

Tanana
Chiefs
Conference



TRIBAL TOOLKIT

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

CHUM SALMON BYCATCH – FINAL ACTION

CREATED BY TANANA CHIEFS CONFERENCE
TRIBAL RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP DEPARTMENT



**THIS DECISION WILL DETERMINE
WHETHER MEANINGFUL LIMITS ARE
PLACED ON CHUM SALMON BYCATCH
IN FEDERAL FISHERIES — OR WHETHER
CURRENT LOSSES CONTINUE.**



What Is the NPFMC?

The **North Pacific Fishery Management Council** manages federal fisheries from **3 to 200 nautical miles offshore** in the Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands, and Gulf of Alaska. While the Council does not manage salmon fisheries directly, it **regulates salmon bycatch** in federal fisheries, including the Bering Sea pollock fishery.

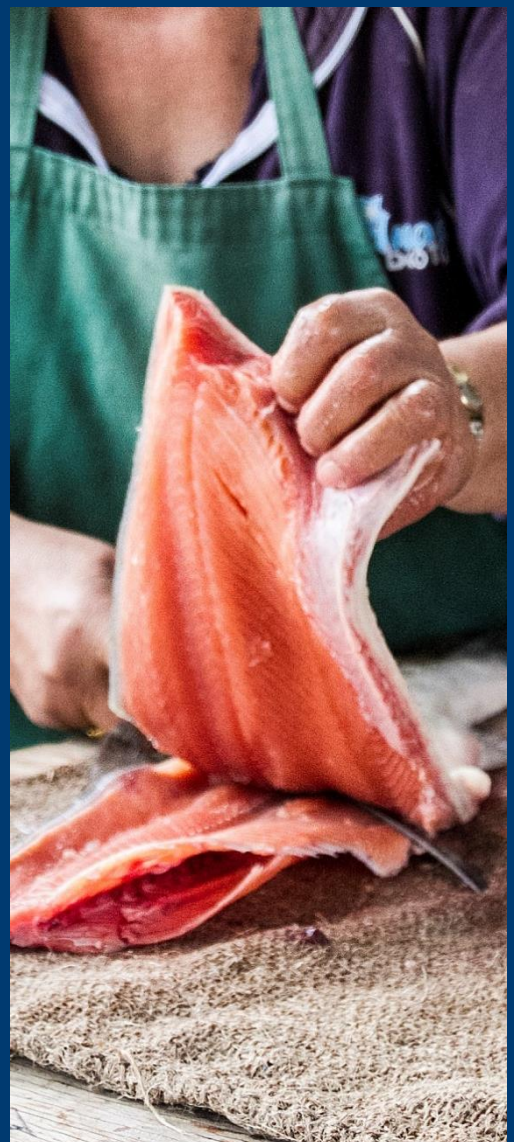
Why This Decision Matters

The Bering Sea pollock fishery accounts for **99% of chum salmon bycatch** in federal waters

17–19% of bycaught chum originates from **Western Alaska**, including Yukon and Kuskokwim stocks

Most chum salmon bycatch occurs from June through August, overlapping with peak migration timing for Western and Interior Alaska salmon, meaning these fish are **intercepted before they can reach subsistence users and spawning grounds**.

There is currently **no federal cap** on chum salmon bycatch



MORE THAN 600,000 WESTERN ALASKA CHUM SALMON HAVE BEEN CAUGHT AND DISCARDED IN FEDERAL FISHERIES SINCE 2011.



What Is Happening Now?

NOAA Fisheries initiated a **full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)** to reconsider how chum salmon bycatch is managed in the Bering Sea pollock fishery.

Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) and the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (KRITFC) are participating as **Tribal Cooperating Agencies**, ensuring that **Traditional Knowledge, subsistence impacts, and Tribal science** are incorporated into the analysis.

The Council is now selecting among management alternatives and will take **final action** at its February meeting.

What Decisions Are Being Made?

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council is deciding whether and how to place enforceable limits on chum salmon bycatch in federal fisheries.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) evaluates several management approaches, including:

- Whether to adopt a **hard annual cap** on chum salmon bycatch
- Whether to rely on **abundance-based** or trigger-based limits
- Whether avoidance measures should be **mandatory** or **voluntary**
- Whether to protect key Western Alaska **migration corridors**

The Council may adopt a package of alternatives, not just one.

DECADES OF VOLUNTARY MEASURES HAVE NOT PREVENTED REPEATED HIGH-BYCATCH YEARS.

THESE SALMON ARE LIVING RELATIVES — NOT DISPOSABLE LOSSES AT SEA



Preferred Management Approach

Protecting Western and Interior Alaska chum salmon requires **enforceable limits, targeted protections, and accountability**. The following alternatives work together to meaningfully reduce bycatch while improving predictability and transparency.

Alternative 2 – Fixed Annual Cap (≤100,000 Chum)

Establishes a **Bering Sea–wide hard cap** on chum salmon bycatch. Once the cap is reached, the pollock fishery closes for the remainder of the season.

Alternative 4 – Mandatory Avoidance & Accountability Measures

Requires salmon avoidance tools—such as **excluders, genetic sampling, reporting, and monitoring**—to be **mandatory rather than voluntary**.

Alternative 5 – Western Alaska Chum Migratory Corridor (Option 1)

Establishes a **50,000-fish in-season cap** within a defined migratory corridor near the Alaska Peninsula. When reached, **all corridor areas close**.

Important Note:

The **50,000-fish corridor cap** is included within the overall 100,000-fish **annual cap** under Alternative 2 — it is **not additive**.

**ZERO BYCATCH SHOULD BE THE GOAL —
BUT IT WAS NOT OFFERED AS AN OPTION
IN THE EIS.**

**CONSERVATION MUST BE A SHARED
RESPONSIBILITY FROM OCEAN TO RIVER.**

“The Council must adopt management measures that minimize the by-catch of chum salmon and other Western Alaska salmon to the greatest extent possible, in order to protect Yukon River salmon and the people who depend on them for their subsistence way of life.”

— Resolution 2012-50



How to Submit a Comment

Submit written comments by January 30, 2026 at 12:00 p.m.

**SCAN THE QR CODE WITH YOUR
PHONE TO WATCH A SHORT
VIDEO ON HOW TO COMMENT**

**OR EMAIL
TRSP@TANANACHIEFS.ORG
AND WE WILL HELP YOU SUBMIT
YOUR COMMENT**



For generations, Alaska Native communities along the Yukon and throughout Western and Interior Alaska have relied on these salmon for nourishment, cultural continuity, and the passing down of knowledge between Elders and youth. When salmon are intercepted at sea, those losses are not abstract. They are felt in empty smokehouses, missed teachings, disrupted ceremonies, and growing food insecurity in communities that have already borne the greatest burden of conservation.

