



Alaska Seafood Cooperative Report to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council for the 2024 Fishery

March 2025

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Introduction

On September 14, 2007, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published a final rule implementing Amendment 80 to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands management area (BSAI). Amendment 80 provides specific groundfish, and prohibited species catch (PSC) allocations to the non-American Fisheries Act (AFA) trawl catcher processor sector and allows the formation of cooperatives. Sector allocations and the formation of cooperatives were intended to assist in improving groundfish retention.

On January 20, 2008, the Alaska Seafood Cooperative (AKSC) began fishing Amendment 80 allocations. Previous annual reports described AKSC co-op management/harvest strategies and catch monitoring protocols. Catch monitoring protocols are implemented through regulation and, except for halibut deck sorting protocols, remain largely unchanged since program inception. These sections were removed from this report to improve readability.

This report summarizes AKSC and its catch for the 2024 fishing year. Harvest and management strategies continue to be reviewed periodically by cooperative members and are adapted to address changes to fishing conditions and information needs.

AKSC membership

During 2024, AKSC was comprised of the following five member companies, consisting of 16 non-AFA trawl catcher processors. This is a reduction of 1 catcher processor and 1 catcher vessel from the 2023 fishing year.

Company	Vessel	Length Overall
Fishermen's Finest, Inc.	American No. 1	160
	U.S. Intrepid	185
	America's Finest	262
North Star Fishing Company, LLC	Arica	186
	Unimak	185
	North Star	261
Ocean Peace, Inc	Seafisher	230
	Ocean Peace	219
	Alaska Victory	227
O'Hara Corporation	Constellation	166
	Defender	123
	Enterprise	120
	Alaska Spirit	221
United States Seafoods, LLC	Araho	194
	Seafreeze Alaska	295
	Seafreeze America	208

2024 AKSC Catch

The following tables provide AKSC catch. All data is rounded to the nearest whole number for simplicity. It is important to understand that fishing behavior and catch amounts under any given year of cooperative operations may not reflect those of other years.

AKSC initially apportions its annual NMFS-issued allocation to individual companies or vessels. Subsequently, AKSC companies can engage in transfers with other AKSC companies or vessels to maximize harvesting efficiencies. Because allocations are managed under hard caps, a portion of each of AKSC's allocations will be left unharvested to serve as a buffer prior to reaching allocation amounts.

Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands AKSC Allocated Quota and Catch Amounts

Species	AKSC A80 Allocation (mt)	AKSC Catch (mt)
Cod	20,447	17,553
Yellowfin Sole	137,139	78,747
Rock Sole	52,938	25,949
Flathead Sole	28,702	10,713
POP 541	6,315	6,276
POP 542	4,383	4,234
POP 543	10,929	10,849
Mackerel BS/541	25,781	25,558
Mackerel 542	13,398	13,351
Mackerel 543	21,388	21,291

Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands AKSC PSC Limits and Catch Amounts

Species	AKSC A80 Allocation (mt)	AKSC Catch
Halibut Mortality (mt)	1,396 ¹	1,273
King Crab Z1 (#)	43,293	9,579
Bairdi Z1 (#)	368,521	44,720
Bairdi Z2 (#)	627,778	170,796
COBLZ Opilio (#)	1,909,256	504,665

Notes: Crab are reported as individuals.

¹ 2024 was the first year of Halibut Abundance Based Management (Amendment 123) which reduced the halibut allocation to the A80 sector from 1745mt to 1396mt.

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/11/24/2023-25513/fisheries-of-the-exclusive-economic-zone-off-alaska-bering-sea-and-aleutian-islands-halibut>

Retention Compliance Standard

Amendment 79, also known as the Groundfish Retention Standard or GRS, was implemented simultaneously with Amendment 80 in 2008. The GRS required the cooperative to annually improve groundfish retention over the course of several years from 65% in 2008 to 85% in 2011 and beyond.

Soon after the adoption of the GRS, the Council repealed the GRS because of problems of enforceability and a mismatch between the analysis used to establish the GRS and the metrics used to estimate retention under the GRS. Simultaneously, at the request of the Council, AKSC substituted an internal monitoring system known as the Retention Compliance Standard (RCS) for the GRS program.

The RCS is implemented through a contract with substantial non-compliance fines, and an annual third-party audit report. The RCS agreement, including the calculation methodology, and the third part audit are appended to this report.

Since 2008, AKSC has exceeded Council retention expectations, and annual RCS-measured retention has consistently exceeded 90%. ***The RCS required a 2024 groundfish retention of 85 percent; AKSC achieved a groundfish retention of 91.0%.***

GOA sideboard management

Regulations limit Amendment 80 vessels to historic catch levels by establishing sideboard amounts for several species. To help manage GOA sideboard fisheries, AKSC established a GOA fishing plan. The 2024 GOA fishing plan includes cooperative management measures to limit individual vessels and the cooperative to halibut PSC sideboard amounts.

Summary

The Council has designed, and NMFS has implemented, a well-designed program that provides AKSC with the necessary tools to effectively manage Amendment 80 fisheries, minimize bycatch to the extent practicable, and increase retention. AKSC and its member companies are working hard to achieve the goals of Amendment 80 by implementing internal data management and quality control measures that enable companies and vessel captains to maximize allocations. For 2024, AKSC target catch amounts for this complex multi-species fishery were well utilized, PSC limits were below regulatory limits, and the groundfish retention goals exceeded.

Attachment 1



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February 27, 2025

Re: Audit of the Alaska Seafood Cooperative's groundfish retention for 2024.

This letter details the methods and results for an audit of the Alaska Seafood Cooperative's groundfish retention for 2024.

Methods:

Observer data for cooperative vessels were supplied to Sea State Inc. via the North Pacific Observer Program's password-protected web site. Logon credentials were supplied by all members of the Alaska Seafood Cooperative. Production data were obtained from the NMFS Alaska Region e-Landings system using login credentials supplied by member companies.

Unsampled hauls in the observer data were extrapolated using standard methods documented by NMFS Alaska Region to produce total groundfish catch estimates in accord with those in the Alaska Region Catch Accounting System. Retained product data were expanded to round weight equivalents (RWE) using published Product Recovery Rates.

Groundfish retention is given by:

Retained percentage = Retained catch (retained product RWE) / Total Catch (CAS).

For 2024, 2 groundfish categories transitioned to Prohibited Species Catch (PSC): Rougheye (CAI/WAI) on Aug 26 and AI Other Rockfish on Sept 16. The retained percentage calculation does not include these species after the transition date.

Results:

For 2024, the Alaska Seafood Cooperative's Total Catch of FMP species was 365,947 mt. The round weight-equivalent (RWE) from this catch was 302,697 mt. The annual retention rate for the Alaska Seafood Cooperative was 82.7%

Sincerely,
Steve Martell

Steve Martell
Sea State Inc.