (CAI), and Western Aleutian District (WAI).

Table 2–Final 2026 Overfishing Level (OFL), Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC), Total Allowable Catch (TAC), Initial TAC (ITAC), CDQ Reserve Allocation, and Nonspecified Reserves of Groundfish in the BSAI[1]

[Amounts are in metric tons]

Species	Area	2026					
		OFL	ABC	TAC	ITAC[2]	CDQ[3]	Nonspecified Reserves
Pollock[4]	BS	2,496,000	2,036,000	1,375,000	1,237,500	137,500	-
	AI	56,231	46,437	19,000	17,100	1,900	-
	Bogoslof	77,354	58,015	250	250	-	
Pacific cod[5]	BS	169,243	141,520	123,077	109,908	13,169	-
	AI	16,273	12,973	8,432	7,530	902	-
Sablefish[6]	Alaska-wide	57,797	47,008	n/a	n/a	n/a	
	BS	n/a	13,037	8,996	3,823	337	337
	AI	n/a	11,421	7,440	1,581	140	140
Yellowfin sole	BSAI	305,039	267,639	145,000	129,485	15,515	-
Greenland turbot	BSAI	2,059	1,328	1,328	1,129	n/a	
	BS	n/a	1,120	1,120	952	120	48
	AI	n/a	208	208	177	-	31
Arrowtooth flounder	BSAI	102,472	87,035	14,000	11,900	1,498	602
Kamchatka flounder	BSAI	7,790	6,606	6,606	5,615	-	991
Rock sole[7]	BSAI	166,220	158,225	75,000	66,975	8,025	-
Flathead sole[8]	BSAI	106,283	87,700	36,000	32,148	3,852	-
Alaska plaice	BSAI	33,965	28,230	16,200	13,770	-	2,430
Other flatfish[9]	BSAI	26,083	19,562	4,500	3,825	-	675
Pacific ocean perch	BSAI	43,084	36,578	33,490	29,481	n/a	
	BS	n/a	9,905	9,905	8,419	-	1,486
	EAI	n/a	6,144	6,144	5,487	657	-
	CAI	n/a	5,441	5,441	4,859	582	-
	WAI	n/a	16,058	12,000	10,716	1,284	-
Northern rockfish	BSAI	22,284	18,232	12,000	10,200	-	1,800
Blackspotted/Rougheye rockfish[10]	BSAI	902	766	766	651	-	115
	BS/EAI	n/a	441	441	375	-	66
	CAI/WAI	n/a	325	325	276	-	49
Shortraker rockfish	BSAI	631	473	473	402	-	71
Other rockfish[11]	BSAI	1,406	1,054	1,054	896	-	158
	BS	n/a	639	639	543	-	96
	AI	n/a	415	415	353	-	62
Atka mackerel	BSAI	107,889	92,361	82,941	74,066	8,875	-
	EAI/BS	n/a	41,731	41,731	37,266	4,465	-
	CAI	n/a	23,716	23,716	21,178	2,538	-
	WAI	n/a	26,914	17,494	15,622	1,872	-
Skates	BSAI	43,285	35,833	27,646	23,499	-	4,147
Sharks	BSAI	689	450	400	340	-	60
Octopuses	BSAI	6,080	4,560	400	340	-	60
TOTAL		3,849,059	3,188,585	2,000,000	1,782,415	194,357	13,151

Note: Regulatory areas and districts are defined at § 679.2 (BSAI=Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area, BS=Bering Sea subarea, AI=Aleutian Islands subarea, EAI=Eastern Aleutian district, CAI=Central Aleutian district, WAI=Western Aleutian district). The 2026 harvest specifications are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2026, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 18, 2026.

[1] These amounts apply to the entire BSAI management area unless otherwise specified. With the exception of pollock, and for the purpose of these harvest specifications, the Bering Sea subarea (BS) includes the Bogoslof District.

[2] Except for pollock, the portion of the sablefish TAC allocated to fixed gear, and Amendment 80 species (Atka mackerel, yellowfin sole, rock sole, flathead sole, Pacific cod, and AI Pacific ocean perch), 15 percent of each TAC is put into a non-specified reserve (§ 679.20(b)(1)(i)). The ITAC for these species is the remainder of the TAC after the subtraction of these reserves. For pollock and Amendment 80 species, ITAC is the non-CDQ allocation of TAC (see footnotes 3 and 4).

[3] For the Amendment 80 species (Atka mackerel, yellowfin sole, rock sole, flathead sole, Pacific cod, and AI Pacific ocean perch), 10.7 percent of the TAC is reserved for use by CDQ participants (§ 679.20(b)(1)(ii)(C)). Twenty percent of the sablefish TAC allocated to fixed gear, 7.5 percent of the sablefish TAC allocated to trawl gear, and 10.7 percent of the TACs for BS Greenland turbot and arrowtooth flounder are reserved for use by CDQ participants (§ 679.20(b)(1)(ii)(B) and (D)). The 2026 fixed gear portion of the sablefish ITAC and CDQ reserve will not be specified until the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications. AI Greenland turbot, "other flatfish," Alaska plaice, BS Pacific ocean perch, Kamchatka flounder, northern rockfish, blackspotted/rougheye rockfish, shortraker rockfish, "other rockfish," skates, sharks, and octopuses are not allocated to the CDQ program.

[4] Under § 679.20(a)(5)(i)(A), the annual BS pollock TAC, after subtracting first for the CDQ directed fishing allowance (10 percent) and second for the incidental catch allowance, is further allocated by sector for a pollock directed fishery as follows: inshore - 50 percent; CP - 40 percent; and motherships - 10 percent. Section 679.20(a)(5)(iii)(B)(*1*) requires the AI pollock TAC to be set at 19,000 mt when the AI pollock ABC equals or exceeds 19,000 mt. Under § 679.20(a)(5)(iii)(B)(*2*), the annual AI pollock TAC, after subtracting first for the CDQ directed fishing allowance (10 percent) and second for the incidental catch allowance, is allocated to the Aleut Corporation for a pollock directed fishery. The Bogoslof pollock TAC is set to accommodate incidental catch amounts.

[5] The BS Pacific cod TAC is set to account for the 13 percent, plus 45 mt, of the BS ABC for the State of Alaska's (State) guideline harvest level in State waters of the BS. The AI Pacific cod TAC is set to account for 35 percent of the AI ABC for the State guideline harvest level in State waters of the AI.

[6] The sablefish OFL and ABC are Alaska-wide and include the Gulf of Alaska. The Alaska-wide sablefish OFL and ABC are included in the total OFL and ABC. The BS and AI sablefish TACs are set to account for the 5 percent of the BS and AI ABC for the State of Alaska's (State) guideline harvest level in State waters of the BS and AI.

[7]"Rock sole" includes *Lepidopsetta polyxystra* (northern rock sole) and *Lepidopsetta bilineata* (southern rock sole).

[8] "Flathead sole" includes *Hippoglossoides elassodon* (flathead sole) and *Hippoglossoides robustus* (Bering flounder).

[9] "Other flatfish" includes all flatfish species, except for halibut (a prohibited species), Alaska plaice, arrowtooth flounder, flathead sole, Greenland turbot, Kamchatka flounder, rock sole, and yellowfin sole.

[10] ''Blackspotted/Rougheye rockfish'' includes *Sebastes melanostictus* (blackspotted) and *Sebastes aleutianu*s (rougheye).

[11] "Other rockfish" includes all *Sebastes* and *Sebastolobus* species except for dark rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish, blackspotted/rougheye rockfish, and shortraker rockfish.

Groundfish Reserves and the ICAs for Pollock, Atka Mackerel, Flathead Sole, Rock Sole, Yellowfin Sole, and AI Pacific Ocean Perch

Section 679.20(b)(1)(i) requires that NMFS reserve 15 percent of the TAC for each target species (except for pollock, fixed gear allocation of sablefish, and Amendment 80 species) in a non-specified reserve. Section 679.20(b)(1)(ii)(B) requires that NMFS allocate 20 percent of the fixed gear allocation of sablefish to the fixed-gear sablefish CDQ reserve for each subarea. Section 679.20(b)(1)(ii)(D) requires that NMFS allocate 7.5 percent of the trawl gear allocations of sablefish in the BS and AI and 10.7 percent of the BS Greenland turbot and arrowtooth flounder TACs to the respective CDQ reserves. Section 679.20(b)(1)(ii)(C) requires that NMFS allocate 10.7 percent of the TACs for the Amendment 80 species, which includes Atka mackerel, AI Pacific ocean perch, yellowfin sole, rock sole, flathead sole, and Pacific cod to the respective CDQ reserves.

Section 679.20(b)(1)(ii)(A) requires that 10 percent of the BS pollock TAC be allocated to the pollock CDQ directed fishing allowance (DFA). Section 679.20(b)(1)(ii)(A) requires that 10 percent of the AI pollock TAC be allocated to the pollock CDQ DFA. The entire Bogoslof District pollock TAC is allocated as an incidental catch allowance (ICA) pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(ii) because the Bogoslof District is closed to directed fishing for pollock by regulation (§ 679.22(a)(7)(B)). With the exception of the fixed gear sablefish CDQ reserve, the regulations do not further apportion the CDQ allocations by gear.

Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(i)(A)(*1*), NMFS establishes a pollock ICA of 46,000 mt of the BS pollock TAC after subtracting the 10 percent CDQ DFA. This allowance is based on NMFS's examination of the pollock incidental catch, including the incidental catch by CDQ vessels, in target fisheries other than pollock in the most recent years. Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(iii)(B)(*2*), NMFS establishes a pollock ICA of 3,000 mt of the

AI pollock TAC after subtracting the 10 percent CDQ DFA. This allowance is based on NMFS's examination of the pollock incidental catch, including the incidental catch by CDQ vessels, in target fisheries other than pollock from recent years.

After subtracting the 10.7 percent CDQ reserve and pursuant to § 679.20(a)(8) and (10), NMFS allocates ICAs of 2,000 mt of flathead sole, 3,000 mt of rock sole, 2,000 mt of yellowfin sole, 10 mt of Western Aleutian district (WAI) Pacific ocean perch, 60 mt of CAI Pacific ocean perch, 100 mt of Eastern Aleutian district (EAI) Pacific ocean perch, 20 mt of WAI Atka mackerel, 100 mt of CAI Atka mackerel, and 800 mt of EAI and BS Atka mackerel. These ICAs are based on NMFS's examination of the incidental catch in other target fisheries from recent years.

The regulations do not designate the remainder of the non-specified reserve by species or species group. Any amount of the reserve may be apportioned to a target species that contributed to the non-specified reserves during the year, provided that such apportionments are consistent with § 679.20(a)(3) and do not result in overfishing (see § 679.20(b)(1)(i)). The Regional Administrator has determined that the ITACs specified for two species groups listed in tables 1 and 2 need to be supplemented from the non-specified reserve because U.S. fishing vessels have demonstrated the capacity to catch the full TAC allocations. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.20(b), NMFS is apportioning the amounts shown in table 3 from the non-specified reserve to increase the ITAC for AI "other rockfish" and blackspotted/rougheye rockfish in the CAI/WAI by 15 percent of their TACs in 2025 and 2026.

Table 3–Final 2025 and 2026 Apportionment of Non-Specified Reserves to ITAC Categories

[Amounts are in metric tons]

Species-area or subarea	2025 ITAC	2025 reserve amount	2025 final TAC	2026 ITAC	2026 reserve amount	2026 final TAC
Other rockfish-Aleutian Islands subarea	353	62	415	353	62	415
Blackspotted/Rougheye rockfish - CAI/WAI districts	253	45	298	276	49	325
Total	606	107	713	629	111	740

Allocation of Pollock TAC under the AFA

Section 679.20(a)(5)(i)(A) requires that the BS pollock TAC be apportioned as a DFA, after subtracting 10 percent for the CDQ program and 46,000 mt for the ICA in both 2025 and 2026, as follows: 50 percent to the inshore sector, 40 percent to the catcher/processor (CP) sector, and 10 percent to the mothership sector. In the BS, 45 percent of the DFAs are allocated to the A season (January 20–June 10), and 55 percent of the DFAs are allocated to the B season (June 10–November 1) (§§ 679.20(a)(5)(i)(B)(*1*) and 679.23(e)(2)). The AI directed pollock fishery allocation to the Aleut Corporation is the amount of pollock TAC remaining in the AI after subtracting 10 percent (1,900 mt) for the CDQ DFA and 3,000 mt for the ICA (§ 679.20(a)(5)(iii)(B)(*2*)). In the AI, the total A season apportionment of the TAC (including the AI directed fishery allocation, the CDQ DFA, and the ICA) may not exceed 40 percent of the ABC for AI pollock, and the remainder of the TAC is allocated to the B season (§ 679.20(a)(5)(iii)(B)(*3*)). Tables 4 and 5 list these 2025 and 2026 amounts.

Section 679.20(a)(5)(iii)(B)(*6*) sets harvest limits for pollock in the A season (January 20 to June 10) in Areas 543, 542, and 541. In accordance with this regulation, NMFS establishes harvest limits for pollock in the A season in Area 541 of no more than 30 percent, in Area 542 of no more than 15 percent, and in Area 543 of no more than 5 percent of the AI pollock ABC.

Section 679.20(a)(5)(i)(A)(*4*) also includes several specific requirements regarding BS pollock allocations. First, it requires that 8.5 percent of the pollock allocated to the CP sector be available for harvest by AFA CVs with CP sector endorsements, unless the Regional Administrator receives a cooperative contract that

allows for the distribution of harvest among AFA CPs and AFA CVs in a manner agreed to by all members. Second, AFA CPs not listed in the AFA are limited to harvesting not more than 0.5 percent of the pollock allocated to the CP sector. Tables 4 and 5 list the 2025 and 2026 allocations of pollock TAC. Table 6 lists the 2025 inshore sector allocation among AFA inshore cooperatives and AFA open access vessels. The 2026 AFA CV cooperative membership will not be known until eligible participants apply for participation in the program by December 1, 2025. Table 21 lists the CDQ allocation of pollock among the CDQ groups. Tables 23, 24, and 25 list the AFA CP and CV harvesting and PSC sideboard limits.

Tables 4, 5, and 6 also list seasonal apportionments of pollock and harvest limits within the Steller Sea Lion Conservation Area (SCA). The harvest of pollock within the SCA, as defined at § 679.22(a)(7)(vii), is limited to no more than 28 percent of the annual pollock DFA before 12 p.m. A.l.t. (noon), April 1, as provided in § 679.20(a)(5)(i)(C). The A season pollock SCA harvest limit is apportioned to each sector in proportion to each sector's allocated percentage of the DFA.

Table 4–Final 2025 Allocations of Pollock TACs to the Directed Pollock Fisheries and to the CDQ Directed Fishing Allowances (DFA)[1]

[Amounts are in metric tons]

Area and sector	2025 Allocations	2025 A season[1]		2025 B season[1]
		A season DFA	SCA harvest limit[2]	B season DFA
Bering Sea subarea TAC[1]	1,375,000	n/a	n/a	n/a
CDQ DFA	137,500	61,875	38,500	75,625
ICA[1]	46,000	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Bering Sea non-CDQ DFA	1,191,500	536,175	333,620	655,325
AFA Inshore	595,750	268,088	166,810	327,663
AFA CPs[3]	476,600	214,470	133,448	262,130
Catch by CPs	436,089	196,240	n/a	239,849
Catch by CVs[3]	40,511	18,230	n/a	22,281
Unlisted CP Limit[4]	2,383	1,072	n/a	1,311
AFA Motherships	119,150	53,618	33,362	65,533
Excessive Harvesting Limit[5]	208,513	n/a	n/a	n/a
Excessive Processing Limit[6]	357,450	n/a	n/a	n/a
Aleutian Islands subarea ABC	46,051	n/a	n/a	n/a

Aleutian Islands subarea TAC[1]	19,000	n/a	n/a	n/a
CDQ DFA	1,900	1,900	n/a	-
ICA	3,000	1,500	n/a	1,500
Aleut Corporation	14,100	14,100	n/a	-
Area harvest limit[7]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
541	13,815	n/a	n/a	n/a
542	6,908	n/a	n/a	n/a
543	2,303	n/a	n/a	n/a
Bogoslof District ICA[8]	250	n/a	n/a	n/a

Note: Seasonal or sector apportionments may not total precisely due to rounding. The 2025 harvest specifications for pollock are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t, [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2025.

[1] Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(i)(A), the Bering Sea subarea pollock TAC, after subtracting first for the CDQ DFA (10 percent) and second for the ICA (46,000 mt), is allocated as a DFA as follows: inshore sector – 50 percent, catcher/processor sector (CP) – 40 percent, and mothership sector – 10 percent. In the Bering Sea subarea, 45 percent of the DFA and CDQ DFA are allocated to the A season (January 20–June 10) and 55 percent of the DFA and CDQ DFA are allocated to the B season (June 10–November 1). When the AI pollock ABC equals or exceeds 19,000 mt, the annual TAC is equal to 19,000 mt (§ 679.20(a)(5)(iii)(B)(*1*)). Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(iii)(B)(*2*), the AI subarea pollock TAC, after subtracting first for the CDQ DFA (10 percent) and second for the ICA (3,000 mt), is allocated to the Aleut Corporation for a pollock directed fishery. In the AI subarea, the A season is allocated no more than 40 percent of the AI pollock ABC.

[2] In the Bering Sea subarea, pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(i)(C), no more than 28 percent of each sector's annual DFA may be taken from the SCA before noon, April 1. The SCA is defined at § 679.22(a)(7)(vii).

[3] Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(i)(A)(*4*), 8.5 percent of the allocation to listed CPs shall be available for harvest only by eligible CVs with a CP endorsement delivering to listed CPs, unless there is a CP sector cooperative contract for the year.

[4] Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(i)(A)(*4*)(*iii*), the AFA unlisted CPs are limited to harvesting not more than 0.5 percent of the CP sector's allocation of pollock.

[5] Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(i)(A)(*6*), NMFS establishes an excessive harvesting share limit equal to 17.5 percent of the sum of the non-CDQ pollock DFAs.

[6] Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(i)(A)(*7*), NMFS establishes an excessive processing share limit equal to 30.0 percent of the sum of the non-CDQ pollock DFAs.

[7] Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(iii)(B)(*6*), NMFS establishes harvest limits for pollock in the A season in Area 541 of no more than 30 percent, in Area 542 of no more than 15 percent, and in Area 543 of no more than 5 percent of the AI pollock ABC.

[8] Pursuant to § 679.22(a)(7)(i)(B), the Bogoslof District is closed to directed fishing for pollock. The amounts specified are for incidental catch only and are not apportioned by season or sector (§ 679.20(a)(5)(ii)).

Table 5–Final 2026 Allocations of Pollock TACs to the Directed Pollock Fisheries and to the CDQ Directed Fishing Allowances (DFA)[1]

[Amounts are in metric tons]

Area and sector	2026 Allocations	2026 A season[1]	2026 B season[1]

		A season DFA	SCA harvest limit[2]	B season DFA
Bering Sea subarea TAC[1]	1,375,000	n/a	n/a	n/a
CDQ DFA	137,500	61,875	38,500	75,625
ICA[1]	46,000	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Bering Sea non-CDQ DFA	1,191,500	536,175	333,620	655,325
AFA Inshore	595,750	268,088	166,810	327,663
AFA CPs	476,600	214,470	133,448	262,130
Catch by CPs	436,089	196,240	n/a	239,849
Catch by CVs[3]	40,511	18,230	n/a	22,281
Unlisted CP Limit[4]	2,383	1,072	n/a	1,311
AFA Motherships	119,150	53,618	33,362	65,533
Excessive Harvesting Limit[5]	208,513	n/a	n/a	n/a
Excessive Processing Limit[6]	357,450	n/a	n/a	n/a
Aleutian Islands subarea ABC	46,437	n/a	n/a	n/a
Aleutian Islands subarea TAC[1]	19,000	n/a	n/a	n/a
CDQ DFA	1,900	1,900	n/a	-
ICA	3,000	1,500	n/a	1,500
Aleut Corporation	14,100	14,100	n/a	-
Area harvest limit[7]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
541	13,931	n/a	n/a	n/a
542	6,966	n/a	n/a	n/a
543	2,322	n/a	n/a	n/a
Bogoslof District ICA[8]	250	n/a	n/a	n/a

Note: Seasonal or sector apportionments may not total precisely due to rounding. The 2026 harvest specifications for pollock are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2026, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 18, 2026.

[1] Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(i)(A), the Bering Sea subarea pollock TAC, after subtracting first for the CDQ DFA (10 percent) and second for the ICA (46,000 mt), is allocated as a DFA as follows: inshore sector – 50 percent, catcher/processor sector (CP) – 40 percent, and mothership sector – 10 percent. In the Bering Sea subarea, 45 percent of the DFA and CDQ DFA are allocated to the A season (January 20–June 10) and 55 percent of the DFA and CDQ DFA are allocated to the B season (June 10–November 1). When the AI pollock ABC equals or exceeds 19,000 mt, the annual TAC is equal to 19,000 mt (§ 679.20(a)(5)(iii)(B)(*1*)). Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(iii)(B)(*2*), the AI subarea pollock TAC, after subtracting first for the CDQ DFA (10 percent) and second for the ICA (3,000 mt), is allocated to the Aleut Corporation for a pollock directed fishery. In the AI subarea, the A season is allocated no more than 40 percent of the AI pollock ABC.

[2] In the Bering Sea subarea, pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(i)(C), no more than 28 percent of each sector's annual DFA may be taken from the SCA before noon, April 1. The SCA is defined at § 679.22(a)(7)(vii).

[3] Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(i)(A)(*4*), 8.5 percent of the allocation to listed CPs shall be available for harvest only by eligible CVs with a CP endorsement delivering to listed CPs, unless there is a CP sector cooperative contract for the year.

[4] Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(i)(A)(*4*)(*iii*), the AFA unlisted CPs are limited to harvesting not more than 0.5 percent of the CP sector's allocation of pollock.

[5] Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(i)(A)(*6*), NMFS establishes an excessive harvesting share limit equal to 17.5 percent of the sum of the non-CDQ pollock DFAs.

[6] Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(i)(A)(*7*), NMFS establishes an excessive processing share limit equal to 30.0 percent of the sum of the non-CDQ pollock DFAs.

[7] Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(5)(iii)(B)(*6*), NMFS establishes harvest limits for pollock in the A season in Area 541 of no more than 30 percent, in Area 542 of no more than 15 percent, and in Area 543 of no more than 5 percent of the AI pollock ABC.

[8] Pursuant to § 679.22(a)(7)(i)(B), the Bogoslof District is closed to directed fishing for pollock. The amounts specified are for incidental catch only and are not apportioned by season or sector (§ 679.20(a)(5)(ii)).

Table 6–Final 2025 AFA Inshore Cooperative and Open Access Pollock Allocations

[Amounts are in metric tons]

Cooperative Name[1]	% of Inshore Sector Allocation	Sum of Vessel's Catch Histories (mt)[2]	2025 allocations (mt)
AFA Open Access	0.925932%	18,414	5,516
Akutan Catcher Vessel Association	33.787794%	295,836	201,291
Arctic Enterprise Association	0.000000%	0	0
Northern Victor Fleet Cooperative	9.345631%	81,828	55,677
Peter Pan Fleet Cooperative	0.000000%	0	0
Unalaska Fleet Cooperative (Alyeska)	12.261341%	107,357	73,047
UniSea Fleet Cooperative	24.299652%	202,454	144,765
Westward Fleet Cooperative	19.379650%	169,683	115,454
Sum of all Cooperatives	100.00%	875,572	595,750

[1] The 2025 allocations are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t, [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2025. The 2026 AFA CV cooperative membership will not be known until eligible participants apply for participation in the program by December 1, 2025. NMFS will specify the 2026 AFA inshore cooperative and open access pollock allocations in the 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications.

[2]According to regulations at § 679.62(a)(1), the individual catch history for each vessel is equal to the vessel's best 2 of 3 years inshore pollock landings from 1995 through 1997 and includes non-CDQ offshore landings to CPs for vessels that made 500 or more mt of landings to CPs or offshore motherships from 1995 through 1997.

Allocation of the Atka Mackerel TACs

Section 679.20(a)(8) allocates the Atka mackerel TACs to the Amendment 80 and BSAI trawl limited access sectors, after subtracting the CDQ reserves, ICAs for the BSAI trawl limited access sector and non-trawl gear sector, and the jig gear allocation (tables 7 and 8). The percentage of the ITAC for Atka mackerel allocated to the Amendment 80 and BSAI trawl limited access sectors is listed in table 33 to 50 CFR part 679 and in § 679.91. Pursuant to § 679.20(a)(8)(i), up to 2 percent of the EAI district and the BS subarea Atka mackerel TAC may be allocated to vessels using jig gear. The percent of this allocation is recommended annually by the Council based on several criteria, including, among other criteria, the anticipated harvest capacity of the jig gear fleet. After reviewing the Council’s recommendation, NMFS approves a 0.5 percent allocation of the

Atka mackerel TAC in the EAI district and BS subarea to the jig gear sector in 2025 and 2026.

Section 679.20(a)(8)(ii)(A) apportions the Atka mackerel TAC, after subtraction of the jig gear allocation, into two equal seasonal allowances. Section 679.23(e)(3) sets the first seasonal allowance for directed fishing with trawl gear from January 20 through June 10 (A season), and the second seasonal allowance from June 10 through December 31 (B season). Section 679.23(e)(4)(iii) applies Atka mackerel seasons to CDQ Atka mackerel trawl fishing. Within any fishing year, any under harvest or over harvest of a seasonal allowance may be added to or subtracted from a subsequent seasonal allowance (§ 679.20(a)(8)(ii)(B)). The ICAs and jig gear allocations are not apportioned by season.

Sections 679.20(a)(8)(ii)(C)(*1*)(*i*) and (*ii*) limits Atka mackerel catch within waters 0 nautical miles (nmi) to 20 nmi of Steller sea lion sites listed in table 6 to 50 CFR part 679 and located west of 178° W longitude to no more than 60 percent of the annual TACs in Areas 542 and 543. The annual harvest is also equally divided between the A and B seasons as defined at § 679.23(e)(3). Section 679.20(a)(8)(ii)(C)(*2*) requires that the annual TAC in Area 543 will be no more than 65 percent of the ABC in Area 543. Section 679.20(a)(8)(ii)(D) requires that any unharvested Atka mackerel A season allowance that is added to the B season be prohibited from being harvested within waters 0 nmi to 20 nmi of Steller sea lion sites listed in table 6 to 50 CFR part 679 and located in Areas 541, 542, and 543.

Tables 7 and 8 list these 2025 and 2026 Atka mackerel seasonal and area allowances, and the sector allocations. One Amendment 80 cooperative has formed for the 2025 fishing year. Because all Amendment 80 vessels are part of the sole Amendment 80 cooperative, no allocation to the Amendment 80 limited access sector is required for 2025. The 2026 allocations for Atka mackerel between Amendment 80 cooperatives and the Amendment 80 limited access sector will not be known until eligible participants

apply for participation in the program by November 1, 2025. Table 21 lists the allocation of CDQ Atka mackerel among the CDQ groups.

Table 7–Final 2025 Seasonal and Spatial Allowances, Gear Shares, CDQ Reserve, Incidental Catch Allowance, and Amendment 80 Allocations of the BSAI Atka Mackerel TAC

[Amounts are in metric tons]

Sector[1]	Season[2,3,4]	2025 allocation by area		
		Eastern Aleutian District/Bering Sea	Central Aleutian District[5]	Western Aleutian District
TAC	n/a	39,000	24,443	18,557
CDQ reserve	Total	4,173	2,615	1,986
	A	2,087	1,308	993
	Critical Habitat	n/a	785	596
	B	2,087	1,308	993
	Critical Habitat	n/a	785	596
Non-CDQ TAC	n/a	34,827	21,828	16,571
ICA	Total	800	100	20
Jig[6]	Total	170	-	-
BSAI trawl limited access	Total	3,386	2,173	-
	A	1,693	1,086	-
	Critical Habitat	n/a	652	-
	B	1,693	1,086	-
	Critical Habitat	n/a	652	-
Amendment 80 sector	Total	30,471	19,555	16,551
	A	15,236	9,777	8,276
	Critical Habitat	n/a	5,866	4,965
	B	15,236	9,777	8,276
	Critical Habitat	n/a	5,866	4,965

Note: Seasonal or sector apportionments may not total precisely due to rounding. The 2025 harvest specifications for Atka mackerel are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t, [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2025.

[1] Section 679.20(a)(8)(ii) allocates the Atka mackerel TACs, after subtracting the CDQ reserves, ICAs, and jig gear allocation, to the Amendment 80 and BSAI trawl limited access sectors. The allocation of the ITAC for Atka mackerel to the Amendment 80 and BSAI trawl limited access sectors is established in table 33 to 50 CFR part 679 and § 679.91. The CDQ reserve is 10.7 percent of the TAC for use by CDQ participants (see § 679.20(b)(1)(ii)(C)).

[2] Sections 679.20(a)(8)(ii)(A) and 679.22(a) establish temporal and spatial limitations for the Atka mackerel fishery.

[3] The seasonal allowances of Atka mackerel for the CDQ reserve, BSAI trawl limited access sector, and Amendment 80 sector are 50 percent in the A season and 50 percent in the B season.

[4] Section 679.23(e)(3) authorizes directed fishing for Atka mackerel with trawl gear during the A season from January 20 to June 10 and the B season from June 10 to December 31.

[5]Section 679.20(a)(8)(ii)(C)(*1*)(*i*) limits no more than 60 percent of the annual TACs in Areas 542 and 543 to be caught inside of Steller sea lion protection areas; 679.20(a)(8)(ii)(C)(*1*)(*ii*) equally divides the annual catch inside of Steller sea lion protection areas between the A and B seasons as defined at § 679.23(e)(3); and 679.20(a)(8)(ii)(C)(*2*) requires that the TAC in Area 543 shall be no more than 65 percent of ABC in Area 543.

[6] Sections 679.2 and 679.20(a)(8)(i) require that up to 2 percent of the Eastern Aleutian Islands District and the Bering Sea subarea TAC be allocated to jig gear after subtracting the CDQ reserve and the ICA. NMFS sets the amount of this allocation for 2025 at 0.5 percent. The jig gear allocation is not apportioned by season.

Table 8–Final 2026 Seasonal and Spatial Allowances, Gear Shares, CDQ Reserve, Incidental Catch Allowance, and Amendment 80 Allocations of the BSAI Atka Mackerel TAC

[Amounts are in metric tons]

Sector[1]	Season[2,3,4]	2026 allocation by area		
		Eastern Aleutian District/Bering Sea[5]	Central Aleutian District[5]	Western Aleutian District[5]
TAC	n/a	41,731	23,716	17,494
CDQ reserve	Total	4,465	2,538	1,872
	A	2,233	1,269	936
	Critical Habitat	n/a	761	562
	B	2,233	1,269	936
	Critical Habitat	n/a	761	562
non-CDQ TAC	n/a	37,266	21,178	15,622
ICA	Total	800	100	20
Jig[6]	Total	182	-	-
BSAI trawl limited access	Total	3,628	2,108	-
	A	1,814	1,054	-
	Critical Habitat	n/a	632	-
	B	1,814	1,054	-
	Critical Habitat	n/a	632	-
Amendment 80 sectors[7]	Total	32,655	18,971	15,602
	A	16,328	9,485	7,801
	Critical Habitat	n/a	5,691	4,681
	B	16,328	9,485	7,801
	Critical Habitat	n/a	5,691	4,681

Note: Seasonal or sector apportionments may not total precisely due to rounding. The 2026 harvest specifications for Atka mackerel are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2026, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 18, 2026.

[1] Section 679.20(a)(8)(ii) allocates the Atka mackerel TACs, after subtracting the CDQ reserves, ICAs, and jig gear allocation, to the Amendment 80 and BSAI trawl limited access sectors. The allocation of the ITAC for Atka mackerel to the Amendment 80 and BSAI trawl limited access sectors is established in table 33 to 50 CFR part 679 and § 679.91. The CDQ reserve is 10.7 percent of the TAC for use by CDQ participants (see § 679.20(b)(1)(ii)(C)).

[2] Sections 679.20(a)(8)(ii)(A) and 679.22(a) establish temporal and spatial limitations for the Atka mackerel fishery.

[3] The seasonal allowances of Atka mackerel for the CDQ reserve, BSAI trawl limited access sector, and Amendment 80 sector are 50 percent in the A season and 50 percent in the B season.

[4] Section 679.23(e)(3) authorizes directed fishing for Atka mackerel with trawl gear during the A season from January 20 to June 10 and the B season from June 10 to December 31.

[5] Section 679.20(a)(8)(ii)(C)(*1*)(*i*) limits no more than 60 percent of the annual TACs in Areas 542 and 543 to be caught inside of Steller sea lion protection areas; 679.20(a)(8)(ii)(C)(*1*)(*ii*) equally divides the annual catch inside of Steller sea lion protection areas between the A and B seasons as defined at § 679.23(e)(3); and 679.20(a)(8)(ii)(C)(*2*) requires that the TAC in Area 543 shall be no more than 65 percent of ABC in Area 543.

[6] Sections 679.2 and 679.20(a)(8)(i) require that up to 2 percent of the Eastern Aleutian Islands District and the Bering Sea subarea TAC be allocated to jig gear after subtracting the CDQ reserve and the ICA. NMFS sets the amount of this allocation for 2026 at 0.5 percent. The jig gear allocation is not apportioned by season.

[7] The 2026 allocations for Atka mackerel between Amendment 80 cooperatives and the Amendment 80 limited access sector will not be known until eligible participants apply for participation in the program by November 1, 2025.

Allocation of the Pacific Cod TAC

Section 679.20(b)(1)(ii)(C) allocates 10.7 percent of the BS TAC and the AI TAC to the CDQ program. After CDQ allocations have been deducted from the respective BS and AI Pacific cod TACs, the remaining BSAI Pacific cod TACs are combined for calculating further BSAI Pacific cod sector allocations and seasonal allowances. If the non-CDQ Pacific cod TAC is or will be reached in either the BS or the AI subareas, NMFS will prohibit non-CDQ directed fishing for Pacific cod in that subarea as provided in § 679.20(d)(1)(iii).

Section 679.20(a)(7)(ii) allocates to the non-CDQ sectors the Pacific cod TAC in the combined BSAI, after subtracting 10.7 percent for the CDQ program, as follows: 1.4 percent to vessels using jig gear; 2.0 percent to hook-and-line or pot CVs less than 60 ft (18.3 m) LOA; 0.2 percent to hook-and-line CVs greater than or equal to 60 ft (18.3 m) LOA; 48.7 percent to hook-and-line CPs; 8.4 percent to pot CVs greater than or equal to 60 ft (18.3 m) LOA; 1.5 percent to pot CPs; 2.3 percent to AFA trawl CPs; 13.4 percent to Amendment 80 sector; and 22.1 percent to trawl CVs. The ICA for the hook-and-line and pot sectors will be deducted from the aggregate portion of Pacific cod TAC allocated to the hook-and-line and pot sectors. For 2025 and 2026, the Regional Administrator establishes an ICA of 500 mt based on anticipated incidental catch by these sectors in

directed fisheries for groundfish other than Pacific cod. During the fishing year, NMFS may reallocate unharvested Pacific cod among sectors, consistent with the reallocation hierarchy set forth at § 679.20(a)(7)(iii).

The ITAC allocation of Pacific cod to the Amendment 80 sector is established in table 33 to 50 CFR part 679 and § 679.91. One Amendment 80 cooperative has formed for the 2025 fishing year. Because all Amendment 80 vessels are part of the sole Amendment 80 cooperative, no allocation to the Amendment 80 limited access sector is required for 2025. The 2026 allocations for Pacific cod between Amendment 80 cooperatives and the Amendment 80 limited access sector will not be known until eligible participants apply for participation in the program by November 1, 2025.

The BSAI ITAC allocation of Pacific cod to the Pacific Cod Trawl Cooperative (PCTC) Program is established in § 679.131(b). Section 679.131(b)(1)(i) also requires NMFS to establish an ICA for incidental catch of Pacific cod in the A and B seasons by trawl CVs engaged in directed fishing for groundfish other than PCTC Program Pacific cod. In the annual harvest specification process, NMFS determines the Pacific cod trawl CV TAC and the annual apportionment of Pacific cod in the A and B seasons between the PCTC Program DFA and the ICA (§ 679.131(b)(2)) (tables 9 and 10 below). The 2025 PCTC cooperative allocations and PSC limits are listed in table 11. The 2026 allocations for PCTC Program cooperatives will not be known until NMFS receives the membership applications by November 1, 2025.

The sector allocations of Pacific cod are apportioned into seasonal allowances to disperse the Pacific cod fisheries over the fishing year (see §§ 679.20(a)(7)(i)(B) (CDQ), 679.20(a)(7)(iv)(A) (non-CDQ), and 679.23(e)(5) (seasons)). Tables 9 and 10 list the CDQ and non-CDQ sector allocations and the non-CDQ seasonal allowances. In accordance with § 679.20(a)(7)(iv)(B) and (C), any unused portion of a non-CDQ Pacific cod seasonal allowance for any sector, except the jig sector, will become available at the

beginning of that sector's next seasonal allowance. Section 679.20(a)(7)(i)(B) sets forth the CDQ Pacific cod gear allowances by season, and CDQ groups are prohibited from exceeding those seasonal allowances (§ 679.7(d)(6)).

Section 679.20(a)(7)(vii) requires that the Regional Administrator establish an Area 543 Pacific cod harvest limit based on Pacific cod abundance in Area 543 as determined by the annual stock assessment process. Based on the 2024 stock assessment, the Regional Administrator determined for 2025 and 2026 the estimated amount of Pacific cod abundance in Area 543 is 36.5 percent of the total AI abundance. To calculate the Area 543 Pacific cod harvest limit, NMFS first subtracts the State GHL Pacific cod amount from the AI Pacific cod ABC. Then NMFS determines the harvest limit in Area 543 by multiplying the percentage of Pacific cod estimated in Area 543 (36.5 percent) by the remaining ABC for AI Pacific cod. Based on these calculations, the Area 543 harvest limit is 3,173 mt for 2025, and 3,078 mt for 2026.

Under the PCTC Program, NMFS is required to specify an AI set-aside of up to twelve percent of the PCTC Program A season cooperative quota for delivery to an AI shoreplant in years in which an AI community representative notifies NMFS of the intent to process PCTC Program Pacific cod in the City of Adak or City of Atka (§ 679.132). A notice of intent to process PCTC Program Pacific cod must be submitted in writing to the Regional Administrator by a representative of the City of Adak or the City of Atka no later than October 15. A notice of intent was not received by October 15, 2024, and accordingly the AI set-aside will not be in effect for 2025. The 2026 set-aside will be determined after the October 15, 2025, deadline in conjunction with the 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications process.

Based on the final 2025 and 2026 Pacific cod TACs, tables 9 and 10 list the CDQ and non-CDQ TAC amounts; non-CDQ seasonal allowances by gear; the sector

allocations of Pacific cod; and the seasons set forth at § 679.23(e)(5). The CDQ allocation of BS and AI Pacific cod among the CDQ groups is listed in table 21.

Table 9–Final 2025 Sector Allocations and Seasonal Allowances of the BSAI Pacific Cod TAC

[Amounts are in metric tons]

Sector	Percent	2025 share of gear sector total	2025 share of sector total	2025 seasonal allowances	
				Season	Amount
Total Bering Sea TAC	n/a	133,602	n/a	n/a	n/a
Bering Sea CDQ	n/a	14,295	n/a	See §679.20(a)(7)(i)(B)	n/a
Bering Sea non-CDQ TAC	n/a	119,307	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Aleutian Islands TAC	n/a	8,694	n/a	n/a	n/a
Aleutian Islands CDQ	n/a	930	n/a	See §679.20(a)(7)(i)(B)	n/a
Aleutian Islands non-CDQ TAC	n/a	7,764	n/a	n/a	n/a
Western Aleutians Islands Limit	n/a	3,173	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total BSAI non-CDQ TAC[1]	100.0	127,070	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total hook-and-line/pot gear	60.8	77,259	n/a	n/a	n/a
Hook-and-line/pot ICA[2]	n/a	n/a	500	n/a	n/a
Hook-and-line/pot sub-total	n/a	76,759	n/a	n/a	n/a
Hook-and-line CPs	48.7	n/a	61,483	n/a	n/a
A-season				Jan-1-Jun 10	31,356
B-season				Jun 10-Dec 31	30,127
Hook-and-line CVs ≥ 60 ft LOA	0.2	n/a	252	n/a	n/a
A-season				Jan 1-Jun 10	129
B-season				Jun 10-Dec 31	124
Pot CPs	1.5	n/a	1,894	n/a	n/a
Pot CPs A-season				Jan 1-Jun 10	966
Pot CPs B-season				Sept 1-Dec 31	928
Pot CVs≥ 60 ft LOA	8.4	n/a	10,605	n/a	n/a
A-season				Jan 1-Jun 10	5,408
B-season				Sept-1-Dec 31	5,196
CVs < 60 ft LOA using hook-and-line or pot gear	2.0	n/a	2,525	n/a	n/a
Trawl CVs[3]	22.1	28,083	n/a	n/a	n/a
A-Season ICA				Jan 20-Apr 1	1,500
A-season PCTC				Jan 20-Apr 1	19,281
B-season ICA				Apr 1-Jun 10	700
B-season PCTC				Apr 1-Jun 10	2,389
C-season trawl CVs				Jun 10-Nov 1	4,212
AFA trawl CPs	2.3	2,923	n/a	n/a	n/a
A-season				Jan 20-Apr 1	2,192
B-season				Apr 1-Jun 10	731

C-season				Jun 10-Nov 1	-
Amendment 80	13.4	17,027	n/a	n/a	n/a
A-season				Jan 20-Apr 1	12,771
B-season				Apr 1-Jun 10	4,257
C-season				Jun 10-Dec 31	-
Jig	1.4	1,779	n/a	n/a	n/a
A-season				Jan 1-Apr 30	1,067
B-season				Apr 30-Aug 31	356
C-season				Aug 31-Dec 31	356

Note: Seasonal or sector apportionments may not total precisely due to rounding. The 2025 harvest specifications for Pacific cod are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t, [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2025.

[1] The sector allocations and seasonal allowances for BSAI Pacific cod TAC are based on the sum of the BS and AI Pacific cod TACs, after subtraction of the reserves for the CDQ Program. If the TAC for Pacific cod in either the BS or AI subareas is or will be reached, then directed fishing will be prohibited for non-CDQ Pacific cod in that subarea, even if a BSAI allowance remains (§ 679.20(d)(1)(iii)).

[2] The ICA for the hook-and-line and pot sectors is deducted from the aggregate portion of Pacific cod TAC allocated to the hook-and-line and pot sectors. The Regional Administrator approves an ICA of 500 mt based on anticipated incidental catch by these sectors in directed fisheries for groundfish other than Pacific cod.

[3] The A and B season trawl CV Pacific cod allocation is allocated to the Pacific Cod Trawl Cooperative Program after subtraction of the A and B season ICAs (§ 679.131(b)(1)). The Regional Administrator approves for the A and B seasons ICAs of 1,500 mt and 700 mt, respectively, to account for projected incidental catch of Pacific cod by trawl CVs engaged in directed fishing for groundfish other than PCTC Program Pacific cod.

Table 10–Final 2026 Sector Allocations and Seasonal Allowances of the BSAI Pacific Cod TAC

[Amounts are in metric tons]

Sector	Percent	2026 share of gear sector total	2026 share of sector total	2026 seasonal allowances	
				Season	Amount
Total Bering Sea TAC	n/a	123,077	n/a	n/a	n/a
Bering Sea CDQ	n/a	13,169	n/a	See §679.20(a)(7)(i)(B)	n/a
Bering Sea non-CDQ TAC	n/a	109,908	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total Aleutian Islands TAC	n/a	8,432	n/a	n/a	n/a
Aleutian Islands CDQ	n/a	902	n/a	See §679.20(a)(7)(i)(B)	n/a
Aleutian Islands non-CDQ TAC	n/a	7,530	n/a	n/a	n/a
Western Aleutians Islands Limit	n/a	3,078	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total BSAI non-CDQ TAC[1]	100.0	117,438	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total hook-and-line/pot gear	60.8	71,402	n/a	n/a	n/a
Hook-and-line/pot ICA[2]	n/a	n/a	500	n/a	n/a

Hook-and-line/pot sub-total	n/a	70,902	n/a	n/a	n/a
Hook-and-line CPs	48.7	n/a	56,792	n/a	n/a
A-season				Jan-1-Jun 10	28,964
B-season				Jun 10-Dec 31	27,828
Hook-and-line CVs≥ 60 ft LOA	0.2	n/a	233	n/a	n/a
A-season				Jan 1-Jun 10	119
B-season				Jun 10-Dec 31	114
Pot CPs	1.5	n/a	1,749	n/a	n/a
Pot CPs A-season				Jan 1-Jun 10	892
Pot CPs B-season				Sept 1-Dec 31	857
Pot CVs≥ 60 ft LOA	8.4	n/a	9,796	n/a	n/a
A-season				Jan 1-Jun 10	4,996
B-season				Sept-1-Dec 31	4,800
CVs < 60 ft LOA using hook-and-line or pot gear	2.0	n/a	2,332	n/a	n/a
Trawl CVs[3]	22.1	25,954	n/a	n/a	n/a
A-Season ICA				Jan 20-Apr 1	1,500
A-season PCTC				Jan 20-Apr 1	17,706
B-season ICA				Apr 1-Jun 10	700
B-season PCTC				Apr 1-Jun 10	2,155
C-season trawl CVs				Jun 10-Nov 1	3,893
AFA trawl CPs	2.3	2,701	n/a	n/a	n/a
A-season				Jan 20-Apr 1	2,026
B-season				Apr 1-Jun 10	675
C-season				Jun 10-Nov 1	-
Amendment 80	13.4	15,737	n/a	n/a	n/a
A-season				Jan 20-Apr 1	11,802
B-season				Apr 1-Jun 10	3,934
C-season				Jun 10-Dec 31	-
Jig	1.4	1,644	n/a	n/a	n/a
A-season				Jan 1-Apr 30	986
B-season				Apr 30-Aug 31	329
C-season				Aug 31-Dec 31	329

Note: Seasonal or sector apportionments may not total precisely due to rounding. The 2026 harvest specifications for Pacific cod are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2026, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 18, 2026.

[1] The sector allocations and seasonal allowances for BSAI Pacific cod TAC are based on the sum of the BS and AI Pacific cod TACs, after subtraction of the reserves for the CDQ Program. If the TAC for Pacific cod in either the BS or AI subareas is or will be reached, then directed fishing will be prohibited for non-CDQ Pacific cod in that subarea, even if a BSAI allowance remains (§ 679.20(d)(1)(iii)).

[2] The ICA for the hook-and-line and pot sectors is deducted from the aggregate portion of Pacific cod TAC allocated to the hook-and-line and pot sectors. The Regional Administrator approves an ICA of 500 mt based on anticipated incidental catch by these sectors in directed fisheries for groundfish other than Pacific cod.

[3] The A and B season trawl CV Pacific cod allocation is allocated to the Pacific Cod Trawl Cooperative Program after subtraction of the A and B season ICAs (§ 679.131(b)(1)). The Regional Administrator approves for the A and B seasons ICAs of 1,500 mt and 700 mt, respectively, to account for projected incidental catch of Pacific cod by trawl CVs engaged in directed fishing for groundfish other than PCTC Program Pacific cod.

Table 11–Final 2025 PCTC Cooperative Allocations and PSC Limits

[Pacific cod and Pacific halibut amounts are in metric tons. Crab are in number of animals.]

Cooperative Name[1]	Total Pacific Cod CQ	A Season Pacific Cod CQ	B Season Pacific Cod CQ	Halibut	Red King Crab	*C. opilio* COBLZ	Zone 1 *C. bairdi*	Zone 2 *C. bairdi*
Akutan Cod Association	13,230.29	11,771.72	1,458.57	134.317	1,009	50,732	20,493	17,078
GA Catcher Vessels Association	1,716.84	1,527.57	189.272	17.429	130	6,583	2,659	2,216
USS Cod Cooperative	2,221.55	1,976.64	244.914	22.553	169	8,518	3,441	2,867
Unified Cod Cooperative	4,501.32	4,005.07	496.245	45.698	343	17,260	6,972	5,810
TOTALS	21,670	19,281	2,389	220	1,651	83,093	33,565	27,971

Note: Totals may not add up due to rounding. Refer to § 679.2 for definitions of areas and zones.

[1] The 2025 PCTC cooperative allocations and PSC limits are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t, [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2025. The 2026 allocations and PSC limits for PCTC Cooperatives will not be known until eligible participants apply for participation in the program by November 1, 2025. NMFS will specify the 2026 PCTC cooperative allocations and PSC limits in the 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications.

Sablefish Gear Allocation

Sections 679.20(a)(4)(iii) and (iv) require allocation of the sablefish TAC for the BS and AI subareas between the trawl gear and fixed gear sectors. Gear allocations of the sablefish TAC for the BS are 50 percent for trawl gear and 50 percent for fixed gear. Gear allocations of the sablefish TAC for the AI are 25 percent for trawl gear and 75 percent for fixed gear. Section 679.20(b)(1)(ii)(B) requires that NMFS apportion 20 percent of the fixed gear allocation of sablefish TAC to the CDQ reserve for each subarea. Also, § 679.20(b)(1)(ii)(D)(*1*) requires that in the BS and AI 7.5 percent of the trawl gear allocation of sablefish TAC from the non-specified reserve, established under § 679.20(b)(1)(i), be assigned to the CDQ reserve.

The Council recommended and NMFS agrees that only trawl sablefish TAC be established biennially and that fixed gear sablefish TAC be established for one year. The harvest specifications for the fixed gear sablefish Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ)

fisheries are limited to the 2025 fishing year to ensure those fisheries are conducted concurrently with the halibut IFQ fishery, which opens March 20, 2025. Concurrent sablefish and halibut IFQ fisheries reduce the potential for discards of halibut and sablefish in those fisheries. The sablefish IFQ fisheries remain closed at the beginning of each fishing year until the final harvest specifications for the sablefish IFQ fisheries are in effect. Table 12 lists the 2025 and 2026 gear allocations of the sablefish TAC and CDQ reserve amounts. Allocations among CDQ groups are listed in table 21.

Table 12–Final 2025 and 2026 Gear Shares and CDQ Reserve of BSAI Sablefish TACs

[Amounts are in metric tons]

Subarea and gear	Percent of TAC	2025 Share of TAC	2025 ITAC	2025 CDQ reserve	2026 Share of TAC	2026 ITAC	2026 CDQ reserve
Bering Sea							
Trawl gear[1]	50	4,248	3,611	319	4,498	3,823	337
Fixed gear[2]	50	4,248	3,398	850	n/a	n/a	n/a
TOTAL	100	8,496	7,009	1,168	4,498	3,823	337
Aleutian Islands							
Trawl gear[1]	25	1,985	1,687	149	1,860	1,581	140
Fixed gear[2]	75	5,955	4,764	1,191	n/a	n/a	n/a
TOTAL	100	7,940	6,451	1,340	1,860	1,581	140

Note: Seasonal or sector apportionments may not total precisely due to rounding.

[1] For the sablefish TAC allocated to vessels using trawl gear, 15 percent of TAC is apportioned to the non-specified reserve (§ 679.20(b)(1)(i)). The ITAC for vessels using trawl gear is the remainder of the TAC after subtracting this reserve. In the BS and AI, 7.5 percent of the trawl gear allocation of sablefish TAC is assigned from the non-specified reserve to the CDQ reserve (§ 679.20(b)(1)(ii)(D)(*1*)). The 2025 sablefish allocations to trawl gear are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t, [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2025. The 2026 sablefish allocations to trawl gear are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2026, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 18, 2026.

[2] For the portion of the sablefish TAC allocated to vessels using fixed gear, 20 percent of the allocated TAC for the BS and AI is reserved for use by CDQ participants (§ 679.20(b)(1)(ii)(B)). The ITAC for vessels using fixed gear is the remainder of the TAC after subtracting the CDQ reserve for each subarea. The Council recommended, and NMFS concurs, that specifications for the fixed gear sablefish IFQ fisheries be limited to one year. The 2025 sablefish allocations to fixed gear are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t, [INSERT DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER], through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2025. The 2026 sablefish allocations to fixed gear will be specified in the 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications.

Allocation of the AI Pacific Ocean Perch, and BSAI Flathead Sole, Rock Sole, and Yellowfin Sole TACs

Sections 679.20(a)(10)(i) and (ii) require that NMFS allocate AI Pacific ocean perch and BSAI flathead sole, rock sole, and yellowfin sole ITACs between the

Amendment 80 sector and the BSAI trawl limited access sector, after subtracting 10.7 percent for the CDQ reserves and ICAs for the BSAI trawl limited access sector and vessels using non-trawl gear. The allocations of the ITACs for AI Pacific ocean perch and BSAI flathead sole, rock sole, and yellowfin sole to the Amendment 80 sector and the BSAI trawl limited access sector are established in accordance with tables 33 and 34 to 50 CFR part 679 and with § 679.91.

One Amendment 80 cooperative has formed for the 2025 fishing year. Because all Amendment 80 vessels are part of the sole Amendment 80 cooperative, no allocation to the Amendment 80 limited access sector is required for 2025. The 2026 allocations for Amendment 80 species between Amendment 80 cooperatives and the Amendment 80 limited access sector will not be known until eligible participants apply for participation in the program by November 1, 2025. Tables 13 and 14 list the 2025 and 2026 allocations of the AI Pacific ocean perch and BSAI flathead sole, rock sole, and yellowfin sole TACs. Allocations among the CDQ groups are listed in table 21.

Table 13–Final 2025 Community Development Quota (CDQ) Reserves, Incidental Catch Amounts (ICAs), and Amendment 80 Allocations of the Aleutian Islands Pacific Ocean Perch and BSAI Flathead Sole, Rock Sole, and Yellowfin Sole TACs

[Amounts are in metric tons]

Sector	Pacific ocean perch			Flathead sole	Rock sole	Yellowfin sole
	Eastern Aleutian District	Central Aleutian District	Western Aleutian District	BSAI	BSAI	BSAI
TAC	6,278	5,559	11,500	36,000	75,000	135,000
CDQ	672	595	1,231	3,852	8,025	14,445
ICA	100	60	10	2,000	3,000	2,000
BSAI trawl limited access	551	490	205	-	-	12,718
Amendment 80	4,956	4,414	10,054	30,148	63,975	105,837

Note: Sector apportionments may not total precisely due to rounding. The 2025 CDQ reserves, ICAs, and allocations for BSAI flathead sole, rock sole, and yellowfin sole are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t, [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2025.

Table 14–Final 2026 Community Development Quota (CDC) Reserves, Incidental Catch Amounts (ICAs), and Amendment 80 Allocations of the Aleutian Islands Pacific Ocean Perch and BSAI Flathead Sole, Rock Sole, and Yellowfin Sole TACs

[Amounts are in metric tons]

Sector	Pacific ocean perch	Flathead sole	Rock sole	Yellowfin sole

	Eastern Aleutian District	Central Aleutian District	Western Aleutian District	BSAI	BSAI	BSAI
TAC	6,144	5,441	12,000	36,000	75,000	145,000
CDQ	657	582	1,284	3,852	8,025	15,515
ICA	100	60	10	2,000	3,000	2,000
BSAI trawl limited access	539	480	214	-	-	15,936
Amendment 80[1]	4,848	4,319	10,492	30,148	63,975	111,549

Note: Sector apportionments may not total precisely due to rounding. The 2026 CDQ reserves, ICAs, and allocations for BSAI flathead sole, rock sole, and yellowfin sole are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2026, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 18, 2026.

[1] The 2026 allocations for Amendment 80 species between Amendment 80 cooperatives and the Amendment 80 limited access sector will not be known until eligible participants apply for participation in the program by November 1, 2025.

Section 679.2 defines the ABC surplus for flathead sole, rock sole, and yellowfin sole as the difference between the annual ABC and TAC for each species. Section 679.20(b)(1)(iii) establishes ABC reserves for flathead sole, rock sole, and yellowfin sole. The ABC surpluses and the ABC reserves are necessary to mitigate the operational variability, environmental conditions, and economic factors that may constrain the CDQ groups and the Amendment 80 cooperatives from fully harvesting their allocations and to improve the likelihood of achieving and maintaining, on a continuing basis, the OY in the BSAI groundfish fisheries. NMFS, after consultation with the Council, may set the ABC reserve at or below the ABC surplus for each species, thus maintaining the TAC at or below ABC limits. An amount equal to 10.7 percent of the ABC reserves will be allocated as CDQ ABC reserves for flathead sole, rock sole, and yellowfin sole. Section 679.31(b)(4) establishes the annual allocations of CDQ ABC reserves among the CDQ groups. The Amendment 80 ABC reserves are the ABC reserves minus the CDQ ABC reserves. Section 679.91(i)(2) establishes the Amendment 80 cooperatives' ABC reserve to be the ratio of each cooperatives' quota share units and the total Amendment 80 quota share units, multiplied by the Amendment 80 ABC reserve for each respective species. Table 15 lists the 2025 and 2026 ABC surplus and ABC reserves for BSAI flathead sole,

rock sole, and yellowfin sole. The ABC reserves for the CDQ groups are listed in table 21.

Table 15–Final 2025 and 2026 ABC Surplus, ABC Reserves, Community Development Quota (CDQ) ABC Reserves, and Amendment 80 ABC Reserves in the BSAI for Flathead Sole, Rock Sole, and Yellowfin Sole

[Amounts are in metric tons]

Sector	2025 Flathead sole	2025 Rock sole	2025 Yellowfin sole	2026[1] Flathead sole	2026[1] Rock sole	2026[1] Yellowfin sole
ABC	83,807	157,487	262,557	87,700	158,225	267,639
TAC	36,000	75,000	135,000	36,000	75,000	145,000
ABC surplus	47,807	82,487	127,557	51,700	83,225	122,639
ABC reserve	47,807	82,487	127,557	51,700	83,225	122,639
CDQ ABC reserve	5,115	8,826	13,649	5,532	8,905	13,122
Amendment 80 ABC reserve	42,692	73,661	113,908	46,168	74,320	109,517

[1] The 2025 surpluses and reserves for BSAI flathead sole, rock sole, and yellowfin sole are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t, [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2025. The 2026 surpluses and reserves for BSAI flathead sole, rock sole, and yellowfin sole are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2026, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 18, 2026. The 2026 allocations for Amendment 80 species between Amendment 80 cooperatives and the Amendment 80 limited access sector will not be known until eligible participants apply for participation in the program by November 1, 2025.

PSC Limits for Halibut, Salmon, Crab, and Herring

Section 679.21 (b), (e), (f), and (g), set forth the BSAI PSC limits. Section 679.21(b)(1) establishes three fixed halibut PSC limits totaling 1,770 mt, and assigns 315 mt of the halibut PSC limit as the PSQ reserve for use by the groundfish CDQ Program, 745 mt of the halibut PSC limit for the BSAI trawl limited access sector, and 710 mt of the halibut PSC limit for the BSAI non-trawl sector. An additional amount of BSAI halibut PSC limit for the Amendment 80 sector is determined annually based on the most recent halibut biomass estimates from the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) setline survey index and the NMFS Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) Eastern Bering Sea shelf trawl survey index. In accordance with § 679.21(b)(1)(i), NMFS uses both halibut biomass estimates such that the value at the intercept of those survey indices from table 58 to 50 CFR part 679 is the Amendment 80 sector halibut PSC limit. The 2024 AFSC Eastern Bering Sea shelf trawl survey index estimate of halibut abundance is 125,145 mt and is below the threshold level of 150,000 mt. The IPHC

setline survey index is 6,282 mt and is in the "low" abundance state. Pursuant to table 58 to 50 CFR part 679, the 2025 Amendment 80 sector halibut PSC limit is 1,309 mt. NMFS will publish the 2026 Amendment 80 sector halibut PSC limit in the 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications.

Section 679.21(b)(1)(iii)(A) and (B) require apportionment of the BSAI non-trawl halibut PSC limit into PSC allowances among six fishery categories (see table 19). Sections 679.21(b)(1)(ii)(A) and (B), (e)(3)(i)(B), and (e)(3)(iv) require apportionment of the trawl PSC limits into PSC allowances among seven fishery categories (see tables 16, 17, and 18). These apportionments into PSC allowances are based on the fishery categories' share of anticipated halibut PSC during the fishing year and the need to optimize the amount of total groundfish harvested under the halibut PSC limit for the non-trawl and trawl sectors.

Pursuant to Section 3.6 of the FMP, the Council recommends that certain specified non-trawl fisheries be exempt from the halibut PSC limit. NMFS concurs with this recommendation and exempts the pot gear fishery, the jig gear fishery, and the sablefish IFQ fixed gear fishery categories from halibut bycatch restrictions for the following reasons: (1) the pot gear fishery has low halibut bycatch mortality; (2) NMFS estimates halibut mortality for the jig gear fleet to be negligible because of the small size of the fishery and the selectivity of the gear; and (3) the sablefish and halibut IFQ fisheries have low halibut bycatch mortality because the IFQ program requires that legal-size halibut be retained by vessels using fixed gear if a halibut IFQ permit holder or a hired master is aboard and is holding unused halibut IFQ for that vessel category and the IFQ regulatory area in which the vessel is operating (see § 679.7(f)(11)).

The 2024 total groundfish catch for the pot gear fishery in the BSAI was 32,622 mt, with an associated halibut bycatch mortality of 10 mt. There was no participation in the 2024 jig gear fishery and 0 mt of total groundfish was harvested.

Under § 679.21(f)(2), NMFS annually allocates portions of either 33,318, 45,000, 47,591, or 60,000 Chinook salmon PSC limits among the AFA sectors, depending on: (1) past bycatch performance; (2) whether Chinook salmon bycatch incentive plan agreements (IPAs) are formed and approved by NMFS; and (3) whether NMFS determines it is a low Chinook salmon abundance year. NMFS will determine that it is a low Chinook salmon abundance year when abundance of Chinook salmon in western Alaska is less than or equal to 250,000 Chinook salmon. The State provides to NMFS an estimate of Chinook salmon abundance using the 3-System Index for western Alaska based on the Kuskokwim, Unalakleet, and Upper Yukon aggregate stock grouping.

If an AFA sector participates in an approved incentive plan agreement (IPA) and has not exceeded its performance standard under § 679.21(f)(6), and if it is not a low Chinook salmon abundance year, then NMFS will allocate a portion of the 60,000 Chinook salmon PSC limit to that sector as specified in § 679.21(f)(3)(iii)(A). If no IPA is approved, or if the sector has exceeded its performance standard under § 679.21(f)(6), and if it is not a low abundance year, then NMFS will allocate a portion of the 47,591 Chinook salmon PSC limit to that sector as specified in § 679.21(f)(3)(iii)(C). If an AFA sector participates in an approved IPA and has not exceeded its performance standard under § 679.21(f)(6), and if in a low abundance year, then NMFS will allocate a portion of the 45,000 Chinook salmon PSC limit to that sector as specified in § 679.21(f)(3)(iii)(B). If no IPA is approved, or if the sector has exceeded its performance standard under § 679.21(f)(6), and if in a low abundance year, then NMFS will allocate a portion of the 33,318 Chinook salmon PSC limit to that sector as specified in § 679.21(f)(3)(iii)(D).

NMFS has determined that 2024 was a low Chinook salmon abundance year, based on the State's estimate that Chinook salmon abundance in western Alaska is less than 250,000 Chinook salmon. In addition, all AFA sectors are participating in NMFS-

approved IPAs, and no sector has exceeded the sector's annual Chinook salmon bycatch performance standard in any three of seven consecutive years. Therefore, in 2025, the Chinook salmon PSC limit is 45,000 Chinook salmon, allocated to each sector as specified in § 679.21(f)(3)(iii)(B). In 2025, the Chinook salmon bycatch performance standard under § 679.21(f)(6) is 33,318 Chinook salmon, allocated to each sector as specified in § 679.21(f)(3)(iii)(D). The AFA sector Chinook salmon PSC limits are also seasonally apportioned with 70 percent for the A season pollock fishery, and 30 percent for the B season pollock fishery (see §§ 679.21(f)(3)(i) and 679.23(e)(2)). NMFS publishes the approved IPAs, allocations, and reports at *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/bycatch/chinook-salmon-bycatch-management-alaska.* NMFS will publish the 2026 Chinook salmon PSC limit and bycatch performance standard in the 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications.

Section 679.21(g)(2)(i) specifies 700 fish as the Chinook salmon PSC limit for the AI pollock fishery. Section 679.21(g)(2)(ii) allocates 7.5 percent, or 53 Chinook salmon, as the AI PSQ reserve for the CDQ program, and allocates the remaining 647 Chinook salmon to the non-CDQ fisheries.

Section 679.21(f)(14)(i) specifies 42,000 fish as the non-Chinook salmon PSC limit for vessels using trawl gear from August 15 through October 14 in the Catcher Vessel Operational Area (CVOA). Section 679.21(f)(14)(ii) allocates 10.7 percent, or 4,494 non-Chinook salmon, in the CVOA as the PSQ reserve for the CDQ program, and allocates the remaining 37,506 non-Chinook salmon in the CVOA to the non-CDQ fisheries. Section 679.21(f)(14)(iv) exempts from closures in the Chum Salmon Savings Area trawl vessels participating in directed fishing for pollock and operating under an IPA approved by NMFS.

PSC limits for crab and herring are specified annually based on abundance and spawning biomass.

Based on the most recent (2024) survey data, the red king crab mature female abundance is estimated at 11.7 million red king crabs, and the effective spawning biomass is estimated at 22.47 million lbs (19,190 mt). Based on the criteria set out at § 679.21(e)(1)(i), the calculated PSC limit of red king crab in Zone 1 for trawl gear is 97,000 animals. This limit derives from the mature female abundance estimate above 8.4 million mature red king crab and an effective spawning biomass between 14.5 and 55 million lbs.

Section 679.21(e)(3)(ii)(B)(*2*) establishes criteria under which NMFS must specify, after consultation with the Council, an annual red king crab bycatch limit for the Red King Crab Savings Subarea (RKCSS) if the State has established a GHL fishery for red king crab in the Bristol Bay area in the previous year. The regulations limit the RKCSS red king crab bycatch limit to 25 percent of the red king crab PSC limit, based on the need to optimize the groundfish harvest relative to red king crab bycatch. In December 2024, the Council recommended, and NMFS approves, that the RKCSS red king crab bycatch limit be equal to 25 percent of the red king crab PSC limit.

Based on the most recent (2024) survey data from the NMFS annual bottom trawl survey, Tanner crab (*Chionoecetes bairdi*) abundance is estimated at 1,216 million animals. Pursuant to criteria set out at § 679.21(e)(1)(ii), the calculated *C. bairdi* crab PSC limit for trawl gear is 980,000 animals in Zone 1, and 2,970,000 animals in Zone 2. The limit in Zone 1 is based on the total abundance of *C. bairdi* (estimated at 1,216 million animals), which is greater than 400 million animals. The limit in Zone 2 is based on the total abundance of *C. bairdi* (estimated at 1,216 million animals), which is greater than 400 million animals.

Pursuant to § 679.21(e)(1)(iii), the PSC limit for trawl gear for snow crab (*C. opilio*) is based on total abundance as indicated by the NMFS annual bottom trawl survey. The *C. opilio* crab PSC limit in the *C. opilio* bycatch limitation zone (COBLZ) is

set at 0.1133 percent of the total abundance minus 150,000 crabs, unless a minimum or maximum PSC limit applies. Based on the most recent (2024) survey estimate of 13.37 billion animals, multiplied by 0.1133 percent, the calculated limit is 14,998,210 animals. Because the calculated limit is greater than 13 million animals, the maximum PSC limit applies and the PSC limit will be 12.85 million animals.

Pursuant to § 679.21(e)(1)(v), the PSC limit of Pacific herring caught while conducting any trawl operation for BSAI groundfish is 1 percent of the annual eastern BS herring biomass. The best current estimate of herring biomass is 265,096 mt. This amount was developed by the State based on biomass for spawning aggregations. Therefore, the herring PSC limit for 2025 and 2026 is 2,651 mt for all trawl gear as listed in tables 16 and 17.

Section 679.21(e)(3)(i)(A)(*1*) allocates 10.7 percent from each trawl gear PSC limit specified for crab as a PSQ reserve for use by the groundfish CDQ program. Section 679.21(e)(3)(i)(A) requires that crab PSQ reserves be subtracted from the total trawl gear crab PSC limits. The crab and halibut PSC limits apportioned to the Amendment 80 and BSAI trawl limited access sectors are listed in table 35 to 50 CFR part 679. The resulting allocations of PSC limit to CDQ PSQ reserves, the Amendment 80 sector, and the BSAI trawl limited access sector are listed in table 16. Pursuant to §§ 679.21(b)(1)(i), 679.21(e)(3)(vi), and 679.91(d) through (f), crab and halibut trawl PSC limits assigned to the Amendment 80 sector are then further allocated to Amendment 80 cooperatives as cooperative quota. Crab and halibut PSC cooperative quota assigned to Amendment 80 cooperatives is not allocated to specific fishery categories.

In 2025, there are no vessels in the Amendment 80 limited access sector and there is a single Amendment 80 cooperative. The 2026 PSC allocations between Amendment 80 cooperatives and the Amendment 80 limited access sector will not be known until eligible participants apply for participation in the program by November 1, 2025.

The BSAI ITAC allocation of halibut and crab PSC limits to the PCTC Program is established in § 679.131(c) and (d). The halibut PSC apportioned to the trawl CV sector is 98 percent of the halibut PSC limit apportioned to the BSAI trawl limited access sector's Pacific cod fishery category, and the remaining 2 percent is apportioned to the AFA CP sector. The trawl CV sector apportionment is further allocated to the A and B seasons (95 percent) and the C season (5 percent). The allocation to the trawl CV sector for the A and B season is subject to reductions, currently 25 percent, consistent with § 679.131(c)(1)(iii). The crab PSC apportioned to the trawl CV sector is 90.6 percent of the crab PSC limit apportioned to the BSAI trawl limited access sector's Pacific cod fishery category, and the remaining 9.4 percent is apportioned to the AFA CP sector. The trawl CV sector apportionment is further allocated to the A and B seasons (95 percent) and the C season (5 percent), and the A and B season limit is reduced by 35 percent to determine the overall PCTC Program crab PSC limit. The limits of halibut and crab PSC for the PCTC Program are listed in table 18, and in table 11 for PSC limits for PCTC Program cooperatives.

Sections 679.21(b)(2) and (e)(5) authorize NMFS, after consulting with the Council, to establish seasonal apportionments of halibut and crab PSC limits for the BSAI trawl limited access and non-trawl sectors to maximize the ability of the fleets to harvest the available groundfish TAC and to minimize bycatch. The factors to be considered are: (1) seasonal distribution of prohibited species; (2) seasonal distribution of target groundfish species relative to prohibited species distribution; (3) PSC bycatch needs on a seasonal basis relevant to prohibited species biomass and expected catches of target groundfish species; (4) the expected variations in bycatch rates throughout the year; (5) the expected changes in directed groundfish fishing seasons; 6) the expected start of fishing effort; and (7) economic effects of establishing seasonal prohibited species apportionments on segments of the target groundfish industry. Based on this criteria, the

Council recommended and NMFS approves the seasonal PSC apportionments in tables 18 and 19 to maximize harvest among gear types, fisheries, and seasons while minimizing bycatch of PSC. PSC limits for PCTC Program cooperatives are listed in table 11. PSC limits among the CDQ groups are listed in table 21.

Table 16–Final 2025 and 2026 Apportionment of Prohibited Species Catch Limits to Non-Trawl Gear, the CDQ Program, Amendment 80, and the BSAI Trawl Limited Access Sectors

PSC species and area and zone[1]	Total PSC	Non-trawl PSC	CDQ PSQ reserve[2]	Trawl PSC remaining after CDQ PSQ	Amendment 80 sector[3]	BSAI trawl limited access sector[4]	BSAI PSC limits not allocated to Amendment 80[3]
Halibut mortality (mt) BSAI	3,079	710	315	n/a	1,309	745	n/a
Herring (mt) BSAI	2,651	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Red king crab (animals) Zone 1	97,000	n/a	10,379	86,621	43,293	26,489	16,839
C. opilio (animals) COBLZ	12,850,000	n/a	1,374,950	11,475,050	5,639,987	3,688,081	2,146,982
C. bairdi crab (animals) Zone 1	980,000	n/a	104,860	875,140	368,521	411,228	95,390
C. bairdi crab (animals) Zone 2	2,970,000	n/a	317,790	2,652,210	627,778	1,241,500	782,932

[1] Refer to § 679.2 for definitions of areas and zones. The 2025 prohibited species catch limits are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t, [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2025. The 2026 prohibited species catch limits are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2026, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 18, 2026.

[2] The PSQ reserve for crab species is 10.7 percent of each crab PSC limit.

[3] The BSAI halibut PSC limit for the Amendment 80 sector is determined annually based on the most recent halibut biomass estimates from the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) setline survey index and the NMFS AFSC Eastern Bering Sea shelf trawl survey index (§ 679.21(b)(1)(i)). The Amendment 80 Program reduced apportionment of the trawl PSC limits for crab below the total PSC limit. These reductions are not apportioned to other gear types or sectors.

[4] The Pacific Cod Trawl Cooperative (PCTC) Program reduced the Pacific cod PCTC Program PSC limit for halibut by 25 percent (§ 679.131(c)(1)(iii)). The PCTC Program reduced the Pacific cod PCTC Program PSC limit for crab by 35 percent (§ 679.131(d)(1)(iii)). The PSC limits apply to PCTC Program trawl CVs in the A and B seasons.

Table 17–Final 2025 and 2026 Herring and Red King Crab Savings Subarea Prohibited Species Catch Allowances for all Trawl Sectors

Fishery categories	Herring (mt) BSAI	Red king crab (animals) Zone 1
Yellowfin sole	153	n/a
Rock sole/flathead sole/Alaska plaice/other flatfish [1]	77	n/a
Greenland turbot/arrowtooth flounder/Kamchatka flounder/sablefish	8	n/a
Rockfish	8	n/a
Pacific cod	14	n/a
Midwater trawl pollock	2,359	n/a

Pollock/Atka mackerel/other species[2,3]	31	n/a
Red king crab savings subarea non-pelagic trawl gear[4]	n/a	24,250
Total trawl PSC	2,651	97,000

Note: Species apportionments may not total precisely due to rounding. The 2025 prohibited species catch allowances are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t, [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2025. The 2026 prohibited species catch allowances are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2026, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 18, 2026.

[1]"Other flatfish" for PSC monitoring includes all flatfish species, except for halibut (a prohibited species), Alaska plaice, arrowtooth flounder, flathead sole, Greenland turbot, Kamchatka flounder, rock sole, and yellowfin sole.

[2]Pollock other than midwater trawl pollock, Atka mackerel, and "other species" fishery category.

[3]"Other species" for PSC monitoring includes skates, sharks, and octopuses.

[4]In December 2024, the Council recommended and NMFS approves that the red king crab bycatch limit for non-pelagic trawl fisheries within the Red King Crab Savings Subarea (RKCSS) be limited to 25 percent of the red king crab PSC limit (see § 679.21(e)(3)(ii)(B)(*2*)).

Table 18–Final 2025 and 2026 Prohibited Species Bycatch Allowances for the BSAI Trawl Limited Access Sectors and Pacific Cod Trawl Cooperative Program

BSAI trawl limited access sector fisheries	Prohibited species and area[1]				
	Halibut mortality (mt) BSAI	Red king crab (animals) Zone 1	*C. opilio* (animals) COBLZ	*C. bairdi* (animals)	
				Zone 1	Zone 2
Yellowfin sole	250	23,337	3,521,726	346,228	1,185,500
Rock sole/flathead sole/ Alaska plaice/ other flatfish[2]	-	-	-	-	-
Greenland turbot/ arrowtooth flounder/ Kamchatka flounder/sablefish	-	-	-	-	-
Rockfish April 15-December 31	5	-	2,971	-	1,000
Total Pacific cod[3]	315	2,955	148,531	60,000	50,000
AFA CP Pacific cod	6	278	13,962	5,640	4,700
PCTC Program Pacific cod, January 20-June 10	220	1,653	83,096	33,567	27,973
Trawl CV Pacific cod, June 10-November 1	15	134	6,728	2,718	2,265
PCTC Program unallocated reduction	73	890	44,744	18,075	15,062
Pollock/Atka mackerel/other species[4]	175	197	14,854	5,000	5,000
Total BSAI trawl limited access sector PSC	745	26,489	3,688,081	411,228	1,241,500

Note: Species apportionments may not total precisely due to rounding. The 2025 prohibited species catch allowances are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t, [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2025. The 2026 prohibited species catch allowances are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2026, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 18, 2026.

[1] Refer to § 679.2 for definitions of areas and zones.

[2] "Other flatfish" for PSC monitoring includes all flatfish species, except for halibut (a prohibited species), Alaska plaice, arrowtooth flounder, flathead sole, Greenland turbot, Kamchatka flounder, rock sole, and yellowfin sole.

[3] The Pacific Cod Trawl Cooperative (PCTC) Program further apportioned the BSAI trawl limited access sector's Pacific cod fishery category PSC limits for halibut and crab between AFA CPs, PCTC A and B season for trawl CVs, and the open access C-season for trawl CVs (§ 679.131(c) and (d)). The halibut PSC limits are reduced for the A and B season trawl CV sector by 25 percent each year (§ 679.131(c)(1)(iii)). The crab PSC limits are reduced for the A and B season trawl CV sector by 35 percent each year (§ 679.131(d)(1)(iii)). Any amount of the PCTC Program PSC limit remaining after the B season may be reapportioned to the trawl CV open access fishery in the C season.

[4] "Other species" for PSC monitoring includes skates, sharks, and octopuses.

Table 19–Final 2025 And 2026 Halibut Prohibited Species Bycatch Allowances for Non-Trawl Fisheries

Halibut mortality (mt) BSAI				
Non-trawl fisheries	Seasons	CP	CV	All Non-Trawl
Pacific cod	Total Pacific cod	648	13	661
	January 1-June 10	388	9	n/a
	June 10-August 15	162	2	n/a
	August 15-December 31	98	2	n/a
Non-Pacific cod non-trawl-Total	May 1-December 31	n/a	n/a	49
Groundfish pot and jig	n/a	n/a	n/a	Exempt
Sablefish hook-and-line	n/a	n/a	n/a	Exempt
Total for all non-trawl PSC	n/a	n/a	n/a	710

Note: Seasonal or sector allowances may not total precisely due to rounding. The 2025 prohibited species catch allowances are effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t, [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2025. The 2026 prohibited species catch allowances are effective from 0001 hours, A.l.t., January 1, 2026, through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 18, 2026.

Estimates of Halibut Biomass and Stock Condition

The IPHC annually assesses the abundance and potential yield of the Pacific halibut stock using all available data from the commercial and sport fisheries, other removals, and scientific surveys. Additional information on the Pacific halibut stock assessment may be found in the IPHC's 2024 Pacific halibut stock assessment (December 2024) available on the IPHC website at *https://www.iphc.int*. The IPHC considered the 2024 Pacific halibut stock assessment at its January 2025 annual meeting when it sets the 2025 commercial halibut fishery catch limits.

Halibut Discard Mortality Rates (DMRs)

To monitor halibut bycatch mortality allowances and apportionments, the Regional Administrator uses observed halibut incidental catch rates, DMRs, and

estimates of groundfish catch to project when a fishery's halibut bycatch mortality allowance or seasonal apportionment is reached. Halibut incidental catch rates are based on observed estimates of halibut incidental catch in the groundfish fishery. DMRs are estimates of the proportion of incidentally caught halibut that do not survive after being returned to the sea. The cumulative halibut mortality that accrues to a particular halibut PSC limit is the product of a DMR multiplied by the estimated halibut PSC. DMRs are estimated using the best scientific information available in conjunction with the annual BSAI stock assessment process. The DMR methodology and findings are included as an appendix to the annual BSAI groundfish SAFE report.

In 2016, the DMR estimation methodology underwent revisions per the Council's recommendation. An interagency halibut working group (IPHC, Council, and NMFS staff) developed improved estimation methods that have undergone review by the Plan Team, SSC, and the Council. A summary of the revised methodology is included in the BSAI proposed 2017 and 2018 harvest specifications (81 FR 87863, December 6, 2016), and a comprehensive discussion of the working group's statistical methodology is available from the Council (see **ADDRESSES**). The DMR working group's revised methodology is intended to improve estimation accuracy, transparency, and transferability used for calculating DMRs. The working group will continue to consider improvements to the methodology used to calculate halibut mortality, including potential changes to the reference period (the period of data used for calculating the DMRs). The methodology continues to ensure that NMFS is using DMRs that accurately reflect halibut mortality, which will inform the sectors of their estimated halibut mortality and allow sectors to respond with methods that could reduce mortality and, eventually, the DMR for that sector.

At the October and December 2024 meetings, the SSC, AP, and the Council concurred with the continued use of the revised DMR estimation methodology, and

NMFS adopts for 2025 and 2026 the DMRs calculated under the revised methodology. The final 2025 and 2026 DMRs in this rule are unchanged from the DMRs in the proposed 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications (89 FR 96186, December 4, 2024). Table 20 lists these final 2025 and 2026 DMRs.

Table 20–2025 and 2026 Pacific Halibut Discard Mortality Rates (DMR) for the BSAI

Gear	Sector	Halibut discard mortality rate (percent)
Pelagic trawl	All	100
Non-pelagic trawl	Mothership and CP	86
Non-pelagic trawl	CV	67
Hook-and-line	CV	9
Hook-and-line	CV	9
Pot	All	21

NOTE: The halibut DMRs are effective at 1200 hours, A.l.t., [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 18, 2026.

CDQ Group Quotas

In 2006, Public Law 109-241 amended section 305(i)(1) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (16 U.S.C. 1855(i)). This law specifies the allocation of CDQ groundfish among the six CDQ groups. The six CDQ groups are the Aleutian Pribilof Island Community Development Association (APICDA), Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation (BBEDC), Central Bering Sea Fisherman's Association (CBSFA), Coastal Villages Regional Fund (CVRF), Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (NSEDC), and Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association (YDFDA). NMFS published the CDQ and CDQ PSQ percentages on August 31, 2006 (71 FR 51804, August 31, 2006). The groundfish and PSC amounts for each CDQ group are based on those percentages and applied to the total 2025 CDQ amounts in these harvest specifications. Those amounts for each CDQ group for 2025 are shown in table 21. The amounts for 2026 will be calculated in conjunction with the final 2026 and 2027 harvest specifications.

Table 21–2025 CDQ Program Quota Categories, Target CDQ Reserves, Prohibited Species Quota (PSQ) Reserves, and CDQ Group Quotas

Groundfish CDQ Species	**CDQ Group Quotas**						
Groundfish units are in metric tons.							
Species or Species Group	APICDA	BBEDC	CBSFA	CVRF	NSEDC	YDFDA	Total

BS Pollock A season	8,662.5	12,993.8	3,093.8	14,850.0	13,612.5	8,662.5	61,875
BS Pollock B season	10,587.5	15,881.3	3,781.3	18,150.0	16,637.5	10,587.5	75,625
BS Pollock Total	19,250.0	28,875.0	6,875.0	33,000.0	30,250.0	19,250.0	137,500
AI Pollock	266.0	399.0	95.0	456.0	418.0	266.0	1,900
BS Fixed Gear Sablefish	127.4	169.9	135.9	0.0	152.9	263.4	850
AI Fixed Gear Sablefish	166.7	226.3	35.7	321.6	273.9	166.7	1,191
BS Sablefish	66.9	70.1	28.7	41.4	41.4	70.1	319
AI Sablefish	38.7	29.8	11.9	19.4	17.9	31.3	149
BS Pacific cod	2,208.4	2,993.2	1,266.7	2,562.5	2,554.0	2,710.7	14,295
AI Pacific cod	143.7	194.8	82.4	166.8	166.2	176.4	930
WAI Atka Mackerel	595.7	297.8	158.8	297.8	278.0	357.4	1,986
CAI Atka Mackerel	784.6	392.3	209.2	392.3	366.2	470.8	2,615
EAI/BS Atka Mackerel	1,251.9	626.0	333.8	626.0	584.2	751.1	4,173
Yellowfin Sole	4,044.6	3,466.8	1,155.6	866.7	1,011.2	3,900.2	14,445
Yellowfin Sole ABC reserves	3,782.2	3,265.4	1,092.2	867.2	994.6	3,646.9	13,649
Rock Sole	1,926.0	1,845.8	642.0	882.8	882.8	1,845.8	8,025
Rock Sole ABC reserves	2,118.3	2,030.0	706.1	970.9	970.9	2,030.0	8,826
BS Greenland Turbot	22.7	28.4	11.4	24.2	27.0	28.4	142
Arrowtooth Flounder	329.6	329.6	134.8	194.7	179.8	329.6	1,498
Flathead Sole	770.4	808.9	346.7	577.8	577.8	770.4	3,852
Flathead Sole ABC reserves	1,023.1	1,074.2	460.4	767.3	767.3	1,023.1	5,115
WAI Pacific Ocean Perch	369.2	184.6	98.4	184.6	172.3	221.5	1,231
CAI Pacific Ocean Perch	178.4	89.2	47.6	89.2	83.3	107.1	595
EAI Pacific Ocean Perch	201.5	100.8	53.7	100.8	94.0	120.9	672
PSQ							
Halibut PSQ is in metric tons. Crab and salmon PSQ are in number of animals							
Zone 1 Red King Crab	2,491	2,180	830	1,245	1,245	2,387	10,379
Zone 1 Bairdi Tanner Crab	27,264	25,166	8,389	8,389	8,389	27,264	104,860
Zone 2 Bairdi Tanner Crab	76,270	73,092	25,423	34,957	31,779	76,270	317,790
COBLZ Opilio Tanner Crab	343,738	329,988	109,996	137,495	109,996	343,738	1,374,950
Pacific Halibut	69	69	28	38	38	72	315
BS Chinook Salmon A season	547	820	195	937	859	547	3,906
BS Chinook Salmon B season	139	208	50	238	218	139	990
BS Chinook Salmon total	685	1,028	245	1,175	1,077	685	4,896
AI Chinook Salmon	7	11	3	13	12	7	53
Non-Chinook Salmon	629	944	225	1,079	989	629	4,494

Refer to § 679.2 for definitions of areas and zones.

Directed Fishing Closures

In accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Regional Administrator may establish a DFA for a species or species group if the Regional Administrator determines that any allocation or apportionment of a target species has been or will be reached. If the Regional Administrator establishes a DFA, and that allowance is or will be reached before the end of the fishing year, NMFS will prohibit directed fishing for that species or species group in the specified subarea, regulatory area, or district (see § 679.20(d)(1)(iii)). Pursuant to § 679.21(b)(4) and (e)(7), if the Regional Administrator determines that a fishery category's bycatch allowance of halibut, red king crab, *C. bairdi* crab, or *C. opilio* crab for a specified area has been reached, the Regional Administrator will prohibit directed fishing for each species or species group in that fishery category in the area specified by regulation for the remainder of the season or fishing year.

Based on historical catch patterns and anticipated fishing activity, the Regional Administrator has determined that the groundfish allocation amounts in table 22 will be necessary as incidental catch to support other anticipated groundfish fisheries for the 2025 and 2026 fishing years. Consequently, in accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(i), the Regional Administrator establishes the DFA for the species and species groups in table 22 as zero mt. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.20(d)(1)(iii), NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for these sectors and species or species groups in the specified areas effective at 1200 hours, A.l.t., [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 18, 2026. Also, for the BSAI trawl limited access sector, bycatch allowances of halibut, red king crab, *C. bairdi* crab, and *C. opilio* crab listed in table 22 are insufficient to support directed fisheries for the species and species groups listed in table 22. Therefore, in accordance with § 679.21(b)(4)(i) and (e)(7), NMFS is prohibiting directed fishing for these sectors, species, and fishery categories in the specified areas effective at 1200 hours, A.l.t., [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 18, 2026.

Table 22–2025 and 2026 Directed Fishing Closures[1]

[Groundfish and halibut amounts are in metric tons. Crab amounts are in number of animals.]

Area	Sector	Species	2025 Incidental Catch Allowance	2026 Incidental Catch Allowance
Bogoslof District	All	Pollock	250	250
Aleutian Islands subarea	All	Greenland Turbot	224	177
Aleutian Islands subarea	All	ICA pollock	3,000	3,000
		"Other rockfish"[2]	415	415
Aleutian Islands subarea	Trawl non-CDQ, Non-Amendment 80	Sablefish	1,687	1,581
Eastern Aleutian District/Bering Sea	All	ICA Atka mackerel	800	800
	All	Blackspotted/Rougheye rockfish	347	375
Eastern Aleutian District	All	ICA Pacific ocean perch	100	100
Central Aleutian District	All	ICA Atka mackerel	100	100
		ICA Pacific ocean perch	60	60
Western Aleutian District	All	ICA Atka mackerel	20	20
		ICA Pacific ocean perch	10	10
Western and Central Aleutian Districts	All	Blackspotted/Rougheye rockfish	298	325
Bering Sea subarea	Trawl non-CDQ, non-Amendment 80	Sablefish	3,611	3,823
Bering Sea subarea	All	Pacific ocean perch	8,603	8,419
		"Other rockfish"[2]	415	415
		ICA pollock	46,000	46,000
Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands	All	Shortraker rockfish	402	402
		Skates	23,499	23,499
		Sharks	340	340
		Octopuses	340	340
	Hook-and-line and pot gear	ICA Pacific cod	500	500
	All	ICA flathead sole	2,000	2,000
		ICA rock sole	3,000	3,000
	All	ICA yellowfin sole	2,000	2,000
	BSAI trawl limited access	Rock sole/flathead sole/Alaska plaice/other flatfish fishery category- halibut mortality, red king crab Zone 1, *C. opilio* COBLZ, *C. bairdi* Zone 1 and 2	-	-
		Greenland turbot/arrowtooth flounder/Kamchatka flounder/sablefish fishery category- halibut mortality, red king crab Zone 1, *C. opilio* COBLZ, *C. bairdi* Zone 1 and 2	-	-
		Rockfish fishery category - red king crab Zone 1	-	-

NOTE: The directed fishing closures are effective at 1200 hours, A.l.t., [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 18, 2026.

[1] Maximum retainable amounts may be found in table 11 to 50 CFR part 679.

[2] "Other rockfish" includes all *Sebastes* and *Sebastolobus* species except for dark rockfish, Pacific ocean perch, northern rockfish, blackspotted/rougheye rockfish, and shortraker rockfish.

Closures implemented under the final 2024 and 2025 BSAI harvest specifications for groundfish (89 FR 15484, March 4, 2024) remain effective under authority of these final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications and until the date specified in those closure notifications. Closures are posted at the following website under the Alaska filter for Management Area: *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/rules-and-announcements/bulletins*. While these closures are in effect, the maximum retainable amounts at § 679.20(e) and (f) apply at any time during a fishing trip. These closures to directed fishing are in addition to closures and prohibitions found at 50 CFR part 679. NMFS may implement other closures during the 2025 and 2026 fishing years as necessary for effective conservation and management and consistent with the regulations at 50 CFR part 679.

Listed AFA CP Sideboard Limits

Pursuant to § 679.64(a), the Regional Administrator is responsible for restricting the ability of listed AFA CPs to engage in directed fishing for groundfish species other than pollock to protect participants in other groundfish fisheries from adverse effects resulting from the AFA fishery and from fishery cooperatives in the directed pollock fishery. These restrictions are set out as sideboard limits on catch. On February 8, 2019, NMFS published a final rule (84 FR 2723) that implemented regulations to prohibit non-exempt AFA CPs from directed fishing for all groundfish species or species groups subject to sideboard limits (see § 679.20(d)(1)(iv)(D) and table 54 to 50 CFR part 679). Section 679.64(a)(1)(v) exempts AFA CPs from a yellowfin sole sideboard limit because the final 2026 aggregate ITAC of yellowfin sole assigned to the Amendment 80 sector and BSAI trawl limited access sector is projected to be greater than 125,000 mt. For 2025, the final yellowfin sole ITAC is below 125,000 mt. A sideboard limit will apply in 2025. Section 679.64(a)(1)(iii) sets the procedures for calculating AFA CP sideboards.

The yellowfin sole sideboard limit for AFA CPs is 23 percent of the yellowfin sole TAC after subtracting the CDQ reserve in the BSAI. Therefore, in 2025 the AFA CP yellowfin sole sideboard limit will be 27,728 mt (table 23).

Section 679.64(a)(2) and tables 40 and 41 to 50 CFR part 679 establish a formula for calculating PSC sideboard limits for halibut and crab caught by listed AFA CPs. The basis for these sideboard limits is described in detail in the final rules implementing the major provisions of the AFA (67 FR 79692, December 30, 2002) and Amendment 80 (72 FR 52668, September 14, 2007). PSC species listed in table 23 that are caught by listed AFA CPs participating in any groundfish fishery other than pollock will accrue against the final 2025 and 2026 PSC sideboard limits for the listed AFA CPs. Section 679.21(b)(4)(iii), (e)(3)(v), and (e)(7) authorizes NMFS to close directed fishing for groundfish other than pollock for listed AFA CPs once a final 2025 or 2026 PSC sideboard limit listed in table 23 is reached. Pursuant to § 679.21(b)(1)(ii)(C) and (e)(3)(ii)(C), halibut or crab PSC by listed AFA CPs while fishing for pollock will accrue against the PSC allowances annually specified for the pollock/Atka mackerel/"other species" fishery categories, according to § 679.21(b)(1)(ii)(B) and (e)(3)(iv).

Table 23–Final 2025 and 2026 BSAI AFA Listed CP Prohibited Species and 2025 Yellowfin Sole Sideboard Limits

PSC species and area[1]	Ratio of PSC catch to total PSC	2025 and 2026 PSC available to trawl vessels after subtraction of CDQ PSQ[2]	2025 and 2026 AFA CP sideboard limit[2]
Halibut mortality BSAI	n/a	n/a	286
Red king crab Zone 1	0.0070	86,621	606
C. opilio (COBLZ)	0.1530	11,475,050	1,755,683
C. bairdi Zone 1	0.1400	875,140	122,520
C. bairdi Zone 2	0.0500	2,652,210	132,611
Yellowfin sole[3]	0.2300	120,555	27,728

[1] Refer to § 679.2 for definitions of areas. The AFA listed CP prohibited species sideboard limits are effective at 1200 hours, A.l.t., [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 18, 2026.

[2] Halibut amounts are in metric tons of halibut mortality. Crab amounts are in numbers of animals.

[3] The 2025 AFA listed CP yellowfin sideboard limit is effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t, [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2025. Section 679.64(a)(1)(v) exempts AFA CPs from a yellowfin sole sideboard limit in 2026 because the final 2026

aggregate ITAC of yellowfin sole assigned to the Amendment 80 sector and BSAI trawl limited access sector is projected to be greater than 125,000 mt.

AFA CV Sideboard Limits

Pursuant to § 679.64(b), the Regional Administrator is responsible for restricting the ability of AFA CVs to engage in directed fishing for groundfish species other than pollock to protect participants in other groundfish fisheries from adverse effects resulting from the AFA fishery and from fishery cooperatives in the pollock directed fishery. Section 679.64(b)(3) and (b)(4) and tables 40 and 41 to 50 CFR part 679 establish formulas for setting AFA CV groundfish and halibut and crab PSC sideboard limits for the BSAI. The basis for these sideboard limits is described in detail in the final rules implementing the major provisions of the AFA (67 FR 79692, December 30, 2002), Amendment 80 (72 FR 52668, September 14, 2007), and Amendment 122 (88 FR 53704, August 8, 2023). Section 679.64(b)(6) exempts AFA CVs from a yellowfin sole sideboard limit because the final 2026 aggregate ITAC of yellowfin sole assigned to the Amendment 80 sector and BSAI trawl limited access sector is projected to be greater than 125,000 mt. For 2025, the final yellowfin sole ITAC is below 125,000 mt. A sideboard limit will apply in 2025. Section 679.64(b)(3)(iii) sets the procedures for calculating AFA CV sideboards. The yellowfin sole sideboard limit for AFA CVs is 6.47 percent of the yellowfin sole TAC after subtracting the CDQ reserve for the BSAI. Therefore, in 2025 the AFA CV yellowfin sole sideboard limit will be 7,800 mt (table 24).

On February 8, 2019, NMFS published a final rule (84 FR 2723) that implemented regulations to prohibit non-exempt AFA CVs from directed fishing for a majority of the groundfish species or species groups subject to sideboard limits (see § 679.20(d)(1)(iv)(D) and table 55 to 50 CFR part 679). The only remaining sideboard limit for non-exempt AFA CVs is for Pacific cod. Pursuant to Amendment 122 to the FMP, the Pacific cod sideboard limit is no longer necessary in the A and B seasons

because directed fishing in the BSAI for Pacific cod by trawl CVs is now managed under the PCTC Program, and accordingly the sideboard limit is in effect in the C season only (§ 679.64(b)(3)(ii)). Table 24 lists the final 2025 and 2026 AFA CV groundfish sideboard limits.

Table 24–Final 2025 and 2026 BSAI Pacific Cod and 2025 Yellowfin Sole Sideboard Limits for American Fisheries Act CVs

[Amounts are in metric tons]

Fishery by area/gear/season	Ratio of 1997 AFA CV catch to 1997 TAC	2025 initial TAC for C season	2025 AFA CV sideboard limit	2026 initial TAC for C season	2026 AFA CV sideboard limit
Pacific cod BSAI	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Trawl gear CV	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Jun 10-Nov 1	0.8609	4,212	3,626	3,893	3,351
Yellowfin sole BSAI	0.0647	120,555	7,800	n/a	n/a

Note: The AFA CV Pacific cod sideboard limit is effective at 1200 hours, A.l.t., [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 18, 2026. The 2025 AFA CV yellowfin sole sideboard limit is effective from 1200 hours, A.l.t, [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 2400 hours, A.l.t., December 31, 2025. Section 679.64(b)(6) exempts AFA CVs from a yellowfin sole sideboard limit in 2026 because the final 2026 aggregate ITAC of yellowfin sole assigned to the Amendment 80 sector and BSAI trawl limited access sector is projected to be greater than 125,000 mt.

Halibut and crab PSC limits listed in table 25 that are caught by AFA CVs participating in any groundfish fishery other than pollock will accrue against the final 2025 and 2026 PSC sideboard limits for the AFA CVs. Section 679.21(b)(4)(iii), (e)(3)(v), and (e)(7) authorizes NMFS to close directed fishing for groundfish other than pollock for AFA CVs once a final 2025 or 2026 PSC sideboard limit listed in table 25 is reached. Pursuant to § 679.21(b)(1)(ii)(C) and (e)(3)(ii)(C), halibut or crab PSC by AFA CVs while fishing for pollock will accrue against the PSC allowances annually specified for the pollock/Atka mackerel/"other species" fishery categories under § 679.21(b)(1)(ii)(B) and (e)(3)(iv).

Table 25–Final 2025 and 2026 American Fisheries Act CV Prohibited Species Catch Sideboard Limits for the BSAI[1]

PSC species and area[1]	Target fishery category[2]	AFA CV PSC sideboard limit ratio	2025 and 2026 PSC limit after subtraction of PSQ reserves[3]	2025 and 2026 AFA CV PSC sideboard limit[3]
Halibut	Pacific cod trawl	n/a	n/a	n/a

	Pacific cod hook-and-line or pot	n/a	n/a	2
	Yellowfin sole total	n/a	n/a	101
	Rock sole/flathead sole/Alaska plaice/other flatfish[4]	n/a	n/a	228
	Greenland turbot/arrowtooth flounder/Kamchatka flounder/sablefish	n/a	n/a	-
	Rockfish	n/a	n/a	2
	Pollock/Atka mackerel/other species[5]	n/a	n/a	5
Red king crab Zone 1	n/a	0.2990	86,621	25,900
C. opilio COBLZ	n/a	0.1680	11,475,050	1,927,808
C. bairdi Zone 1	n/a	0.3300	875,140	288,796
C. bairdi Zone 2	n/a	0.1860	2,652,210	493,311

[1] Refer to § 679.2 for definitions of areas. The AFA CV prohibited species sideboard limits are effective at 1200 hours, A.l.t., [*insert date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER*], through 1200 hours, A.l.t., March 18, 2026.

[2] Target trawl fishery categories are defined at § 679.21(b)(1)(ii)(B) and (e)(3)(iv).

[3] Halibut amounts are in metric tons of halibut mortality. Crab amounts are in numbers of animals.

[4] "Other flatfish" for PSC monitoring includes all flatfish species, except for halibut (a prohibited species), Alaska plaice, arrowtooth flounder, flathead sole, Greenland turbot, Kamchatka flounder, rock sole, and yellowfin sole.

[5] "Other species" for PSC monitoring includes skates, sharks, and octopuses.

Response to Comments

NMFS received three letters raising 19 distinct comments during the public comment period for the proposed BSAI groundfish harvest specifications (89 FR 96186, December 4, 2024). NMFS's responses are below.

Comment 1: NMFS must reduce TAC to address food security and ways-of-life for communities reliant on marine resources like salmon.

Response: NMFS acknowledges that there are communities throughout Alaska that are reliant on marine resources like salmon that provide food security and are integral for ways-of-life. However, considering the best scientific information available, NMFS does not agree a reduction in TACs in the BSAI groundfish fisheries is warranted at this time. NMFS's response to Comment 2 comprehensively addresses how NMFS manages to minimize bycatch in the BSAI groundfish fisheries. NMFS's response to Comment 13 explains how changes in TACs are not expected to result in reductions in salmon PSC.

Therefore, we focus our response to this comment on explaining the TAC setting process and why TAC reductions are not warranted at this time.

The annual TAC setting process is a robust, expansive process that involves significant scientific input and includes consideration of current environmental and ecosystem factors (*e.g.*, climate variability) and other marine resources (*e.g.*, salmon and halibut). Scientists from the AFSC prepare the assessment using sophisticated statistical analyses of fish populations and draft the written assessment for a species or species group. The assessments for the BSAI are informed by the most recent survey and harvest data available, including multiple annual surveys in the Eastern Bering Sea (EBS) and biennial surveys in the AI. The stock assessments then undergo rigorous review, during public meetings, by the scientists and resource managers on the Plan Team and SSC.

During this annual TAC setting process, the Plan Team, SSC, AP, and Council review several sources comprising the best scientific information available—the ESRs, Ecosystem and Socioeconomic Profiles (ESP), stock assessments, and Plan Team report—and incorporate them into their OFL, ABC, and TAC recommendations to NMFS. NMFS reviews the same information for its annual decision to implement the OFLs, ABCs, and TACs for BSAI groundfish. Updates on salmon abundance estimates, commercial salmon catch, and the physical environment are included in the ESR and ESP. For an overview of the ESR and ESP, refer to the response to Comment 3.

The stock assessment author and Plan Team make a recommendation for OFL and ABC for each species and species group, and the SSC may concur with this recommendation or make a different recommendation. Ultimately, the SSC recommends the OFL and ABC (*i.e.*, the biological reference points), and, because the TAC cannot exceed the ABC, this informs the setting of the TAC (the harvest target/limit) for each species and species group. (See section 3.2.3.4.1 of the FMP and 50 CFR 600.310(g)(4)).

This ensures that the TAC for each species and species group does not exceed the scientific recommendations for OFL and ABC.

OFL and ABC are calculated using prescribed methods set forth in the FMP. The FMP specifies a series of six tiers to define OFL and ABC amounts based on the level of reliable information available to fishery scientists. Tier 1 represents the highest level of information quality available, while Tier 6 represents the lowest. The methods for calculating OFL and ABC (including the ABC control rule) become more precautionary depending on the tier and stock status: for example, with less reliable information the larger the buffer (reduction) between OFL and ABC, and as stock status declines the OFL and ABC are reduced.

The specification of ABC is informed by the ecosystem, environmental, and socioeconomic factors presented in the ESRs and in the stock assessment, specifically the stock-specific risk table prepared for each stock as well as an additional ecosystem considerations section prepared for full/operational assessments like pollock. For EBS pollock, for example, the ecosystem considerations section of the stock assessment analyzes the fishery's effects on the ecosystem, including assessments of the pollock fishery's bycatch of non-target species like salmon.

The ESRs provide information on the status of PSC species like salmon, halibut, and crab. The 2024 ESRs included information on salmon in the BS ecosystem and AI ecosystem, including a synthesis of the status of adult and juvenile chum, king, and sockeye salmon; updated information on the abundance of salmon; fish condition and trends; trends in the run size of Bristol Bay sockeye salmon; the increasing abundance and role of eastern Kamchatka pink salmon in the Aleutian Islands; and trends in directed commercial catch of salmon. The 2024 EBS ESR also included an overview of foraging and energetics for halibut, and the 2024 AI ESR evaluated changes in the biomass of fish

apex predators, including halibut. The 2024 EBS ESR evaluated trends influencing commercial crab stock biomass (including snow crab).

In short, the annual process for specifying TACs for groundfish in the BSAI is a thorough, scientifically driven process informed by the best available information on the status of target and bycatch species and the marine ecosystems off Alaska, as well as socioeconomic and harvest data. The 2025 and 2026 TACs were developed through this process and account for ecosystem, environmental, and socioeconomic factors, including bycatch of non-target species like salmon. NMFS has therefore determined that the 2025 and 2026 TACs are consistent with the biological condition of groundfish stocks as described in the 2024 SAFE report and are consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other regulations because they are based on the best scientific information available (16 U.S.C. 1851(a)(2); 50 CFR 600.315) and none of the final TACs exceed the final ABCs (16 U.S.C. 1851(a)(1); 50 CFR 600.310). The 2024 SAFE report is available at *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/population-assessments/2024-north-pacific-groundfish-stock-assessments#bering-sea-and-aleutian-islands-stock-assessments*.

The FMP and implementing regulations direct that the sum of the TACs specified for the BSAI "must be within the OY range specified" in regulation, which for the BSAI is 1.4 to 2.0 million mt (§ 679.20(a)(1)(i)(A) and (a)(2)). This OY, which was previously recommended by the Council and approved by NMFS, is set forth in the FMP and in regulation, and is based on the sum of all TACs. NMFS has therefore determined that, in any given year, setting the TACs to fall within the OY range provides the greatest overall benefit to the Nation, particularly with respect to food production and recreational opportunities and taking into account the protection of marine ecosystems and relevant economic, social, or ecological factors (§ 600.310(e)(3)).

For the 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications, NMFS concurs with the Council's recommendation that TACs fall within the upper bound of the OY range (*i.e.,* 2.0 million

mt). Setting TACs to meet the upper bound of the OY range of 2.0 million mt, which represents a 44 percent reduction below the total groundfish ABC, balances relevant National Standard 1 considerations. Setting TACs at the higher bound of the OY will provide the greatest benefit for the Nation based on the benefits of maintaining viable groundfish fisheries and contributions to regional and local economies. The 44 percent reduction from total groundfish ABC recognizes the benefits that flow from that reduction, such as protections afforded to marine ecosystems, forage for ecosystem components, and other ecological factors (see § 600.310(e)(3)(iii)(A)-(B)). For 2025 and 2026, NMFS has specified TACs to sum to the upper end of the OY range, which NMFS has determined is consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and National Standard 1, the FMP, and the harvest strategy analyzed in the Final EIS.

Comment 2: Salmon support Tribal ways-of-life and food security and are important for the cultural well-being of Alaska Native Tribes. NMFS must limit bycatch of salmon and other species to address food security and ways-of-life for communities reliant on marine resources like salmon.

Response: As described above in response to Comment 1, NMFS and the Council considered the status of Chinook and chum salmon and other PSC species like halibut and crab in the harvest specifications process. In addition, the harvest specifications announce bycatch limits for PSC species.

The Chinook bycatch limits are based on promulgated regulations implementing amendments 91 and 110 to the FMP. NMFS and the Council have previously taken comprehensive action through amendments 91 and 110 to the FMP and implementing regulations to reduce salmon bycatch in the pollock trawl fishery because of the potential for negative impacts on salmon stocks. Existing measures have reduced Chinook salmon bycatch in the pollock fishery. For total Chinook bycatch since 1991, see

https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/akro/chinook_salmon_mortality2025.html.

Regulations set limits on how many Chinook salmon can be bycaught in a year in the Bering Sea pollock fishery, and those regulations require that NMFS announce the applicable Chinook salmon limits in the harvest specifications (§ 679.21(f)). Pursuant to § 679.21(f), NMFS annually allocates portions of either 33,318, 45,000, 47,591, or 60,000 Chinook salmon PSC limits among the AFA sectors, depending on: (1) past bycatch performance; (2) whether Chinook salmon bycatch incentive plan agreements (IPAs) are formed and approved by NMFS; and (3) whether NMFS determines it is a low Chinook salmon abundance year (§ 679.21(f)). NMFS will determine that it is a low Chinook salmon abundance year when abundance of Chinook salmon in western Alaska is less than or equal to 250,000 Chinook salmon, based on the estimate provided by the State. The State provides NMFS with an estimate of Chinook salmon abundance using the 3-System Index for western Alaska based on the Kuskokwim, Unalakleet, and Upper Yukon aggregate stock grouping.

For 2024, NMFS has determined it was a low abundance year based on the State's 3-System Index. In accordance with the regulations at § 679.21(f), NMFS has specified a Chinook salmon PSC limit of 45,000 Chinook salmon, and a Chinook salmon bycatch performance standard of 33,318 Chinook salmon for the 2025 fishing year. NMFS publishes the approved IPAs, allocations, and reports at *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/bycatch/chinook-salmon-bycatch-management-alaska*. Bycatch of salmon is posted on the NMFS website at *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/commercial-fishing/fisheries-catch-and-landings-reports-alaska* (under BSAI Prohibited Species).

For each fishing year, the Bering Sea pollock fleet is constrained by the limit of Chinook salmon PSC set in regulation (as explained above), regardless of the size of the

pollock TAC and harvest. The AFA sectors are prohibited from continuing to fish if their Chinook salmon PSC limit has been exceeded. Further, if the sector exceeds its performance standard in 3 of 7 years, that sector becomes constrained by the performance standard in future years (meaning, the sector would be subject to a lower PSC limit in future years).

Regulations set limits on Chinook salmon PSC for the AI pollock fishery and non-Chinook salmon PSC for vessels using trawl gear (§ 679.21(f)(14) and (g)). These are static limits set in regulations and are included in the groundfish harvest specifications each year. Regulations also set limits on halibut PSC in the groundfish fisheries. Section 679.21(b)(1) establishes a fixed halibut PSC limit of 745 mt for the BSAI trawl limited access sector. The Council and NMFS apportion for seven trawl fishery categories a PSC allowance from the fixed limit of 745 mt. Halibut PSC in the pollock fisheries accrues to a specific fishery category—the pollock/Atka mackerel/other species fishery category—as specified in regulations. For 2025 and 2026, the halibut PSC allowance for the pollock/Atka mackerel/other species fishery category is 175 mt (see table 18). Regulations also set limits on crab PSC. These limits are based on the abundance of crab from the most recent survey data such that limits decrease as abundance decreases (§ 679.21(e)(1)). Each year NMFS determines which of the regulatory limits applies based on the most recent survey data and announces the limits in the groundfish harvest specifications (see table 16 for final 2025 PSC limits for red king crab, snow crab (*C. opilio*), and Tanner crab (*C. bairdi*)). These specifications apportion the crab limits set in regulation amongst some target fisheries, but the overall limits of crab PSC are set by regulation and survey results.

Ultimately, NMFS manages bycatch in the pollock fishery through a variety of tools that apply at all levels of pollock TAC. The tools for bycatch include the Chinook salmon PSC limits (which are announced in these annual harvest specifications), halibut

and crab PSC limits set in regulation (which are also announced in these annual harvest specifications), IPAs to address Chinook and chum bycatch, and a comprehensive monitoring program to collect data on bycatch, including salmon, halibut, and crab bycatch. The information from this monitoring program is used to estimate bycatch, including how many Chinook and chum salmon are caught as bycatch from trawl vessels, where those fish originated from, and whether a potential violation of law occurred.

NMFS acknowledges the western Alaska salmon crisis and the impact it is having on Tribal ways-of-life, cultural well-being, and food security throughout western Alaska. Science indicates climate change as the primary driver of poor chum salmon returns in western Alaska. Scientists from NMFS and the State found that recent heat wave events created conditions where energy allocation and prey quality was affected and added stress to western Alaska chum salmon at critical life stages (see Farley, Jr., *et al.*, 2024; *https://www.int-res.com/abstracts/meps/v726/p149-160*). A recent technical report for the North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission expanded further and considered the role of heatwaves in overwinter survival for chum salmon (see Farley, Jr., *et al.*, 2025; *https://www.npafc.org/tr23-24/*). For other species like Chinook salmon, climate change is also an important driver of poor salmon returns in western Alaska and demographic shifts also appear important (see Feddern, *et al.*, 2024; *https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39377278/*; *see also* Howard & von Biela, 2023; *https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36661402/*). Scientists from NMFS will continue to study the impacts of climate change on salmon. The Council and NMFS will also continue to consider the status of salmon in the harvest specifications process; the 2024 EBS ESR, for example, provided a summary and synthesis on chum, Chinook, and sockeye salmon, including the different species' responses to climate conditions.

NMFS also recognizes that salmon bycatch may be a contributing factor to the current status of salmon in western Alaska. As discussed in the response to Comment 13,

the best scientific evidence indicates that the numbers of the ocean bycatch that would have returned to western Alaska rivers would be relatively small due to ocean mortality and the large number of other river systems, and hatchery production, contributing to the total Chinook or chum salmon bycatch.

NMFS and the Council are committed to continued improvements in bycatch management with a goal of minimizing bycatch at all levels of abundance for target species (*e.g.*, pollock) and PSC species (e.g., halibut, salmon). For example, in 2023 NMFS approved Amendment 123 to the FMP and implementing regulations (see *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/amendment-123-fishery-management-plan-groundfish-bering-sea-and-aleutian-islands*). Amendment 123 changed the PSC limit for the Amendment 80 sector from a static limit to an abundance-based limit. The halibut PSC limit for the Amendment 80 sector is now determined annually based on the most recent halibut biomass estimates from the IPHC setline survey index and the NMFS AFSC Eastern Bering Sea shelf trawl survey index. More details are provided in the earlier section *PSC Limits for Halibut, Salmon, Crab, and Herring.*

Currently, NMFS and the Council are engaged in a comprehensive process to evaluate existing measures and develop alternatives to further reduce chum salmon bycatch. The Council and NMFS most recently considered management measures for chum salmon bycatch at a February 2025 special meeting of the Council (see Agenda Item C2 at *https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/3071*). The proposed management measures (meaning, changes to existing federal regulations) aim to reduce chum salmon bycatch in the pollock fishery, particularly Western Alaska chum salmon bycatch. The range of management alternatives being considered includes limits or "caps" on the number of chum salmon that may be caught in the pollock fishery and closure of all or part of the Bering Sea to pollock fishing once a cap is met, as well as changes to the

IPAs. More information on salmon bycatch and management can be found at *https://www.npfmc.org/fisheries-issues/bycatch/salmon-bycatch/*.

However, the PSC limits and the conditions that affect the limits are set in regulations, and changes to those regulations are outside of the scope of the annual harvest specification process. NMFS believes that changes to bycatch management of all prohibited species, including Chinook salmon, chum salmon, halibut, and crab, are best accomplished through the Council process to recommend FMP amendments and regulations that NMFS would implement if consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the FMP, and other applicable law.

Comment 3: Management of fisheries, including TAC setting and PSC limits, should incorporate information on the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands ecosystems, which are undergoing changes.

Response: Current processes and protocols incorporate ecosystem information into fisheries management, including the specification of TACs for BSAI groundfish. The annual process for specifying TACs for groundfish in the BSAI is a scientifically-driven process informed by the best available information on the status of the marine ecosystems off Alaska. Each year, ESRs are prepared for the BS and AI ecosystems (as well as the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) ecosystem). The intent of the ESRs is to provide the Plan Team, SSC, AP, Council, and NMFS, as well as the public, with a broad overview of the current status of the marine ecosystems. The ESRs are drafted by scientists and staff from NOAA, other federal and state agencies, academic institutions, Tribes, and non-profits, and they compile and summarize information about the status of the Alaska marine ecosystems and represent the best scientific information available. The ESRs include information on the physical environment and oceanography, climate data, biological data, marine resources, and socio-ecological dimensions to provide context for the specification of OFL, ABC, and TAC.

For example, the 2024 ESR for the EBS includes: 1) a synthesis of the physical environment (*e.g.*, air and water temperatures, marine heatwaves, winds, sea ice, and cold pool); 2) an analysis of primary production including status, trends, and implications across the ecosystem (*e.g.*, phytoplankton and zooplankton like copepods); 3) an analysis of groundfish condition (such as length and weight), body condition of some species like pollock, seasonal food habits and patterns in foraging, natural mortality, and recruitment predictions based on environmental variables like temperature and nutrients; 4) an analysis of status, trends, and implications across the ecosystem for benthic communities and for non-target species and discards (*e.g.*, jellyfish, forage fish, herring, salmon, and crab) (see responses to Comment 1 and 2 for more details on salmon and crab); 5) integrated information on seabirds, like breeding and reproductive success for seabirds across the EBS (such as common murres), mortality, and implications across the ecosystem, seabird bycatch estimates, and marine mammal stranding reports; 6) emerging stressors (*e.g.*, ocean acidification, harmful algal blooms); and 7) other ecosystem and community indicators like stability of fish biomass as well as a sustainability index. The AI ESR includes similar information. Many of the sections of the respective ESRs outline trends and implications from the changes across the ecosystem and offer linkages across ecosystem variables. The 2024 ESRs are available at *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/ecosystems/ecosystem-status-reports-gulf-alaska-bering-sea-and-aleutian-islands#2024-alaska-marine-ecosystem-status-reports*.

Information from the ESRs are integrated in stock assessments, primarily through the risk tables that are prepared for each stock. The risk table includes evaluation of four considerations: 1) assessment-related; 2) population dynamics; 3) environmental/ecosystem; and 4) fishery performance. The risk table is meant to inform the specification of ABC by accounting for additional scientific uncertainty that is not addressed in the stock assessment model used to calculate OFL and ABC based on the

stock's tier and the corresponding OFL and ABC control rules in the FMP. Because TAC cannot exceed ABC, reductions in ABC based on the risk table result in additional precaution in the catch limits for groundfish of the BSAI. The risk table can highlight changes in ecosystem conditions for consideration in specifying ABC. For example, in last year's EBS pollock SAFE report (2023), the risk table assessed several environmental and ecosystem considerations that warranted an elevated level of concern (including environmental/oceanographic factors related to climate, low levels of prey, and mixed trends in the status of potential competitors like jellyfish and salmon), and the SSC adopted a reduction of 18 percent for the ABC for EBS pollock for last year's specifications based on the elevated environmental and ecosystem risk identified in the 2023 stock assessment (for the final SSC report for the December 2023 Council meeting, see *https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=f7e6149f-a0d5-496f-a64c-63077eb2165e.pdf&fileName=SSC%20Report%20Dec%202023_FINAL.pdf*).

Some stock assessments also include an individual ESP. The ESP was developed as a framework for organizing and evaluating ecosystem and socioeconomic information about an individual stock. The ESP informs environmental and ecosystem considerations, population dynamics, and fisheries performance in the risk table. For example, the ESP for EBS Pacific cod assesses ecosystem indicators that include physical indicators, lower tropic indicators, and upper trophic indicators; for ecosystem indicators, the ESP also assesses the relationship between each indicator and parameters in the EBS Pacific cod stock assessment (like natural mortality, growth, and recruitment). The 2024 ESP for EBS Pacific cod is available at *https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/SAFE/2024/ESPpcod_app2.pdf*.

Stock assessment authors consider a variety of ecosystem-related factors when preparing their assessments, which are thoroughly reviewed by the Plan Team and the SSC through a public process. Stock assessment authors will include, if possible, relevant

ecosystem-related factors into their modeling. Many models use variables that are potentially ecosystem-related, climate-impacted like size and condition of fish (*i.e.*, length and weight) and recruitment, and some models integrate specific environmental factors that have been influenced by climate variability, such as the extent of the cold pool and bottom temperature in the survey area.

The information from the ESRs, stock assessments, and ESPs allows the Plan Team, SSC, AP, Council, and NMFS to respond to ecosystem changes and stock changes in the BSAI and to adjust the harvest specifications as necessary. This is consistent with the FMP and the preferred harvest strategy analyzed in the Final EIS and implemented each year for the harvest specifications. The Final EIS contemplated that ABCs could be reduced based on ecosystem considerations (Chapter 11 of Final EIS). The harvest strategy is designed such that the most recent information would be used each year in setting the annual harvest specification. The process is flexible to incorporate current information on stock condition and harvest and environmental, ecosystem, and socioeconomic factors (*e.g.*, physical and ecosystem changes associated with climate variability). Similarly, the FMP contemplates ongoing consideration of relevant factors (*e.g.*, ecosystem considerations and climate variability) through the development of SAFE reports (section 3.2.2.2 of the FMP). The use of the most recent, best available information in the SAFE reports allows the Council and NMFS to respond to changes in stock condition and harvest and environmental, ecosystem, and socioeconomic factors in the BSAI and to adjust the harvest specifications as appropriate, which is also consistent with National Standard 2 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act to use the best scientific information available (16 U.S.C. 1851(a)(2)).

The ESRs compile the best scientific information available on the status of the Alaska ecosystems to provide context for the annual groundfish harvest specifications. Some indicators, such as seabird mortality events, marine mammal unusual mortality

events, and climate-driven changes to fish species other than groundfish, warrant continuing examination of the changing ecosystem in relation to the health of groundfish stocks. When the condition of groundfish and the abundance of their stocks remain healthy, NMFS must assess all of the best scientific information available, consistent with National Standard 2, for specifying TACs for groundfish. And, NMFS remains committed to supporting science and research to continue to improve the process of effective ecosystem-based management by refining the existing tools (like ESRs and risk tables) and developing new tools for incorporating ecosystem and socioeconomic information into fisheries management decisions.

As noted in response to Comment 2, PSC limits and the conditions that affect the limits are set in regulations, and changes to those regulations are outside of the scope of the annual harvest specification process.

Comment 4: The Alaska Groundfish Harvest Specifications Final EIS is outdated and NMFS must prepare a new or supplemental EIS on the harvest specifications. New species listings and critical habitat designations, climate change (including changes such as marine heatwaves), vessel strikes and disturbance, entanglement, habitat impacts including pelagic trawl bottom contact, prey competition, bycatch of salmon and hatchery production of pink salmon, and plastics constitute significant new or cumulative information requiring supplementation. Supplementation is also necessary due to new information on salmon populations and changes in body size, poor body conditions in fish, low productivity for some species, mixed benthic productivity, low abundance of large copepods, the poor status of the Bering Sea snow crab stock, mixed success for seabirds, and declining apex predator counts.

Response: Groundfish harvests are managed subject to annual limits on the retained and discarded amounts of each species and species group. The "harvest strategy" is the method used to calculate these annual limits, referred to as "harvest specifications,"

and the process of establishing them is referred to as the "specifications process." NMFS prepared the Alaska Groundfish Harvest Specifications Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) to analyze the environmental, social, and economic impacts of alternative harvest strategies used to determine the annual harvest specifications for the federally managed groundfish fisheries in the GOA and BSAI management areas.

The purpose of the harvest strategy is to: 1) provide for orderly and controlled commercial fishing for groundfish; 2) promote sustainable incomes to the fishing, fish processing, and support industries; 3) support sustainable fishing communities; and 4) provide sustainable flows of fish products to consumers. The harvest strategy balances groundfish harvest in the fishing year with ecosystem needs (*e.g.*, non-target fish stocks, marine mammals, seabirds, and habitat). Importantly, the harvest strategy and specification process are designed to use the best available scientific information developed each year through the annual SAFE (including the ESR process) to calculate the status determination criteria, assess the status of each stock, and set the TACs.

In the Record of Decision (ROD), NMFS selected one of the alternative harvest strategies: to set TACs that fall within the range of ABCs recommended through the harvest specifications process that includes review by the Plan Team and SSC. NMFS concluded that the preferred harvest strategy analyzed in the Final EIS and selected in the ROD provides the best balance among relevant environmental, social, and economic considerations and allows for continued management of the groundfish fisheries based on the most recent, best scientific information. While the specific numbers that the harvest strategy produces may vary from year to year, the methodology used for the preferred harvest strategy remains constant. NMFS has not changed the harvest strategy or specifications process from what was analyzed in the Final EIS.

The harvest strategy employs the same process each year but is designed to consider the most current stock and ecosystem conditions so that the outputs of the

process (OFLs, ABCs, and TACs) are adaptive and reflective of current conditions. Each year the strategy uses the best scientific information available in the annual SAFE reports to derive the annual harvest specifications for OFLs, ABCs, and TACs. Through this process, each year, the Council's Groundfish Plan Teams use updated stock assessments based on survey results and other biological data to calculate biomass, OFLs, and ABCs for each species and species group for specified management areas. The OFLs and ABCs are published with the harvest specifications, and provide the foundation for the Council and NMFS to develop the TACs. The OFLs and ABCs reflect fishery science, applied in light of the requirements of the FMPs. The Council uses the AP report as a basis for TAC recommendations, which are consistent with the SSC's OFL and ABC recommendations (*i.e.*, the TAC recommendations cannot exceed the SSC's ABC recommendations, and ABCs cannot exceed OFLs).

The Final EIS evaluated the consequences of alternative harvest strategies on ecosystem components and on the ecosystem as a whole. The Final EIS evaluated the alternatives for their effects within the action area. The environmental consequences of each alternative were considered for target species, non-specified species, forage species, prohibited species, marine mammals, seabirds, Essential Fish Habitat, ecosystem relationships, the economy, and environmental justice. These considerations were evaluated based on the conditions as they existed at the time the Final EIS was developed, but the Final EIS also anticipated potential changes in these conditions, including climate variability, could be incorporated, as appropriate, through the annual implementation of the harvest strategy. Each year since 2007 NMFS has considered relevant changes (*i.e.*, new information, changed circumstances, potential changes to the action) for the primary purpose of evaluating the need to supplement the Final EIS.

Agencies should prepare supplements to either draft or final environmental impact statements if a major federal action is incomplete or ongoing and: (i) the agency makes

substantial changes to the proposed action that are relevant to environmental concerns; or (ii) there are substantial or significant new circumstances or information about the significance of adverse effects that bear on the analysis (Marsh v. Oregon Nat. Res. Council, 490 U.S. 360, 371-373 (1989); 40 CFR 1502.9(d)(1)). Ultimately, an agency is required to take a 'hard look' at the new information to assess whether supplementation might be necessary (*Norton v. S. Utah Wilderness All.*, 542 U.S. 55, 72-73 (2004)).

NMFS prepares a SIR for the Final EIS each year to take that "hard look" and document the evaluation and decision whether a supplemental EIS (SEIS) is necessary to implement the annual groundfish harvest specifications, consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and NOAA's Policy and Procedures for Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act and Related Authorities, Companion Manual for NOAA Administrative Order 216-6A. The Companion Manual authorizes NMFS's use of a SIR to document a review of new information or circumstances and determine the sufficiency of the existing NEPA analysis for implementing a component or step of the action analyzed in the existing analysis.

The SIR prepared each year for the annual harvest specifications analyzes the information contained in the most recent SAFE reports and all information available to NMFS and the Council to determine whether a SEIS must be prepared to implement the annual harvest specifications. The SAFE reports represent the best scientific information available for the harvest specifications. Included in the SAFE reports are the groundfish stock assessments and any ESPs, the ESRs, and the Economic Status Report. To date, no annual SIR to the Final EIS has concluded that a SEIS is necessary.

The SIR recognizes the preferred harvest strategy analyzed in the Final EIS and selected in the ROD was built on an annual process to compile and utilize the most recent, best scientific information available on species abundance and condition, harvest and survey data, environmental and ecosystem factors, and socio-economic conditions.

The Final EIS contemplates that the annual process was built on flexibility to allow for the implementation of annual harvest specifications that reflect new information and changing circumstances in the context of the considerations in the Final EIS. NMFS has determined that the 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications for the BSAI and GOA are consistent with the preferred alternative harvest strategy analyzed in the Final EIS because they were developed through the harvest specifications process, are within the OYs established for the BSAI and the GOA, and do not set TAC to exceed the ABC for any single species or species group.

The 2025 SIR assesses new information and circumstances. Based on the 2025 SIR, NMFS concluded that the best available, most recent information presented on species abundance and condition, harvest and survey data, environmental and ecosystem factors, and socio-economic conditions and used to set the 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications does not represent a significant change relative to the environmental impacts of the preferred harvest strategy analyzed in the Final EIS.

The Final EIS identifies reasonably foreseeable future actions, which inform the analysis in the SIR regarding new circumstances when relevant and which include catch share management, traditional fisheries management tools, ecosystem-sensitive management, and actions by other federal, state, and international agencies and private actions. The 2025 SIR assesses relevant information and circumstances regarding: 1) bycatch management of salmon, crab, and halibut; 2) habitat impacts; 3) seabirds; and 4) marine mammals, including Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed species like Steller sea lions, humpback whales, and fin whales, and unlisted species like northern fur seals, gray whales, and killer whales. In this assessment, the SIR relies on the 2024 SAFE reports, other analyses prepared to support NMFS management actions, updated catch and bycatch data, and other best available scientific information to conclude any new information and circumstances do not present a seriously different picture of the likely

environmental harms of the action to occur—the annual implementation of the 2025 and 2026 groundfish harvest specifications—beyond what was considered in the Final EIS. More details are provided in the SIR (see **ADDRESSES**). Based on the SIR prepared in conjunction with these harvest specifications, NMFS determined that the 2025 and 2026 groundfish harvest specifications do not constitute a substantial change in the proposed action analyzed in the Final EIS and will not affect the human environment in a significant manner or to a significant extent not already considered in the Final EIS.

In sum, a new EIS is not necessary for NMFS to approve and implement the 2025 and 2026 groundfish harvest specifications for the BSAI and GOA because NMFS implements the specifications each year based on the harvest strategy analyzed as an alternative in the Final EIS and selected in the ROD. In short, NMFS already prepared an EIS that supports these final groundfish harvest specifications. And, NMFS has taken a "hard look" and determined, as documented in the SIR, that supplementation of the Final EIS is not required for NMFS to approve and implement the 2025 and 2026 groundfish harvest specifications for the BSAI and GOA.

Comment 5: NMFS should develop a programmatic EIS or otherwise supplement the Alaska Groundfish Programmatic Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement.

Response: As outlined in response to Comment 4, NMFS prepared the Alaska Groundfish Harvest Specifications Final EIS to analyze alternatives to implement the FMPs' harvest strategy and specifications process that is used to determine the annual harvest specifications for the federally-managed groundfish fisheries in the GOA and BSAI management areas. Separate from the Final EIS for the Alaska Groundfish Harvest Specifications, NMFS and the Council prepared the 2004 Alaska Groundfish Programmatic Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (PSEIS). The PSEIS evaluated alternative policies and objectives for the management of the groundfish fisheries in the BSAI and GOA. The action analyzed in the PSEIS is different from the

action analyzed in the Alaska Groundfish Harvest Specifications Final EIS, and as explained above NMFS implements the harvest specifications consistent with the Final EIS analyzing that action. This is consistent with actions taken since the PSEIS that rely on stand-alone NEPA analyses separate from the PSEIS for their implementation. In addition to the preparation of the Alaska Groundfish Harvest Specifications Final EIS in 2007, since the 2004 PSEIS the Council and NMFS have prepared the appropriate NEPA analyses for FMP amendments and regulatory changes to support the implementation of those specific FMP or regulatory changes. For examples, NMFS analyzed FMP and regulatory changes to amend PSC limits for salmon and halibut in separate EIS documents, including the EIS for amendment 91 to the FMP (salmon PSC limits) and the EIS for amendment 123 to the FMP (halibut PSC limit for the Amendment 80 sector). For the reasons outlined above, whether supplementation of the PSEIS is required is outside of the scope of this final rule to implement the groundfish harvest specifications for the BSAI.

NMFS further notes that the Council and NMFS have been considering a new action to revise the management policies, objectives, and goals for the groundfish fisheries, as well as for all Council-managed fisheries, off Alaska, and have considered this action could be evaluated through a Programmatic EIS. In June 2023, the Council requested that NMFS initiate the development of a Programmatic EIS to analyze alternatives for the revisions of policies, objectives, and goals for all Council-managed fisheries and solicit public input on the action. At its February 2024 meeting, the Council addressed the process for the development of a new Programmatic EIS to evaluate its action alternatives for management policies, objectives, and goals for fisheries off Alaska. In response to public testimony at that meeting from some Tribal groups and some stakeholders, the Council decided to delay action on the programmatic evaluation

of management policies to allow for pre-scoping activities and Tribal consultations to receive input to further develop alternatives prior to formal scoping.

NMFS and the Council have continued to make progress since February 2024 on this programmatic evaluation while also respecting input from Tribes and other stakeholders to delay action. Following the February 2024 Council meeting, NMFS held a number of engagement sessions with Alaska Native Tribes to provide an overview of the programmatic evaluation and process for revisions to Council management policies, goals, and objectives and to solicit feedback from Tribes. In conjunction with the Council meeting in June 2024, the Council held a Climate Scenarios Workshop in part to gather ideas and input that could inform potential management changes. The Council has continued to engage in climate readiness planning discussions and receive reports and updates at its meetings that could inform potential management policies, goals, and objectives related to this action.

The Council is currently scheduled to consider the programmatic evaluation at the April 2025 meeting. At this early stage of the process, the Council and NMFS do not know precisely what action alternatives might be included as part of the programmatic evaluation and whether or how it might affect the harvest strategy analyzed in the Final EIS for the Alaska Groundfish Harvest Specifications. There will be continued opportunities for the public to engage and provide comments on alternatives for analysis for the programmatic evaluation of potential revisions to Council management policies, goals, and objectives.

Comment 6: NMFS must account for climate change in its decision-making. There has been significant warming in the Arctic and marine heatwaves. NMFS should look at implications from the loss of sea ice and impacts of a changing climate on fish populations. There have been a number of studies on these changes in the marine ecosystem and impacts to fish, crabs, seabirds, marine mammals, and other species in the

ecosystem (including poor body conditions in fish, impacts to salmon and body size and condition, low productivity for some species, mixed benthic productivity, low abundance of large copepods, the poor status of the Bering Sea snow crab stock, mixed success for seabirds, declining apex predator counts, and impacts to humpback whales, Steller sea lions, and gray whales).

Response: NMFS's decision-making on the annual implementation of the harvest specifications accounts for changes in the environment, including climate data, consistent with the harvest strategy in the FMP and analyzed in the Final EIS. The Final EIS analyzed alternatives for an implementing framework for the BSAI and GOA harvest strategy and evaluated the potential effects of those alternatives on the human environment (see responses to Comments 3 and 4). The Final EIS examined existing physical and oceanographic conditions in the BSAI and GOA, and addressed climate and ecological regime shifts, warming and loss of sea ice, and acidification (see Chapter 3.5 of the Final EIS), as well as systemic ecosystem impacts (see Chapter 11 of the Final EIS).

Moreover, the framework process for the preferred harvest strategy under the Final EIS allows for the effects of climate variability to be considered in the annual process for setting the harvest specifications. As addressed in response to Comment 3, the annual ESRs are part of the SAFE reports that the Council and the Plan Teams, SSC, and AP annually review prior to the review of the stock assessments and advancing recommendations to NMFS for the annual OFLs, ABCs, and TACs. The purpose of the ESRs is to provide the Council, scientific community, and the public, as well as NMFS, with annual information about ecosystem status and trends, and they include physical oceanography, biological data, and socio-ecological dimensions, primarily collected from AFSC surveys with collaboration from a range of government and non-government partners. The ESRs provide the scientific review body (the SSC) with context for the

annual biological reference points (OFLs and ABCs), and for the Council's final TAC recommendations for groundfish, which are constrained by those biological reference points. Information from the ESRs are also integrated into the annual harvest recommendations through inclusion in stock assessment-specific risk tables. There are many examples of climate data and variability considerations presented in the ESRs, including: 1) physical indicators and oceanographic metrics (*e.g.*, sea surface and bottom temperatures, marine heatwaves, and sea-ice and cold pool extents); 2) impacts from oceanographic changes (*e.g.*, changes in sea ice and cold pool extents resulting in distributional shifts (northward) in stocks); 3) metabolic demands and foraging conditions tied to declining conditions for groundfish during recent marine heatwaves; 4) impacts of anomalously warm conditions in the marine and river environments on juveniles and adults of certain salmon stocks; and 5) emerging stressors like ocean acidification and implications for species (*e.g.*, crab). More details on climate related considerations summarized in the ESRs can be found in the ESRs for the EBS, AI, and GOA at *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/ecosystems/ecosystem-status-reports-gulf-alaska-bering-sea-and-aleutian-islands*.

In past years, the Plan Teams and SSC have recommended ABC reductions based on environmental and ecosystem considerations. As explained in response to Comment 3, stock assessments use a stock-assessment specific risk table that is applied by evaluating the severity of four types of considerations (*i.e.*, assessment-related, population dynamics, environmental/ecosystem, and fishery performance) that could be used to support a scientific recommendation to reduce the ABC. These risk tables are now prepared as part of the stock assessment process for groundfish stocks and help inform the setting of ABC (which in turn informs the setting of TAC). These risk tables summarize scientific uncertainty that is not otherwise captured in the application of the tier system and control rules to calculate ABCs in the assessments, including assessment-

related considerations. In 2023, based on current information from the stock assessments, the condition of every stock was within two standard deviations of the long term mean condition (with the exception of northern rock sole); similarly, in 2024, the condition of every species fell within a single standard deviation of the long term mean. For some fishes, such as large pollock and yellowfin sole, conditions increased in the past year.

Finally, the FMP indicated that the ongoing consideration of ecosystem and ecological factors like climate variability would be addressed annually in the SAFE reports. (See sections 3.2.2.2 and 3.2.3.1.2 of the FMP), as is currently the case with both individual stock assessments and the ESRs. As a result, the annual harvest specifications process, which implements the preferred harvest strategy under the Final EIS, allows for the consideration of the best scientific information available on climate variability and associated effects on fish populations (16 U.S.C. 1851(a)(2)).

Comment 7: The BSAI groundfish specifications are based upon a rigorous public process that includes the best available science when setting OFLs, ABCs and TACs, including climatic, ecosystem, and socioeconomic data and analyses. TAC setting includes consideration of socioeconomic dimensions. This process combined with statutorily mandated limits results in a very conservative and precautionary final result.

Response: NMFS agrees with this comment. For more details on the groundfish harvest specifications process, see responses to Comments 1, 2, 3, and 4. As noted by the commenter, the process is driven by statutory and regulatory requirements. The Magnuson-Stevens Act directs that the Council's recommended annual catch limits (ACL) cannot "exceed the fishing level recommendations of its [SSC]" (16 U.S.C. 1852(h)(6)). NMFS has interpreted "fishing level recommendation" to be the ABC recommendation from the SSC (§ 600.310(b)(2)(v)(D)). This ensures that the ACL does not exceed the ABC developed by the SSC. Under the FMP, the ACL is equal to the ABC, and the annual TAC specified for each stock must be lower than or equal to the

ABC. (See sections 3.2.3.3.2 and 3.2.3.4 of the FMP). This is in accord with National Standard 1 and regulations that the TAC cannot exceed the ABC/ACL (§ 600.310(g)(4)), and ABC cannot exceed OFL (§ 600.310(f)(3) and (4)). The SSC recommends for each species and species group an OFL and an ABC. NMFS specifies TAC after consultation with the Council, and annual determinations of TAC are based on review of both the biological condition of the specific species or species group and socioeconomic considerations that are consistent with the goals of the groundfish FMPs (§ 679.20(a)(2) and (3)). These socioeconomic considerations include the need to promote efficiency in the utilization of fishery resources, including minimizing costs; the need to manage for the optimum marketable size of a species; the impact of groundfish harvests on prohibited species and the domestic target fisheries that utilize these species; the desire to enhance depleted stocks; the seasonal access to the groundfish fishery by domestic fishing vessels; the commercial importance of a fishery to local communities; the importance of a fishery to subsistence users; and the need to promote utilization of certain species.

In the BSAI, the sum of all TACs exceeds the sum of all ABCs (for 2025, the sum of final ABCs is 3,588,065 mt, and final TACs is 2,000,000 mt, a reduction of 44 percent). As a result, TACs for pollock and other species are often set lower than the ABC to ensure the sum of all TACs falls within the OY range (see § 679.20(a)(1)(i)(A) and (a)(2)). While there is precaution built into the specification of each ABC (a reduction from OFL, representing scientific uncertainty) and TAC (a reduction from ABC, representing management uncertainty) for each species or species group (see responses to Comments 1, 3, and 8), the OY range is constraining and also precautionary across the ecosystem in the BSAI. Fishery removals (TAC) are reduced from the ABC so as not to exceed OY and therefore also reduce impacts to the ecosystem from fishing for groundfish species.

Comment 8: NMFS should act with more precaution in specifying TACs. One study shows stock assessment models may be underestimating risk.

Response: As explained in response to Comments 1, 3, and 7, there is precaution built in throughout the harvest strategy and annual stock assessment process for specifying OFLs, ABCs, and TACs for Alaska groundfish stocks that addresses uncertainty and risk. First, OFL and ABC are calculated using prescribed methods set forth in the FMP. These methods become more precautionary depending on the tier and stock status: for example, with less reliable information the larger the buffer (reduction) between OFL and ABC, and as stock status declines the OFL and ABC are reduced. Precaution built into the specification of OFL and ABC also influences TAC as TAC cannot exceed ABC and ABC cannot exceed OFL. Second, risk tables are a new tool prepared for Alaska groundfish stocks to specifically address uncertainty across four considerations (which includes assessment-related concerns and risks). These risk tables are prepared for each stock assessment and inform the specification of ABC by accounting for additional scientific uncertainty that is not addressed in the stock assessment model that is used to calculate OFL and ABC based on the stock's tier and the corresponding OFL and ABC control rules in the FMP. Because TAC cannot exceed ABC, reductions in ABC for scientific uncertainty based on the risk table result in additional precaution in the catch limits (TACs) for groundfish of the BSAI. Third, the sum of all TACs must be within the OY range, which in the BSAI constrains the TACs that NMFS can implement. Since the sum of all TACs in the BSAI well exceeds the upper range of OY, even though TACs can be set up to ABC, some TACs must be set lower than ABCs to ensure the sum of all TACs falls within the OY range (see § 679.20(a)(1)(i)(A) and (a)(2)). The OY range is therefore constraining and precautionary across the ecosystem in the BSAI by reducing fishery removals up to the TACs implemented in this final rule, which further reduces impacts to the ecosystem

from fishing for groundfish species. Finally, the specification of TACs also accounts for management uncertainty. As defined in the FMP and consistent with National Standard 1 regulations, TAC is the annual catch target for a stock or stock complex, derived from the ABC by considering social and economic factors and management uncertainty (*i.e.*, uncertainty in the ability of managers to constrain catch so the ACL is not exceeded, and uncertainty in quantifying the true catch amount). (See FMP section 3.2.1, and § 600.310(f) and (g)(4)). The FMP further provides that TAC may be lower than the ABC if warranted on the basis of bycatch considerations, management uncertainty, or socioeconomic considerations, or if required in order to cause the sum of the TACs to fall within the OY range (section 3.2.3.4.1).

Comment 9: The age-3 plus pollock biomass is estimated to be over ten million tons and is more than sufficient to support a TAC of 1.375 million mt. The 2024 EBS bottom trawl survey estimated the pollock biomass at 1.66 times higher than the long term mean estimate since 1982, and the abundance of age-1 pollock in 2024 was slightly above average and the highest since 2019, which is a positive indicator for the longer-term health of the pollock stock. Given the current status of the stock, the OFL and ABC could support a much higher TAC than 1.375 million mt TAC.

Response: Consistent with the National Standard 1 guidelines, NMFS may implement a TAC up to the ABC (§ 600.310(g)(4)). For 2025, the Bering Sea pollock final ABC is 2,417,000 mt and the final TAC is 1,375,000 mt, a reduction of 43 percent from the ABC. The TAC implemented for Bering Sea pollock is based on the recommendations of the AP and the Council, after public comment at the December 2024 Council meeting, and after the public comment period on the proposed harvest specifications. It is based on the biological condition of the pollock stock and other socio-economic considerations and is reduced, among TACs for other species, so that the sum of all TACs for the BSAI is within the OY range (§ 679.20(a)(2) and (3)).

Comment 10: The impacts of the pollock fishery on the ecosystem have been thoroughly examined. The harvest is well within historical norms. There is a regular Essential Fish Habitat review process associated with this fishery.

Response: The impacts of the pollock fishery have been examined in various documents, including in the annual SAFE report chapters for pollock and in several NEPA documents supporting FMP amendments and regulatory changes (see response to Comment 11). Each year's TAC amount for pollock is informed by a significant amount of data, modeling, and research. This includes annual surveys, updated catch information, weight and age data, updated statistical modeling, and risks that may fall outside of the stock estimation process. Information on habitat disturbance has been evaluated in the Essential Fish Habitat 5-Year Reviews and information can be found at *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/habitat-conservation/essential-fish-habitat-efh-alaska*.

Comment 11: The pollock TAC should reflect the true environmental cost of trawling. Recent studies show trawl fisheries are damaging habitat and are frequently on the ocean floor. Trawling also contributes to large increases in carbon dioxide emissions from the seafloor.

Response: As addressed in response to Comment 10, impacts of the pollock fishery have been examined in various documents. This includes in the evaluations on habitat impacts from trawling contained in the Essential Fish Habitat 5-Year Reviews (see *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/habitat-conservation/essential-fish-habitat-efh-alaska*). In addition, the SAFE report chapter for EBS pollock evaluates annually the EBS pollock fishery's effects on the ecosystem, as well as ecosystem effects on the EBS pollock stock (see section titled "Additional ecosystem considerations" as well as section 15 at *https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/SAFE/2024/EBSpollock.pdf*). The most recent full/operational assessment for AI pollock similarly includes an

evaluation of the AI pollock fishery's effects on the ecosystem, as well as ecosystem effects on AI pollock and a broad overview of ecosystem considerations, at *https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/SAFE/2024/AIpollock.pdf*. Ecosystem considerations, as well as the impact on communities and incidentally caught species, are considered and updated annually in the ESRs and ESPs. The Final EIS supporting the harvest specifications also evaluated environmental and ecosystem considerations, and the environmental impacts of the pollock fishery have been analyzed in a number of subsequent NEPA documents supporting FMP amendments, including the EIS for amendment 91 to the FMP and the Environmental Assessment for amendment 110 to the FMP.

The commenter cites an article by Sala *et al*. published in "Nature" on March 17, 2021. This paper attributed large releases of benthic carbon dioxide from global trawling activities on a level greater than all global air traffic. There was a rebuttal paper in "Nature" by Hiddink *et al*. on May 10, 2023. Hiddink *et al*. pointed out that Sala *et al*. ignored natural remineralization of carbon in marine sediments and attributed all the carbon there as being released by trawling while not accounting for natural release, potentially exaggerating the amount of trawl-released carbon dioxide by orders of magnitude. In marine sediments, perturbation by invertebrates is thought to mix high carbon sediments deeper into the substrate and actually increase the sequestration of carbon. As pointed out by Hiddink *et al*., however, the results from actual studies of trawl disturbances have mixed and inconclusive results and point to increased release of carbon from trawling as well as increased carbon sequestration from trawling. The Sala *et al*. article was subsequently retracted from "Nature."

NMFS acknowledges that there are impacts from trawling upon the seafloor. All forms of fishing and food production result in some level of habitat impact. Over recent decades NMFS has reduced the area of trawled habitat as well as the intensity of the gear

upon the seafloor. (For a summary of spatial management areas including areas in the BSAI closed to trawling see *https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/Publications/Conservation_Area_Summaries.pdf*). While stocks did experience decline from trawling before the implementation of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, none are currently known to be in decline because of trawling, and there is no known loss of habitat from current practices. This is done in keeping with the Magnuson-Stevens Act's mandate to achieve OY on a continuing basis from each fishery with particular attention to food production.

The Council and NMFS are guided by the Magnuson-Stevens Act to use the best scientific information available in recommending and implementing these harvest specifications. NMFS considered the information relevant to the factors for developing these harvest specifications and has concluded that these groundfish harvest specifications are based on the best available scientific information consistent with National Standard 2. Any changes to management of the trawl fisheries to address habitat disturbance are outside the scope of this final rule, which implements catch limits for the groundfish fisheries in the BSAI.

Comment 12: Unfished or underfished pollock stock has a considerable impact on the ecosystem that must be considered because the pollock biomass in the Bering Sea is significant and has impacts relative to being both a prey and predator, particularly Age 3+ biomass.

Response: As explained in response to Comments 1 and 11, the SAFE report chapter for EBS pollock evaluates annually the EBS pollock fishery's effects on the ecosystem, as well as ecosystem effects on the EBS pollock stock. Fishery effects on the ecosystem are also summarized in Table 43 of the EBS pollock SAFE report chapter. The information on ecosystem effects included in the EBS pollock SAFE report chapter was considered in the specification of the pollock TAC, as is any relevant socio-economic and

harvest information and information on pollock and ecosystem effects summarized in the ESRs. The FMP and implementing regulations also dictate that total TACs for the BSAI cannot exceed 2 million mts annually. Because of this, it is not possible to specify higher TACs and fully harvest extremely large stocks of pollock.

Comment 13: Higher EBS pollock TACs should not be expected to measurably increase or decrease salmon escapement to western Alaska. Salmon catches and runs have fluctuated greatly in recent years, while pollock catch has remained stable.

Response: As noted in response to Comment 2, climate change is an important driver of poor salmon returns in western Alaska. While salmon bycatch in the pollock fishery is a source of mortality and may be a contributing factor in the decline of salmon, NMFS expects the numbers of the ocean bycatch that would have returned to western Alaska would be relatively small due to ocean mortality and the large number of other river systems, and hatchery production, contributing to the total Chinook or chum salmon bycatch.

For Chinook salmon, total bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery is reported annually, and includes bycatch of salmon from stocks across Alaska, the Pacific Northwest, and hatchery production from other countries like Russia. NMFS, Council, and State scientists regularly prepare adult equivalence (AEQ) analyses of Chinook salmon that estimate the number of Chinook salmon that would have returned to river systems had they not been caught as bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery. For 2023, the estimate of bycaught Chinook salmon that would have returned to Coastal Western Alaska and Upper/Middle Yukon river systems is 4,074 fish, with an average of 6,749 fish from 2011 through 2023. Considering run sizes for salmon returns to western Alaska, scientists also calculate the "impact rate." Using this impact rate, the bycatch expected to have returned to western Alaska rivers is less than 2 percent per year since 2011, as reported in the 2024 EBS pollock SAFE report, which notes that "[u]pdated estimates

given new genetic information and the [current] levels of PSC as provided to the Council continue to suggest that the impact is low."

For chum salmon, total bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery is reported annually and includes bycatch of salmon from stocks across Alaska, the Pacific Northwest, and Asia. NMFS, Council, and State scientists analyze genetic stock compositions of chum salmon samples collected from the PSC in the Bering Sea pollock fishery. Scientists are able to estimate the number of chum salmon bycaught in the Bering Sea pollock fishery that originate from Coastal Western Alaska and Upper/Middle Yukon river systems; however, NMFS does not have an AEQ analysis for chum salmon equivalent to the analysis for Chinook salmon. . The most recent 2023 genetic data indicates that 8.3 percent of chum bycatch in the B season is of Coastal Western Alaska origin, reduced from the long-term average of 15.4 percent. For 2023, 2.3 percent of chum bycatch in the B season is of Upper/Middle Yukon River origin

Information on the bycatch of salmon in the BSAI groundfish fisheries, including the pollock fisheries, can be found at *https://www.npfmc.org/fisheries-issues/bycatch/salmon-bycatch/* and *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/bycatch/chinook-salmon-bycatch-management-alaska*. The 2023 genetics reports are available at *https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=ea59d5e2-4de4-4d4e-9369-4ffe0991cf43.pdf&fileName=C2%20Chinook%20Genetics%20Report.pdf* and *https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=93adc8a8-9284-4731-b492-74d535241a78.pdf&fileName=C2%20Chum%20Salmon%20Genetics%20Report.pdf.*

NMFS's management of bycatch in the BS and AI pollock fisheries is also explained in the response to Comment 2.

Comment 14: Hatchery salmon production is impacting the North Pacific ecosystems and fisheries. Large-scale pink salmon hatchery production is releasing additional pink salmon into the North Pacific and causing impacts throughout the food web. Increases in chum salmon bycatch in recent years are correlated with increased hatchery production of chum salmon across the North Pacific as well as increasing bottom temperatures.

Response: NMFS acknowledges this comment and the studies cited by the commenters. The increase in hatchery fish is a potential concern for the North Pacific ecosystem and is a topic warranting further research. Although unrelated to hatchery production, the 2024 AI ESR does include an evaluation of the implication from the increasing abundance and expanding role of eastern Kamchatka pink salmon in the AI ecosystem, noting that pink salmon grow exceptionally fast, consume a large amount of various prey, and potentially affect growth and survival of other species in the North Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea.

Comment 15: To be in compliance with section 7 and section 9 of the ESA, NMFS must analyze impacts of the groundfish trawl fisheries under the ESA through section 7 consultations and must reinitiate consultation on the groundfish trawl fisheries to consider new species listings and critical habitat designations; new information on climate change, vessel strikes and disturbance, entanglement, habitat impacts including pelagic trawl bottom contact, prey competition, bycatch of salmon and hatchery production of pink salmon, and plastics in the marine environment; and changes in fisheries' operations.

Response: NMFS approves and implements the harvest specifications if they are consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable law, including the ESA. NMFS has determined that these final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications for the BSAI are consistent with the ESA. NMFS has evaluated the impacts of the BSAI groundfish

fishery on ESA-listed species and designated critical habitat in a number of consultations. These consultations are on the groundfish fishery managed under the BSAI FMP and are not specific to certain gear types (*e.g.*, trawl or fixed gear). The biological opinions are publicly available at *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/consultations/section-7-biological-opinions-issued-alaska-region#fisheries*.

NMFS agrees that reinitiation of ESA section 7 consultation is required for the groundfish fisheries. In November 2022, NMFS indicated that reinitiation of consultation was warranted on both the BSAI groundfish fishery and the GOA groundfish fishery in light of information indicating that reinitiation under 50 CFR 402.16 was required, including revised species designations (*i.e.*, for listed humpback whales) and new critical habitat designations. In light of the extensive scope of the actions under consultation, NMFS agreed to extend the timeframes to complete the consultations, in accordance with 50 CFR 402.14(e). NMFS has since completed the consultation on the GOA groundfish fishery. NMFS concluded that the GOA groundfish fishery was not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any threatened or endangered species under the jurisdiction of NMFS. It was also NMFS's conference opinion that the GOA groundfish fishery is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the proposed threatened sunflower sea star. The biological and conference opinion for the GOA groundfish fishery is available at: *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/biological-opinion-national-marine-fisheries-service-alaska-region-sustainable*.

In November 2022, NMFS determined that the operation of the groundfish fisheries off Alaska (BSAI and GOA) during the anticipated reinitiation period would not violate ESA sections 7(a)(2) and 7(d). Before implementing last year's final harvest specifications, NMFS determined the operation of the groundfish fisheries off Alaska (both BSAI and GOA) under those harvest specifications would not violate ESA sections 7(a)(2) and 7(d). In implementing these harvest specifications, NMFS again confirmed

that the operation of the BSAI groundfish fishery under the 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications during the reinitiation period in 2025 would not violate ESA sections 7(a)(2) and 7(d). NMFS recognizes the agency's obligation to ensure that agency action(s) over a longer term are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat as a jeopardy or adverse modification/destruction determination commensurate with the temporal scope of the action is appropriately made only in a biological opinion.

Section 7(d) of the ESA prohibits Federal agencies from making any irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources with respect to the agency action(s) that would have the effect of foreclosing the formulation or implementation of any reasonable and prudent alternatives at the conclusion of the ESA section 7 consultation. This prohibition is in force until the requirements of section 7(a)(2) have been satisfied. Resource commitments may occur as long as the action agency retains sufficient discretion and flexibility to modify its action(s) to allow formulation and implementation of appropriate reasonable and prudent alternatives. NMFS has discretion to amend its Magnuson-Stevens Act and ESA regulations and may do so at any time subject to the Administrative Procedure Act and other applicable laws. At the conclusion of ESA section 7 consultation on the BSAI groundfish fishery, NMFS will retain sufficient discretion and flexibility to evaluate and make necessary changes to fishery regulations and management plans for the formulation and implementation of appropriate reasonable and prudent alternatives, if required to do so under the ESA.

During the consultation on the BSAI groundfish fishery, existing regulatory measures that offer protection to listed species, including Steller sea lion protection measures and humpback whale approach regulations, will continue to be in effect, and NMFS will continue to implement the reasonable and prudent measures and terms and conditions necessary or appropriate to minimize the amount or extent of incidental take.

NMFS has and will continue to monitor take in the groundfish fisheries consistent with the terms and conditions of the existing biological opinions covering the BSAI groundfish fishery and the 2024 biological opinion for the GOA groundfish fishery. NMFS also has authority under 50 CFR part 679 to implement annual SSL protection measures, such as the harvest limitations implemented through the annual groundfish harvest specifications, and to close directed fishing for pollock, Pacific cod, and Atka mackerel if a biological assessment indicates the stock condition for that species is at or below 20 percent of its unfished spawning biomass during a fishing year (§ 679.20(d)(4)).

In consulting on the BSAI groundfish fishery and a preparing new biological opinion and incidental take statement, NMFS will incorporate the most recent, best scientific and commercial data available, including information relating to the operation of the fisheries and climate data, to assess effects from the BSAI groundfish fishery, such as vessel strikes and disturbance, entanglement, bycatch, prey competition, and habitat impacts, on ESA-listed species and designated critical habitat.

Comment 16: NMFS must ensure compliance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) for the BSAI groundfish trawl fisheries that incidentally take ESA-listed species and must consider those species and stocks with human-caused mortality and serious injury (M/SI) at levels at or approaching potential biological removal (PBR) or for those whose PBR is unknown. The fisheries are currently operating under MMPA permits that violate the MMPA.

Response: NMFS approves and implements the harvest specifications if they are consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other applicable law, including the MMPA. NMFS has determined that these final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications are consistent with the MMPA. The BSAI (and GOA) groundfish fisheries identified as a Category I or II fishery that interact with ESA-listed species have a valid MMPA section 101(a)(5)(E) permit (89 FR 50270, June 13, 2024) and for the BSAI include the AK

Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands flatfish trawl fishery (Amendment 80) and the AK Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands pollock trawl fishery.

Pursuant to section 101(a)(5)(E) of the MMPA, NMFS shall allow taking of ESA-listed marine mammals incidental to commercial fishing operations if NMFS makes a number of determinations regarding negligible impact, recovery plans, and where required take reductions plans, monitoring programs, and vessel registration (16 U.S.C. 1371(a)(5)(E)). In June 2024, NMFS issued permits for the two BSAI groundfish fisheries that require MMPA permits for the incidental take of ESA-listed species (89 FR 50270, June 13, 2024). NMFS determined that the issuance of those permits complied with the MMPA and implementing regulations regarding the negligible impact determination, recovery plans, take reductions plans, monitoring programs, and vessel registration (89 FR 50270, June 13, 2024).

NMFS regularly updates marine mammal stock assessments and reports of human-caused mortalities and serious injuries of marine mammals. The long-term goal under the MMPA is to reduce the level of M/SI of marine mammals to insignificance levels (16 U.S.C. 1387(b)), which is defined as 10 percent of the stocks' PBR (50 CFR 229.2). PBR is defined as the maximum number of animals, not including natural mortalities, that may be removed from a marine mammal stock while allowing that stock to reach or maintain its optimum sustainable population (50 CFR 229.2). Based on the best scientific information summarized in the 2023 Final Marine Mammal Stock Assessment Reports (SAR) (89 FR 104989,; December 26, 2024), the level of M/SI of ESA-listed stocks that interact with the two Category II groundfish fisheries in the BSAI is currently below 10 percent of those stocks' PBR. PBR and incidental M/SI for each ESA-listed stock with M/SI in the AK Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands flatfish trawl fishery are as follows:

- Bearded seal, Beringia - PBR = 8,210, M/SI = 1.2, M/SI as percent of the stock's PBR = 0.01 percent;
- Humpback whale, Western North Pacific - PBR = 0.2, M/SI = 0, M/SI as percent of the stock's PBR = 0 percent (although this stock is currently included in the 2024 List of Fisheries (89 FR 12257, February 16, 2024), NMFS proposes in the 2025 List of Fisheries to remove the Western North Pacific stock of humpback whale from the list of species/stocks incidentally killed or injured in this fishery because there have been no recent reported or observed M/SI of this stock in the AK Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands flatfish trawl fishery (89 FR 77789, September 24, 2024));
- Ringed seal, Arctic - PBR = 4,755, M/SI = 4.6, M/SI as percent of the stock's PBR = 0.097 percent; and
- Steller sea lion, Western U.S - PBR = 299, M/SI = 13, M/SI as percent of the stock's PBR = 4.3 percent.

PBR and incidental M/SI for each ESA-listed stock with M/SI in the AK Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands pollock trawl fishery are as follows:

- Bearded seal, Beringia - PBR = 8,210, M/SI = 0.4, M/SI as percent of the stock's PBR = 0.005 percent;
- Humpback whale, Mexico-North Pacific –PBR is undetermined, M/SI = 0.03 percent;
- Humpback whale, Western North Pacific - PBR = 0.2, M/SI = 0.008, M/SI as percent of the stock's PBR = 4.0 percent;
- Ringed seal, Arctic - PBR = 4,755, M/SI = 0.2, M/SI as percent of the stock's PBR = 0.004 percent; and

- Steller sea lion, Western U.S - PBR = 299, M/SI = 6.8, M/SI as percent of the stock's PBR = 2.3 percent.

In addition, NMFS has proposed to add the North Pacific stock of fin whale to the list of species/stocks incidentally killed or injured in the Category II AK Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands pollock trawl fishery based on a reported mortality in 2019 (89 FR 77789, September 24, 2024). PBR and incidental M/SI for this ESA-listed stock in the AK Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands pollock trawl fishery is as follows:

- Fin whale, North Pacific - PBR = 5.1, mean estimated annual M/SI (2017-2021) = 0.2, M/SI as percent of the stock's PBR = 3.9 percent.

Both the AK Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands flatfish trawl fishery and the AK Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands pollock trawl fishery have a valid MMPA section 101(a)(5)(E) permit for the incidental, but not intentional, take of ESA-listed species during commercial fishing operations. Details on the permits and the analyses that informed them are in the **Federal Register** notice announcing NMFS's issuance of the permits, and can be found at 89 FR 50270, June 13, 2024. This **Federal Register** notice is separate from the harvest specifications process and this final rule.

Based on the best scientific information available summarized in the 2023 Final SARs (89 FR 104989, December 26, 2024), the level of M/SI of other strategic stocks that interact with any Category II groundfish fisheries in the BSAI is below 10 percent of the stocks' PBR. PBR and incidental M/SI for the strategic stock (unlisted) with M/SI in the AK Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands flatfish trawl fishery are as follows:

- Northern fur seal, Eastern Pacific – PBR =11,403, M/SI = 2.7, M/SI as percent of the stock's PBR = 0.02 percent.

The AK Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands flatfish trawl fishery has more than 99 percent observer coverage and there have been no reported or observed M/SI of the

Western North Pacific stock of humpback whale in the AK Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands flatfish trawl fishery in the most recent SAR. The AK Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands pollock trawl fishery has 100 percent observer coverage and there were two[1] humpback whales incidentally taken (mean annual= 0.8) in the most recent SAR. This analysis uses the most recent SAR estimates. This M/SI rate is prorated according to their probability of occurrence between the Hawaii stock/DPS (unlisted under the ESA) (91 percent), Mexico-North Pacific stock/Mexico DPS (7 percent), and the Western North Pacific stock/DPS (2 percent). Thus, the mean estimated annual mortality of the Western North Pacific stock of humpback whale from the most recent SAR in the AK Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands pollock trawl fishery is 0.008.

Comment 17: The Eastern North Pacific Alaska resident stock of killer whales consists of two distinct stocks.

Response: This is outside of the scope of this final rule to implement the groundfish harvest specifications for the BSAI. NMFS notes that it currently intends to initiate in 2025 a review of available information about whether there are multiple demographically independent populations of killer whales within the currently-defined Eastern North Pacific Alaska resident killer whale stock. The Eastern North Pacific Alaska resident killer whale stock, as currently defined, includes resident killer whales in Southeast Alaska, the Gulf of Alaska, the Aleutian Islands, and the Bering Sea. This evaluation would involve experts from NMFS's Alaska, Northwest, and Southwest Fisheries Science Centers. Should the agency find that there are demographically independent populations of killer whales and subsequently decide to describe new stocks of killer whales in Alaska, that would be accomplished through the development of new

[1] Note that there were 2 additional incidental mortalities of humpback whales in this fishery in 2021 and none in 2022 or 2022 (see Brower et al. 2024, https://repository.library.noaa.gov/view/noaa/66173). However, these have not yet been incorporated into the SAR.

draft stock assessment reports. These would be made available for public review and comment separate from the harvest specifications process.

Comment 18: NMFS must ensure there are mitigation measures in place for killer whales and other non-ESA listed marine mammals that interact with the fisheries.

Response: This is outside of the scope of this final rule to implement the groundfish harvest specifications for the BSAI. As noted in response to Comment 16, NMFS has determined that these final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications for the BSAI are consistent with the requirements of the MMPA. NMFS is concerned about the higher than normal number of killer whale incidental catches in the BSAI trawl fisheries in 2023. Industry mitigation efforts seem to have been successful in reducing the incidental catches in 2024. NMFS continues to investigate and prepare updated analyses on killer whales stocks, including through NMFS's marine mammal stock assessment reports and reports of human-caused mortalities and serious injuries of marine mammals. NMFS also released a technical memorandum, Killer Whale Entanglements in Alaska: Summary Report 1991-2022. More information is available at the following websites: *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/cause-death-determined-11-killer-whales-incidentally-caught-fishing-gear-alaska-2023* and *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/resource/document/killer-whale-entanglements-alaska*.

Comment 19: Under the Magnuson-Stevens Act, NMFS can only approve a plan, a plan amendment, harvest specifications, or allow other fishing activity to occur or continue pursuant to permits if such actions do not violate other applicable laws, like NEPA, ESA, and MMPA. NMFS has not complied with other applicable laws like NEPA, ESA, and MMPA for the BSAI groundfish harvest specifications.

Response: As addressed in the **Classification** section (below) and the response to Comments, NMFS has determined that implementing the 2025 and 2026 groundfish harvest specifications for the BSAI is consistent with the Magnuson-Stevens Act, the

FMP, and other applicable laws. As explained in responses to Comments 4-5, 15, and 16, NMFS has determined that this final rule is consistent with NEPA, ESA, and MMPA. In addition, this final rule specifies the OFL, ABC, and TAC for target species in the BSAI. Any FMP amendments, regulations, and permitting alluded to in the comment are outside the scope of this final rule implementing the harvest specifications for the BSAI.

Changes to the Final Rule

NMFS undertook a thorough review of the relevant comments received during the public comment period. However, for reasons described in the preceding section, no changes to the final rule were made in response to any of the comments received.

After incorporating new or updated fishery and survey data, considering Council recommendations and the 2024 SAFE reports, and accounting for State harvest levels, NMFS has made several updates from the proposed rule. Final TACs were adjusted based on the final ABCs. A detailed description of many of these changes can be found above (see "**Changes from the Proposed 2025 and 2026 Harvest Specifications for the BSAI"**). The TAC changes are also summarized in table A. The changes to TACs between the proposed and final harvest specifications are based on the most recent scientific, biological, ecosystem, socioeconomic, and harvest information and are consistent with the FMP, regulatory obligations (including the required OY range of 1.4 million to 2.0 million mt), and the harvest strategy from the Final EIS and ROD.

Classification

NMFS is issuing this final rule pursuant to section 305(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The reason for using this regulatory authority is: Through previous actions, the FMP and regulations are designed to authorize NMFS to take this action pursuant to section 305(d) (see 50 CFR part 679). The NMFS Assistant Administrator has determined that the final harvest specifications are consistent with the FMP, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and other applicable laws.

This action is authorized under 50 CFR 679.20 and is exempt from review under Executive Order 12866 because it only implements annual catch limits in the BSAI.

To provide for meaningful and timely consultation and engagement in the development of this final rule, NMFS invited Alaska Native Tribal Governments and Alaska Native corporations to participate in consultation and/or engagement with NMFS prior to the Council's December 2024 meeting. NMFS held a Tribal engagement session that included NMFS staff providing briefings on the annual specifications process. NMFS staff also met informally with an inter-tribal agency to explain the annual specifications process. No formal consultations were requested or held on the BSAI harvest specifications.

A Tribal summary impact statement under section (5)(b)(2)(B) and section (5)(c)(2) of E.O. 13175 was not required for this final rule because this action does not impose substantial direct compliance costs on Alaska Native Tribal Governments and this action does not preempt Tribal law.

NMFS prepared an EIS for the Alaska groundfish harvest specifications and alternative harvest strategies (see **ADDRESSES**) and made it available to the public on January 12, 2007 (72 FR 1512). On February 13, 2007, NMFS issued the ROD for the Final EIS identifying the selected alternative (Alternative 2). The Final EIS analyzes the environmental, social, and economic consequences of alternative harvest strategies on resources in the action area. Based on the analysis in the Final EIS, NMFS concluded that the preferred alternative (Alternative 2) provides the best balance among relevant environmental, social, and economic considerations and allows for continued management of the groundfish fisheries based on the most recent, best scientific information. The preferred alternative is a harvest strategy in which TACs are set at a level within the range of ABCs recommended through the Council harvest specifications process by the Council's SSC. The sum of the TACs also must achieve the OY specified

in the FMP and regulations. While the specific numbers that the harvest strategy produces may vary from year to year, the methodology used for the preferred harvest strategy remains constant.

The final 2025 and 2026 groundfish harvest specifications for the BSAI were developed through the preferred alternative harvest strategy analyzed in the Final EIS and selected in the ROD. Because NMFS implements this final rule pursuant to and consistent with the Final EIS and ROD, a new EIS is not necessary to implement the 2025 and 2026 groundfish harvest specifications.

NMFS prepared a SIR to address the need to prepare a SEIS (40 CFR 1502.9(d)(1)). Copies of the Final EIS, ROD, and annual SIRs for this action are available from NMFS (see **ADDRESSES**). The latest annual SIR evaluated whether NMFS should prepare an SEIS for the 2025 and 2026 groundfish harvest specifications. A SEIS should be prepared if a major federal action is incomplete or ongoing and: (1) the agency makes substantial changes to the proposed action that are relevant to environmental concerns; or (2) there are substantial new circumstances or information about the significance of adverse effects that bear on the analysis (§ 1502.9(d)(1)). After reviewing the most recent, best available information, including the information contained in the SIR and SAFE report, the Regional Administrator has determined that: (1) the 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications, which were set according to the preferred harvest strategy, do not constitute a substantial change in the action; and (2) the information presented does not indicate that there are substantial new circumstances or information about the significance of adverse effects that bear on the analysis in the Final EIS. Any new information and circumstances do not present a seriously different picture of the likely environmental harms of the action to occur—the implementation of these harvest specifications—beyond what was considered in the Final EIS, and the 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications will result in environmental, social, and economic impacts

within the scope of those analyzed and disclosed in the Final EIS. Therefore, a SEIS is not necessary to implement the 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications.

A final regulatory flexibility analysis (FRFA) was prepared. Section 604 of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA) (5 U.S.C. 604) requires that, when an agency promulgates a final rule under 5 U.S.C. 553, after being required by that section or any other law to publish a general notice of proposed rulemaking, the agency shall prepare a FRFA. The following constitutes the FRFA prepared for these final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications.

Section 604 of the RFA describes the required contents of a FRFA: (1) a statement of the need for, and objectives of, the rule; (2) a statement of the significant issues raised by the public comments in response to the initial regulatory flexibility analysis, a statement of the assessment of the agency of such issues, and a statement of any changes made in the proposed rule as a result of such comments; (3) the response of the agency to any comments filed by the Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Administration in response to the proposed rule, and a detailed statement of any change made to the proposed rule in the final rule as a result of the comments; (4) a description of and an estimate of the number of small entities to which the rule will apply or an explanation of why no such estimate is available; (5) a description of the projected reporting, recordkeeping, and other compliance requirements of the rule, including an estimate of the classes of small entities which will be subject to the requirement and the type of professional skills necessary for preparation of the report or record; and (6) a description of the steps the agency has taken to minimize the significant economic impact on small entities consistent with the stated objectives of applicable statutes, including a statement of the factual, policy, and legal reasons for selecting the alternative adopted in the final rule and why each one of the other significant alternatives to the rule considered by the agency that affect the impact on small entities was rejected. A description of this

action, its purpose, and its legal basis are included at the beginning of the preamble to this final rule and are not repeated here.

NMFS published the proposed rule on December 4, 2024 (89 FR 96186). NMFS prepared an Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis (IRFA) to accompany the proposed action, and included the IRFA in the proposed rule. The comment period closed on January 3, 2025. No comments were received on the IRFA or on the economic impacts of the rule more generally. The Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Administration did not file any comments on the proposed rule.

The entities directly regulated by this action are: 1) entities operating vessels with groundfish Federal fishing permits (FFPs) catching FMP groundfish in Federal waters; 2) all entities operating vessels, regardless of whether they hold groundfish FFPs, catching FMP groundfish in the State-waters parallel fisheries; and 3) all entities operating vessels fishing for halibut that have incidental catch of FMP groundfish (whether or not they have FFPs). These include entities operating CVs and CPs within the action area and entities receiving direct allocations of groundfish.

For RFA purposes only, NMFS has established a small business size standard for businesses, including their affiliates, whose primary industry is commercial fishing (see 50 CFR 200.2). A business primarily engaged in commercial fishing (NAICS code 11411) is classified as a small business if it is independently owned and operated, is not dominant in its field of operation (including its affiliates), and has combined annual gross receipts not in excess of $11 million for all its affiliated operations worldwide.

Using the most recent data available (2023), the estimated number of directly regulated small entities includes approximately 116 CVs, 3 CPs, 6 CDQ groups, and three motherships. Some of these vessels are members of AFA inshore pollock cooperatives, Gulf of Alaska rockfish cooperatives, or BSAI Crab Rationalization Program cooperatives, and, since under the RFA, the aggregate gross receipts of all

participating members of the cooperative must meet the "under $11 million" threshold, the cooperatives are considered to be large entities within the meaning of the RFA. Thus, the estimate of 116 CVs may be an overstatement of the number of small entities. Average gross revenues for hook-and-line CVs, pot gear CVs, and trawl gear CVs are estimated to be $910,000, $1.5 million, and $2.3 million, respectively. Average gross revenues for CP entities are confidential. There are three AFA cooperative affiliated motherships, which appear to fall under the 750-worker threshold and are therefore small entities. The average gross revenues for the AFA motherships are confidential.

This final rule contains no information collection requirements under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

This action implements the final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications, apportionments, and PSC limits for the groundfish fishery of the BSAI. This action is necessary to establish harvest limits for groundfish during the 2025 and 2026 fishing years and is taken in accordance with the FMP prepared and recommended by the Council pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The establishment of the final harvest specifications is governed by the Council and NMFS's harvest strategy for the catch of groundfish in the BSAI. The harvest strategy was previously selected from among five alternatives. Under this preferred alternative harvest strategy, TACs are set within the range of ABCs recommended through the Council harvest specifications process by the SSC, and while the specific TAC numbers that the harvest strategy produces may vary from year to year, the methodology used for the preferred harvest strategy remains constant. The sum of the TACs must be within the OY range specified in the FMP and regulations. This final action implements the preferred alternative harvest strategy previously chosen by the Council and NMFS to set TACs that fall within the range of ABCs recommended through the Council harvest specifications process and as

recommended by the Council. This is the method for determining TACs that has been used in the past.

The final 2025 and 2026 TACs associated with the preferred harvest strategy are those recommended by the Council in December 2024. OFLs and ABCs for each species and species group were based on recommendations prepared by the Plan Team, and reviewed by the SSC. The Council's TAC recommendations are consistent with the SSC's OFL and ABC recommendations, and the sum of all TACs remains within the OY range for the BSAI consistent with § 679.20(a)(1)(i)(A). Because setting all TACs equal to ABCs would cause the sum of TACs to exceed the maximum OY of 2 million mt, TACs for some species and species groups are lower than the ABCs recommended by the Plan Team and the SSC.

The final 2025 and 2026 OFLs and ABCs are based on the best available biological information, including projected biomass trends, information on assumed distribution of stock biomass, and revised technical methods to calculate stock biomass. The final 2025 and 2026 TACs are based on the best available biological and socioeconomic information. The final 2025 and 2026 OFLs, ABCs, and TACs are consistent with the biological condition of groundfish stocks as described in the 2024 SAFE report, which is the most recent, completed SAFE report, as well as the ecosystem and socioeconomic information presented in the 2024 SAFE report (including the BS ESR and AI ESR). Accounting for the most recent information to set the final OFLs, ABCs, and TACs is consistent with the objectives for this action, as well as National Standard 2 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (16 U.S.C. 1851(a)(2)) that actions shall be based on the best scientific information available.

Under this action, the ABCs reflect harvest amounts that are less than the specified OFLs. The TACs are within the range of ABCs recommended by the SSC and do not exceed the biological limits recommended by the SSC (the ABCs and OFLs).

Specifying TACs that do not exceed ABCs and ABCs that do not exceed OFLs is consistent with the objectives for this action, the FMP, and National Standard 1 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (16 U.S.C. 1851(a)(1)) and implementing regulations (50 CFR 600.310). For some species and species groups in the BSAI, the Council recommended, and NMFS sets, TACs equal to ABCs, which is intended to maximize harvest opportunities in the BSAI. Although under the FMP and regulations, NMFS could specify TACs equal to ABCs, NMFS cannot set TACs for all species in the BSAI equal to their ABCs due to the constraining OY limit in the BSAI of 2 million mt. For this reason, some final TACs are less than the final ABCs. These specific reductions were reviewed and recommended by the Council's AP, and then reviewed and adopted by the Council as the Council's recommended final 2025 and 2026 TACs.

Based on the best available scientific data, and in consideration of the Council and NMFS's objectives for this action, there are no significant alternatives that have the potential to accomplish the stated objectives of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and any other applicable statutes and that have the potential to minimize any significant adverse economic impact of the final rule on small entities. This action is economically beneficial to entities operating in the BSAI, including small entities. The action specifies TACs for commercially-valuable species in the BSAI and allows for the continued prosecution of the fishery, thereby creating the opportunity for fishery revenue. After public process, during which the Council and NMFS solicited input from stakeholders, the Council concluded and NMFS determines that these final harvest specifications would best accomplish the stated objectives articulated in the preamble for this final rule and in applicable statutes, and would minimize to the extent practicable adverse economic impacts on the universe of directly regulated small entities.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3), the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the date of effectiveness for this rule

because delaying this rule is contrary to the public interest. The Plan Team review of the 2024 SAFE report occurred in November 2024, and based on the 2024 SAFE report the Council considered and recommended the final harvest specifications in December 2024. Accordingly, NMFS's review of the final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications could not begin until after the December 2024 Council meeting, and after the public had time to comment on the proposed action.

For all fisheries not currently closed because the TACs established under the final 2024 and 2025 harvest specifications (89 FR 17287, March 11, 2024) were not reached, it is possible that they would be closed prior to the expiration of a 30-day delayed effectiveness period because their TACs could be reached within that period. If implemented immediately, this rule would allow these fisheries to continue fishing because some of the new TACs implemented by this rule are higher than the TACs under which they are currently fishing. Because this rule would allow fisheries subject to lower TACs under the final 2024 and 2025 harvest specifications (89 FR 17287, March 11, 2024) to harvest up to the higher TACs published in these final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications, it relieves a potential restriction for those fisheries and as a result is also not subject to the 30-day delayed effectiveness provision of the APA pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(1). For those fisheries not currently closed because the TACs established under the final 2024 and 2025 harvest specifications have not yet been reached, it is possible that their TACs could be reached within that 30-day period and NMFS would have to close those fisheries prior to the expiration of a 30-day delayed effectiveness period. If those fisheries closed, they would experience a restriction in fishing. If this rule is implemented immediately, this rule would relieve the potential for those fisheries to be restricted and would allow these fisheries to continue fishing because some of the new TACs implemented by this rule are higher than the TACs under which they are currently fishing.

In addition, immediate effectiveness of this action is required to provide consistent management and conservation of fishery resources based on the best available scientific information. This is particularly pertinent for those species that have lower ABCs and TACs than those established in the 2024 and 2025 harvest specifications (89 FR 17287, March 11, 2024). If implemented immediately, this rule would ensure that NMFS can properly manage those fisheries for which this rule sets lower ABCs and TACs, which are based on the most recent biological information on the condition of stocks, rather than managing species under the higher TACs set in the previous year's harvest specifications. The action is also necessary to ensure that the updated final ABCs for 2025 and 2026 are timely implemented for the management of the fisheries under the annual catch limits required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act as the FMP sets the statutorily-required annual catch limits equal to the ABC amounts specified in the annual harvest specifications.

Certain fisheries, such as those for pollock, are intensive, fast-paced fisheries. Other fisheries, such as those for sablefish, flatfish, rockfish, Atka mackerel, skates, sharks, and octopuses, are critical as directed fisheries and as incidental catch in other fisheries. U.S. fishing vessels have demonstrated the capacity to catch the TAC allocations in many of these fisheries. If the date of effectiveness of this rule were to be delayed 30 days and if a TAC were to be reached during those 30 days, NMFS would be required to close directed fishing or prohibit retention for the applicable species. Any delay in allocating the final TACs in these fisheries would cause confusion to the industry and potential economic harm through unnecessary discards, thus undermining the intent of this rule. Waiving the 30-day delay allows NMFS to prevent economic loss to fishermen that could otherwise occur should the 2025 TACs (set under the 2024 and 2025 harvest specifications) be reached. Determining which fisheries may close is nearly impossible because these fisheries are affected by several factors that cannot be predicted

in advance, including fishing effort, weather, movement of fishery stocks, and market price. Furthermore, the closure of one fishery has a cascading effect on other fisheries by freeing-up fishing vessels, allowing them to move from closed fisheries to open ones, increasing the fishing capacity in those open fisheries, and causing them to close at an accelerated pace.

In fisheries subject to declining sideboard limits, a failure to implement the updated sideboard limits before initial season's end could deny the intended economic protection to the non-sideboard limited sectors. Conversely, in fisheries with increasing sideboard limits, economic benefit could be denied to the sideboard-limited sectors.

If these final harvest specifications are not effective by March 20, 2025, which is the start of the 2025 Pacific halibut season as specified by the IPHC, the fixed gear sablefish fishery will not begin concurrently with the Pacific halibut IFQ season. Delayed effectiveness of this action would result in confusion for sablefish harvesters and economic harm from the unnecessary discard of sablefish that are caught along with Pacific halibut, as both fixed gear sablefish and Pacific halibut are managed under the same IFQ program. Immediate effectiveness of these final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications will allow the sablefish IFQ fishery to begin concurrently with the Pacific halibut IFQ season.

Finally, immediate effectiveness also would provide the fishing industry the earliest possible opportunity to plan and conduct its fishing operations with respect to new information about TAC limits. Therefore, NMFS finds good cause to waive the 30-day delay in the date of effectiveness for this rule under 5 U.S.C. 553(d)(3).

Small Entity Compliance Guide

Section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996 states that, for each rule or group of related rules for which an agency is required to prepare a FRFA, the agency shall publish one or more guides to assist small entities in

complying with the rule, and shall designate such publications as "small entity compliance guides." The agency shall explain the actions a small entity is required to take to comply with a rule or group of rules.

The tables contained in this final rule are provided online and serve as the plain language guide to assist small entities in complying with this final rule as required by the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act of 1996. This final rule's primary purpose is to announce the final 2025 and 2026 harvest specifications and prohibited species bycatch allowances for the groundfish fisheries of the BSAI. This action is necessary to establish harvest limits and associated management measures for groundfish during the 2025 and 2026 fishing years and to accomplish the goals and objectives of the FMP. It is taken in accordance with the FMP, the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and regulations at 50 CFR parts 600 and 679. This action directly affects all fishermen who participate in the BSAI fisheries. The specific amounts of OFL, ABC, TAC, and PSC amounts are provided in tables in this final rule to assist the reader. Affected fishery participants are advised to review the tables contained in this final rule as well as this final rule, which also contains plain language summaries of the underlying relevant regulations supporting the harvest specifications and the harvest of groundfish in the BSAI that the reader may find helpful.

Information to assist small entities in complying with this final rule is provided online. The OFL, ABC, TAC, and PSC tables are individually available online at *https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/alaska/sustainable-fisheries/alaska-groundfish-harvest-specifications*. Explanatory information on the relevant regulations supporting the harvest specifications is found in footnotes to the tables. Harvest specification changes are also available from the same online source, which includes applicable **Federal Register** notices, information bulletins, and other supporting materials. NMFS will announce closures of directed fishing in the **Federal Register** and information bulletins released by

the Alaska Region. Affected fishery participants should keep themselves informed of such closures. Copies of the tables and/or this final rule are also available upon request.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 773 *et seq.*; 16 U.S.C. 1540(f); 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*; 16 U.S.C. 3631 *et seq.*; Pub. L. 105–277; Pub. L. 106–31; Pub. L. 106–554; Pub. L. 108–199; Pub. L. 108–447; Pub. L. 109–241; Pub. L. 109–479.

Dated: March 13, 2025.

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Samuel D. Rauch III,
Deputy Assistant Administrator for Regulatory Programs, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 2025-04406 Filed: 3/17/2025 8:45 am; Publication Date: 3/18/2025]