

Council Motion
Agenda Item C3
Catcher Vessel Chinook PSC Limit Adjustments
February 9, 2018

The Council recommends another initial review of the analysis with the following revisions to the purpose and need statement and alternatives. (Added text is shown in **bold and underline**, deleted text is shown in **~~bold and strikeout~~**):

Purpose and Need Statement

The Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) National Standards require, **among other factors, that** the Council to balance the objectives of achieving optimum yield, minimizing bycatch, and minimizing adverse impacts on fishery-dependent communities. Chinook salmon PSC taken in GOA trawl fisheries is a resource concern, and the Council has taken action to set hard cap PSC limits that are below the incidental take amount that would trigger reconsultation under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Attainment of a PSC hard cap closes the trawl fishery. Since the 2015 implementation of Chinook salmon PSC limits for the GOA non-pollock groundfish trawl CV sector, the fishery has continued to display variable levels and unpredictable timing of salmon encounter. Potential closures and PSC encounter rates that vary from year-to-year or even week-to-week create uncertainty for fishery participants, which in turn can ~~exacerbate a “race for fish,”~~ make business planning more difficult, or directly lead to forgone harvest opportunities. Those outcomes adversely affect trawl harvesters, crew, processors, and GOA coastal communities.

Relative to what was available when the Council established the PSC limits, new information about the resource and the fishery’s rate of salmon encounter has been gathered from salmon genetic identification studies and the expansion of observer sampling onto smaller trawl vessels. Meanwhile, the **non-Rockfish Program GOA trawl fisheries fishery** will continue to operate under a limited access management structure where harvesters must compete for a share of the available catch without formalized cooperative tools to **best** minimize **and utilize** PSC. ~~As a result, individual actions to avoid PSC often confer an individual competitive disadvantage. Voluntary collective action is costly to organize, and agreements to stand down from fishing to minimize PSC have not always held.~~

The proposed action would **consider increasing** Chinook salmon PSC limits **and establishing an annual rollover of unused Chinook salmon PSC** for the GOA non-pollock **non-Rockfish Program** trawl CV sector and/or the Central GOA Rockfish Program CV sector. Alternatives to increase PSC limits **or provide more flexibility under the existing PSC limits** are offered in light of new information and multiple years of experience fishing under constraining hard caps **for these fisheries in a limited access fishery** with variable and unpredictable PSC rates. The action would not modify ~~other existing features of the GOA Chinook salmon PSC limits for non-pollock trawl fisheries such as~~ PSC rollovers from the Rockfish Program CV sector to the limited access CV sector, and NMFS’s ability to make in-season Chinook salmon PSC limit reapportionments between certain trawl sectors. The action seeks to find the most appropriate PSC limits **or flexibility within the existing PSC limits** for **these fisheries** ~~this fishery~~ by ~~considering historical PSC and~~

providing a margin that accommodates expected **high** variability, while remaining within previously established outer bounds for annual GOA-wide PSC levels that are not expected to jeopardize the Chinook salmon resource.

Alternatives

Revise the alternatives and options as follows:

Alternative 1: Status Quo

Alternative 2: **Increase Modify** the Chinook salmon PSC limit for the GOA non-pollock non-Rockfish Program CV sector by:

Option 1: 1,000 fish

Option 2: 2,000 fish

Option 3: 3,000 fish

Option 4: Replace the performance standard/incentive buffer with an annual rollover of any unused Chinook salmon PSC in this sector. NMFS will determine the amount of unused Chinook salmon PSC based on the amount used in the sector relative to the base limit of 2,700 fish. The maximum amount of Chinook salmon PSC that may be rolled over cannot exceed:

Suboption 1: 675 fish (25% of the limit of 2,700 fish)

Suboption 2: 1,350 fish (50% of the limit of 2,700 fish)

Suboption 3: 2,025 fish (75% of the limit of 2,700 fish)

Under this option, in any year the total amount of Chinook salmon PSC available cannot exceed the base limit plus the amount in the suboption selected.

Alternative 3: **Increase Modify** the Chinook salmon PSC limit for the Central GOA Rockfish Program CV sector by:

Option 1: 300 fish

Option 2: 600 fish

Option 3: 900 fish

Option 4: Allow an annual rollover of any unused Chinook salmon PSC in this sector. NMFS will determine the amount of unused Chinook salmon PSC based on the amount used in the sector relative to the base limit of 1,200 fish. The maximum amount of Chinook salmon PSC that may be rolled over cannot exceed:

Suboption 1: 300 fish (25% of the limit of 1,200 fish)

Suboption 2: 600 fish (50% of the limit of 1,200 fish)

Suboption 3: 900 fish (75% of the limit of 1,200 fish)

Under this option, in any year the total amount of Chinook salmon PSC available cannot exceed the base limit plus the amount in the suboption selected.

Staff should incorporate the SSC's recommended revisions to extent practicable, with particular emphasis on the bulleted text.