

**Summary of Follow-up Teleconference
for the June 1, 2011, Tribal Consultation
on Chum Salmon Bycatch in the Bering Sea Pollock Fishery**

October 6, 2011

In Attendance

Attending via telephone:

Native Village of Brevig Mission
Stuart Tocktoo, President
Leonard Adams
Floyd Olanna
Walter Seetot
Inez Tocktoo

Native Village of Savoonga
Mitchell Kiyuklook, President
Peggy Akeya
Merton Miklahook, Sr.
Ronnie Toolie
Gregory Toolie

Native Village of St. Michael
Charlie Fitka

Nome Eskimo Community
Mike Sloan

Kawerak, Inc.
Rose Fosdick
Julie Raymond-Yakoubian

North Pacific Fishery Management Council
Nicole Kimball
Diana Stram (diana.stram@noaa.gov), co-author of non-Chinook (chum) salmon bycatch analysis

Office of Senator Donald Olson
Laura Lawrence
Loren Peterson
David Scott

Office of Representative Neal Foster
Paul LaBolle

Attending in person, NMFS Alaska Regional Office:

Sally Bibb, NMFS, Sustainable Fisheries Division (sally.bibb@noaa.gov; 907-586-7389)
Melanie Brown, NMFS Sustainable Fisheries Division
Mary Grady, NMFS Sustainable Fisheries Division
Sarah Ellgen, NMFS Sustainable Fisheries Division
Gabrielle Aberle, NMFS Sustainable Fisheries Division (gabrielle.aberle@noaa.gov; 907-586-7356)
Scott Miller, NMFS, Analytical Team and co-author of non-Chinook (chum) salmon bycatch analysis
Demian Schane, NOAA General Counsel

Summary

This teleconference responded to issues raised during a tribal consultation conducted on June 1, 2011, between the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and six Norton Sound and Bering Strait tribes. Each tribe had submitted to NMFS a written resolution stating its position on chum salmon bycatch and a separate resolution requesting a permanent ban of all bottom trawling in the Northern Bering Sea Research Area. The tribes requested the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) adopt a hard cap of 30,000 chum salmon for the Bering Sea pollock fishery. The tribes emphasized the cultural and nutritional significance of salmon, the importance of subsistence use of salmon, and concerns with the status of some chum salmon stocks.

Representatives from the Native Village of Elim/Elim IRA Council, Native Village of Gambell, Native Village of Savoonga, Native Village of Shishmaref/Shishmaref IRA Council, Native Village of Teller/Teller Traditional Council, Mary's Igloo Traditional Council, and Kawerak, Inc., participated in the consultation, which was conducted under Presidential Executive Order 13175. NMFS did not receive the resolutions submitted by the Native Village of Koyuk IRA Council and the Native Village of St. Michael until after June 1; therefore, these tribes were not notified of the consultation until after it occurred. The Native Village of Koyuk IRA Council and the Native Village of St. Michael, as well as other tribes in the Norton Sound and Bering Strait area, the June 1 participants, and staff from the offices of Senator Donald Olson and Representative Neal Foster were invited to attend the teleconference held on October 6, 2011. The purpose of the teleconference was to update the tribes on the analysis and to follow-up on questions from the June 1, 2011, consultation about the prohibited species donation program.

Sally Bibb opened the meeting by introducing those present at the NMFS Alaska Regional Office, then asked for an introduction from each participant that called in to the meeting. She then summarized the final report from the June 1 tribal consultation.

Next, Sarah Ellgen provided an overview of the prohibited species donation program (PSD program), which is administered by the organization SeaShare. During the June 1 consultation, several tribal representatives requested information about the PSD program and expressed interest in participation in the program by western Alaska communities. The PSD program allows salmon and halibut caught accidentally in the groundfish trawl fisheries to be distributed to hunger relief organizations. Starting in the fall of 2011, participation in the PSD program increased beyond the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands to include Gulf of Alaska processors and vessels. SeaShare has begun distributing salmon to food banks in the Kodiak area. Sarah offered to provide the appropriate contact information for those interested in learning more about the program. None of the teleconference participants had questions on the PSD program at this time.

Diana Stram and Nicole Smith summarized the status of the Council's review of the analysis evaluating proposed management measures to minimize non-Chinook (chum) salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery. The Council conducted an initial review of the analysis at its June 2011 meeting in Nome. The Council revised and restructured the alternatives and options, and requested that additional information be included in the analysis. The Council is scheduled to review the revised analysis at its meeting in Anchorage in April 2012. The analysis will be available for public review in mid-March and will be posted on the Council's website at <http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc/>. Nicole informed the participants that a public, statewide teleconference on the non-Chinook salmon bycatch management measures would be held in the spring of 2012. The Council held this teleconference on February 24, 2012, and a report will be posted on the Council's website.

The participants were then asked to share their concerns and questions. The following issues and responses from NMFS were discussed.

- What is the location of the Council's April meeting?
 - Response: The Council will hold its April meeting at the Hilton Hotel in Anchorage.
- Clarification was requested on a sentence for a Response on page 4 of the June 1 tribal consultation report. The sentence responded to a concern on how bycatch can be controlled and reads as follows: "The Council's program does not set as a goal allowing the pollock fishery to harvest up to the hard cap of Chinook salmon."
 - Response: The Council authorizes and approves the amount of Chinook salmon bycatch that can be caught by the Bering Sea pollock fishery. The pollock fishery will close if that number, the hard cap, is reached. The goal is not for the pollock fishery to reach that number, but for the pollock fishery to minimize its Chinook salmon bycatch and keep the amount of bycatch as low as possible.
- When does the pollock fishery close?
 - Response: The pollock fishery will close when sectors reach their seasonal pollock allocations, when the seasons end on June 10 or November 1, or when the hard cap for Chinook salmon bycatch is reached.
- We would rather catch salmon than acquire it through food banks. Subsistence catch of salmon is shared and contributes to our food supplies. Important knowledge, skills, and values are associated with the way we harvest, preserve, and share salmon.
 - Response: NMFS appreciates the comments that subsistence salmon have considerable significance to individuals, their families, and their communities. The PSD program is not intended to replace locally harvested salmon with commercial bycatch. The purpose of the PSD program is to try to use salmon bycatch, which has already been caught and killed, for human consumption if that salmon has been maintained in the appropriate condition.
- Are the salmon distributed through the PSD program edible?
 - Response: Yes, the same processing and quality guidelines exist for the salmon as the other fish that the fishermen process. The food banks where the salmon are distributed are subject to the State of Alaska's food safety regulations.
- A representative of Savoonga requested more information on receiving donated salmon through the PSD program.
 - Response: After the teleconference, Sarah Ellgen and Sally Bibb called and talked to Ronnie Toolie of Savoonga about the PSD program. The contact information for the representative of SeaShare, which distributes salmon donated to the program, was emailed to Mr. Toolie.
- During the June 1 tribal consultation, tribal representatives commented on research needs and asked questions on the cumulative impact of salmon interception in the False Pass salmon fisheries, the information we get from Russia about chum salmon, and the percent of Alaska fisheries taxes used for research.

- Response: The analysis will include escapement and harvest information for the Area M fisheries, which are also known as the False Pass fisheries, and information on the stock of origin of chum salmon caught in Area M. The analysis also will include what is known about chum salmon released from Russian hatcheries and the origin of chum salmon caught in the Bering Sea pollock fishery.

The analysis probably will not include information on fisheries taxes used for research; however, this could change as the analysis progresses. As the action is not expected to reduce landings, there is no expected impact on taxes derived from landed value and, therefore, no specific need to detail the various State of Alaska taxes at this time. Almost all of the state fisheries tax collections are General Fund tax collections and are appropriated, including to fisheries research, during the annual budget process. The collections and how they are shared with municipalities depend on the type of tax in question. Information on the fisheries tax collections is provided in the Alaska Tax Division 2011 Annual Report:

<http://www.tax.alaska.gov//programs/documentviewer/viewer.aspx?2470f>.

The Fisheries Resource Landings Tax, which is a tax on the pollock fishery authorized by the American Fisheries Act and most applicable to the discussion of chum bycatch, and the State Fisheries Business Tax are shared with municipalities. The remainder of these tax collections is retained by the State of Alaska as receipts into the General Fund. A municipality could use its portion of these taxes to fund research; however, it is more likely that it goes into the municipality's General Fund and any amount for fisheries research would be part of an appropriation in the municipal budget process. The State collection goes into the State's General Fund and could be allocated to fisheries research as part of the annual budget process. Additionally, most municipalities that have fish landing ports charge their own landing taxes as well as sales taxes, and large proportions of the annual budget for such locales can come from these taxes. Thus, municipalities receiving these revenues could allocate monies to fisheries research as part of their annual budget process.

- NMFS should review the Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund, which could fund research in the Norton Sound and Bering Strait region.
 - Response: The Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund (AKSSF) comprises Alaska's allocation of funds from the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF). The PCSRF was established by Congress in fiscal year 2000 to protect, restore, and conserve Pacific salmon and steelhead populations and their habitats. Under the PCSRF, NMFS provides funding to states and tribes of the Pacific Coast region to implement habitat restoration and recovery projects that contribute to the sustainability of the species. For more information, see the AKSSF website at http://www.akssf.org/akssf_org/home.cfm# or the NMFS PCSRF website at <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/Salmon-Recovery-Planning/PCSRF/>.