

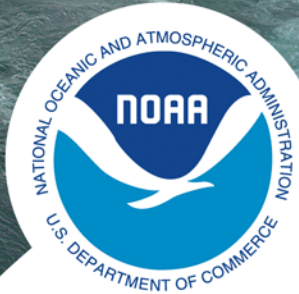


**NOAA**  
**FISHERIES**  
Alaska Region

# Alaska Region Issues and Perspectives

Jim Balsiger  
Alaska Regional Administrator

Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission 71st Annual Meeting  
August 27, 2018

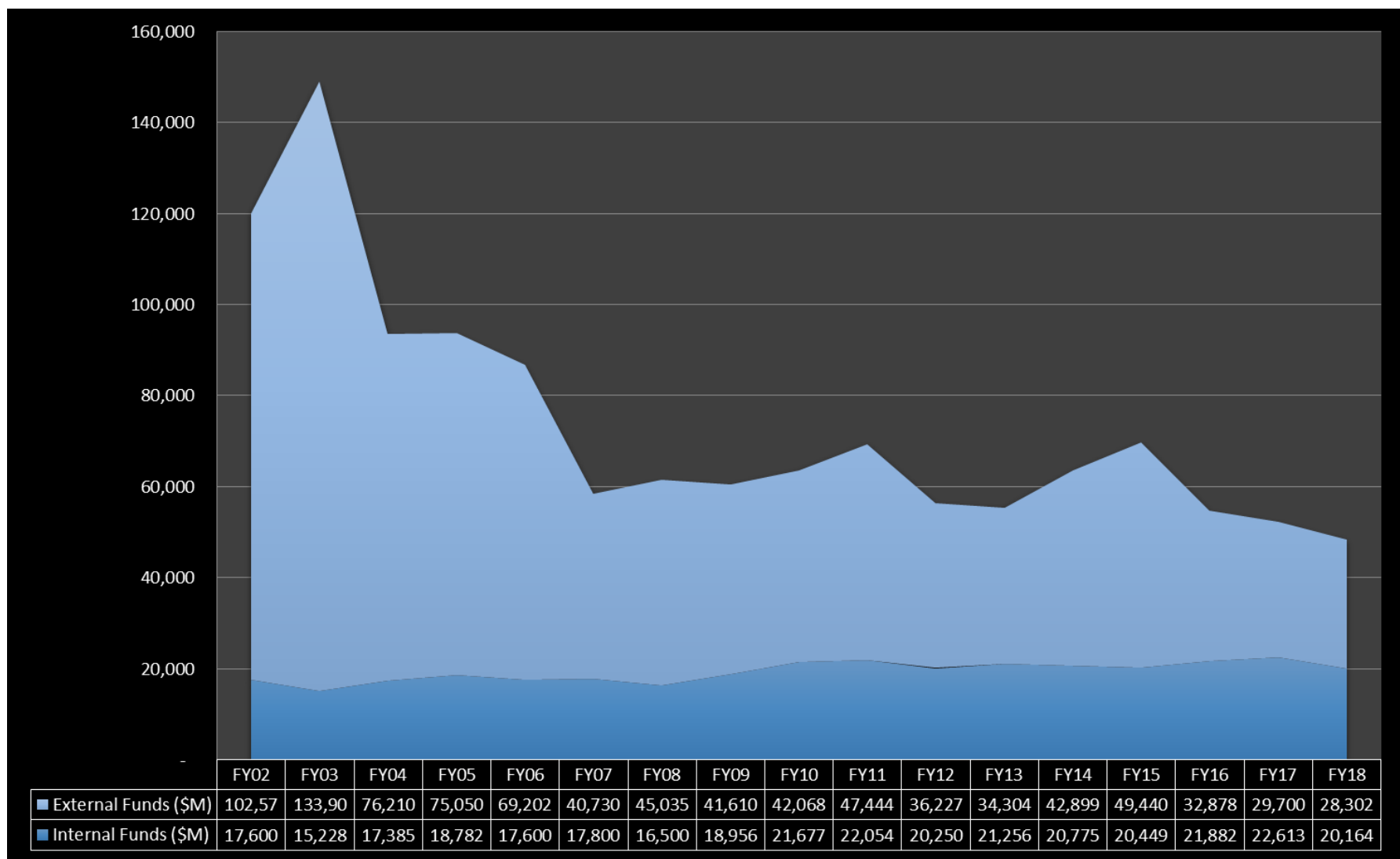


**NOAA**  
**FISHERIES**  
Alaska Region

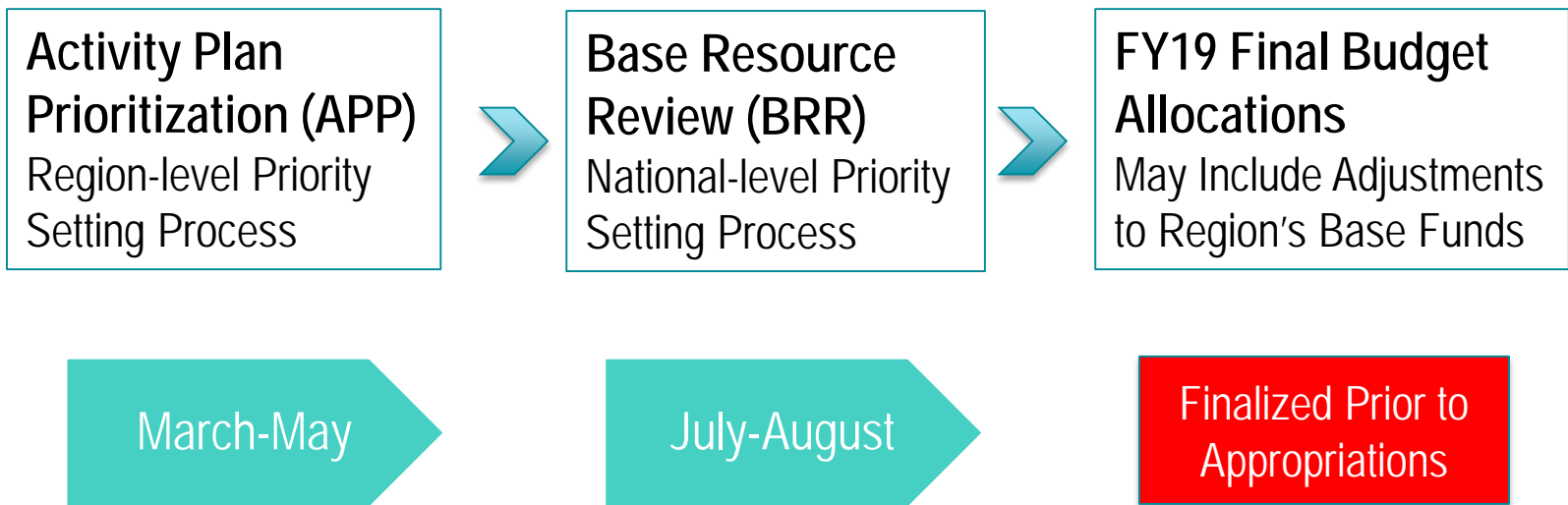
# Overview

- Budget History
- Base Resource Review
- Disaster Process
- Summary of AFSC Surveys
- Salmon FMP
- Observer Program
- EM Update
- Status of Stocks
- Halibut issues
- Aquaculture

# Alaska Region Budget History FY02-FY18

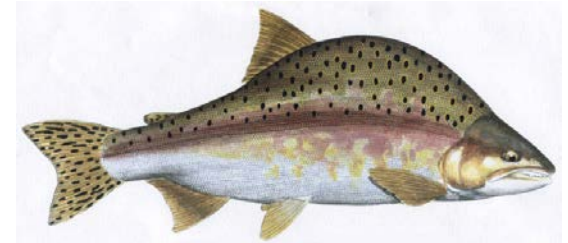


# New Priority Base Resourcing Framework



# 2016 Gulf of Alaska Pink Salmon Commercial Fisheries Failure

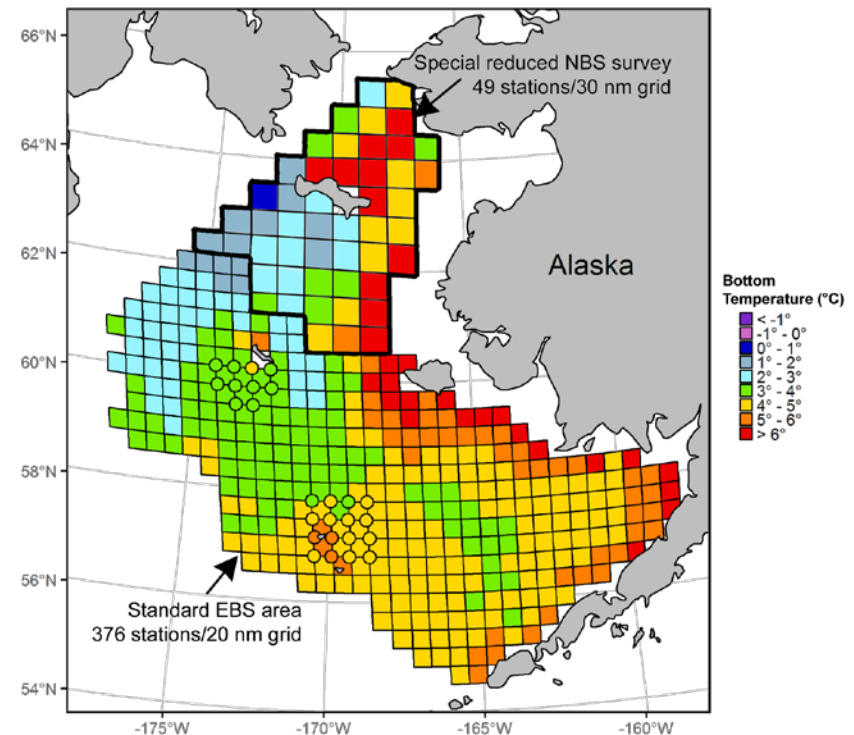
- \$56.3M Allocation to Address Disaster in Alaska
- Grant Administered by PSMFC
- State of Alaska Leading the Development of a Spend Plan
- Possible Relief Activities include:
  - Direct payments to impacted Harvesters, Processors, Municipalities
  - Research to Understand & Address Factors Leading to Disaster
- Estimated Timelines for Release of Funds:
  - Early December- Grant Approved
  - Early 2019- First Release of Direct Payments



# 2018 eastern and northern Bering Sea survey results

- Surveys to sample groundfish, crab and other bottom-dwelling species.
- Special reduced Northern Bering Sea survey following standard annual Eastern Bering Sea survey in 2018
- Heatmap 2018
  - Warmer than average bottom temperatures
  - Notable absence of cold pool ( $<2^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) on EBS shelf - unlike anything observed in 37-year time series
  - Warmer EBS shelf affecting distributions of walleye Pollock and Pacific cod
- Preliminary results from 2018 for walleye pollock and Pacific cod
  - Eastern Bering Sea
    - Survey completed 7/31 140,000 nm<sup>2</sup>
    - lower survey catches compared to 2017
    - fewer age 1 observed since 2015
  - Northern Bering Sea
    - Partial survey completed 8/15: similar catches compared to standard NBS survey in 2017
    - higher survey catches compared to EBS
    - genetic samples collected to determine origin
- A standard NBS survey will be conducted in 2019

Heatmap June-August 2018

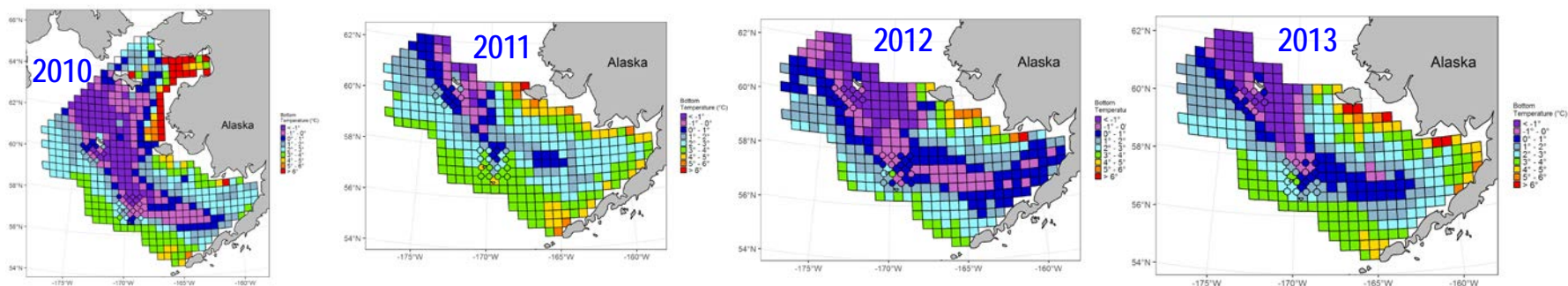


Above average "warm" year

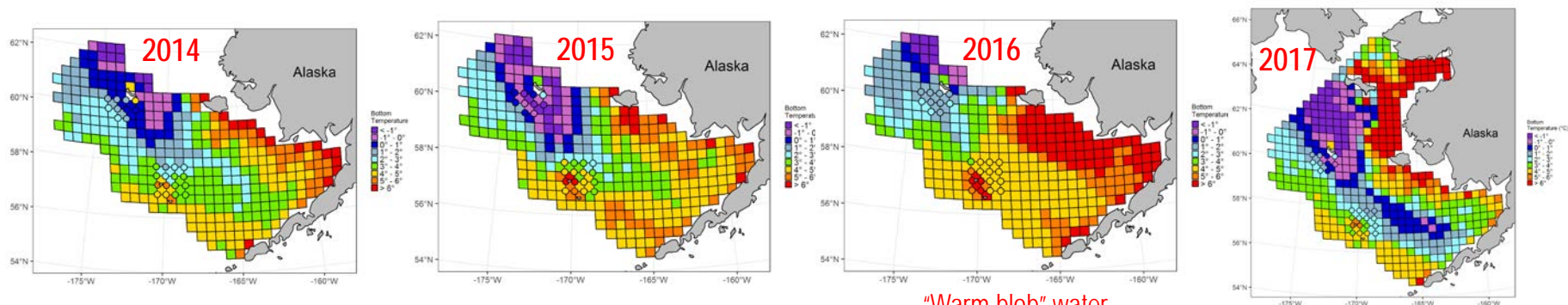
# 2018 eastern and northern Bering Sea survey results

Heatmaps from 2010 to 2017 standard surveys (next standard NBS survey in 2019)

Below average “cold years”



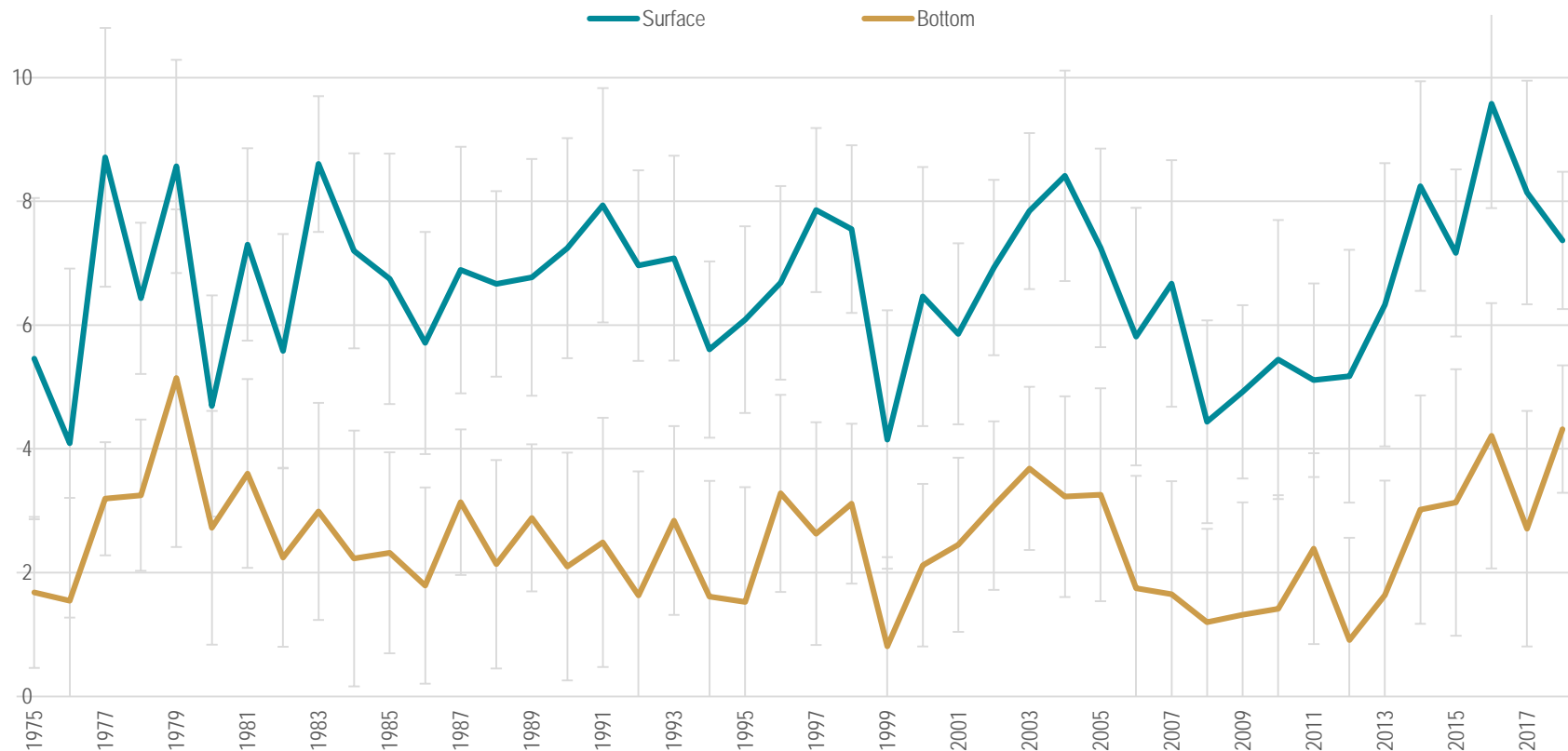
Above average “warm years”



“Warm blob” water  
from Gulf

# 2018 eastern Bering Sea crab survey results

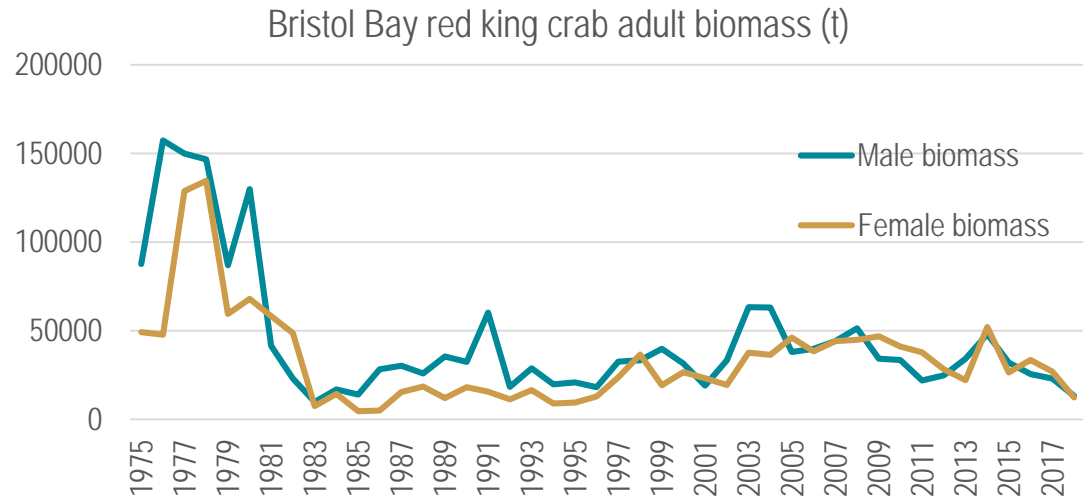
## Eastern Bering Sea June-July Temperatures



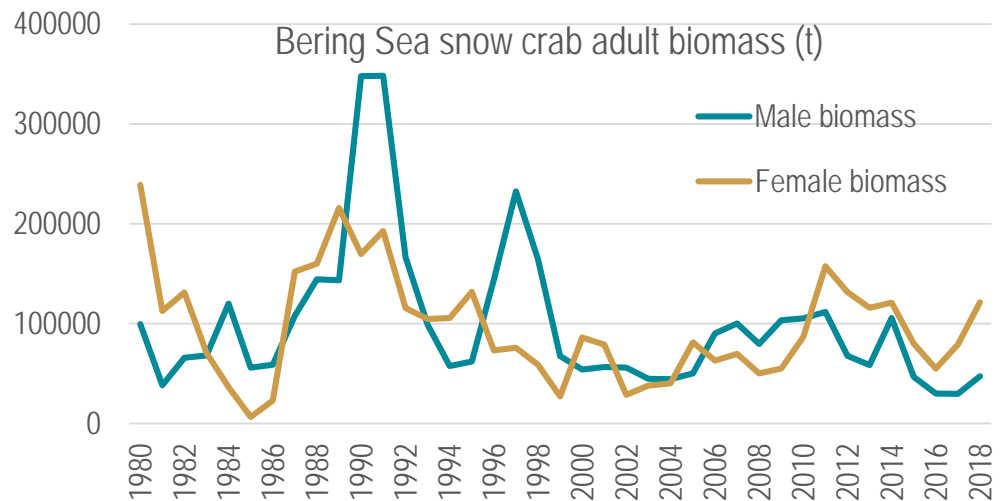


# 2018 eastern Bering Sea crab survey results

- Bristol Bay red king crab
  - Male and female biomass decrease 72% in 4 years
  - Little to no sign of recruitment



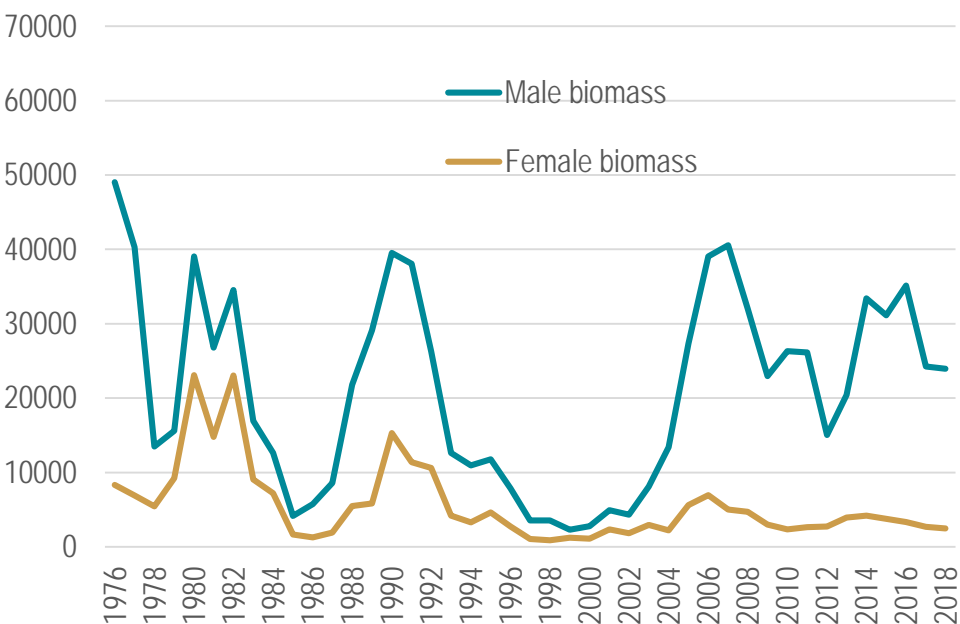
- Bering Sea snow crab
  - After 50% decline in mid-2000s, substantial increased recruitment and adult biomass
  - Movement likely due to changes in temperature



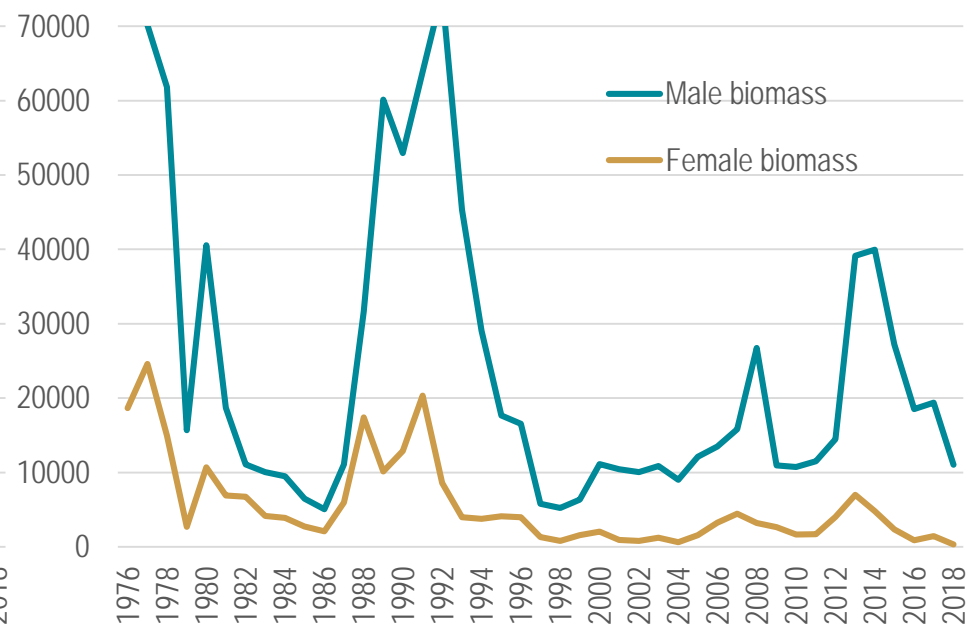
# 2018 eastern Bering Sea crab survey results

- Bering Sea Tanner crab
  - Western portion of stock relatively stable
  - Eastern portion of the stock near record lows; fishery closed

Western Tanner crab adult biomass (t)



Eastern Tanner crab adult biomass (t)



# Salmon FMP Update

- In June, the Council named a working group committee of stakeholders
- December Council Meeting
- Intention to allow ADF&G to work as it has traditionally



Credit: NPFMC

# North Pacific Observer Program Update

- Magnuson-Stevens Act authorizes North Pacific Council to establish system of fees to fund deployment of observers and electronic monitoring in groundfish and halibut fisheries off Alaska.
- Observer Program was restructured in 2013 to randomly deploy observers in a portion of the Alaska fisheries according to an Annual Deployment Plan (ADP)
- Observers deployed under the ADP are funded by an industry fee:
  - Fee is 1.25% of ex-vessel value of fisheries subject to the ADP (vessels in the “partial observer coverage category”).
  - Total amount of fees collected each year varies with the ex-vessel value of the fisheries. Has ranged between \$3-4M / year. NMFS also has provided additional funding for observer deployment to increase the total number of observer days.
  - Council has initiated an analysis to look at modifying the fee.
- In 2017, NMFS deployed 41,123 observer days
  - 37,517 days in full coverage on vessels and plants
  - 3,606 days on vessels in partial coverage
- Overall in 2017, for all federal fisheries, 4,362 trips (37.6%) and 458 vessels (40.3%) were monitored by either an observer or EM.



# Electronic Monitoring (EM) Update

## Fixed Gear (pot and longline)

- Regulated program started in 2018.
- Voluntary: vessels can choose to be in EM instead of observers
  - Participating vessels must comply with requirements
  - 141 vessels opted-in to EM in 2018
- Trips randomly selected for EM recording
- Video used to estimate discards of all species
- Video reviewed by PSMFC team in Portland



## Trawl gear

- In April, Council reconstituted EM Committee to focus on developing EM in Alaska trawl fisheries.
- Group meeting August 23-24 in Seattle to begin cooperative research and develop methods to implement EM in trawl catcher vessels and processing plants.



# Status of Stocks

October Joint Protocol Committee Mtg. (Council / AK Board of Fish)  
October 17, 2018, Anchorage

Pacific Cod Alaska Board of Fish Mtg.  
October 18-19, 2018, Anchorage

- **GOA Pacific cod** - 2017 stock assessment large decrease in ABC; full stock assessment updated in November 2018.
- **Sablefish** - strong 2014 year class; 2018 ABC increased 14%; additional incoming large year classes?
- **Squids** - moving to the Ecosystem Component.
- **Halibut** - Concerns over small year-classes of younger fish and a decline in overall abundance.



# Pacific Halibut

- Recreational quota entity (RQE)
  - Authorizes formation of a RQE, which could purchase and hold commercial halibut quota shares for use by charter anglers in International Pacific Halibut Commission regulatory Areas 2C (Southeast Alaska) and 3A (Southcentral Alaska).
  - Final rule is in final stages of review process.
- Charter Halibut Permit annual renewal
  - Requested by charter operators; intended to facilitate the retirement of non-transferable permits, help enforce rules for permit ownership caps, and collect information on the use and distribution of charter permits.
  - Proposed rule will likely be issued this year.



# Aquaculture

- Alaska opportunities

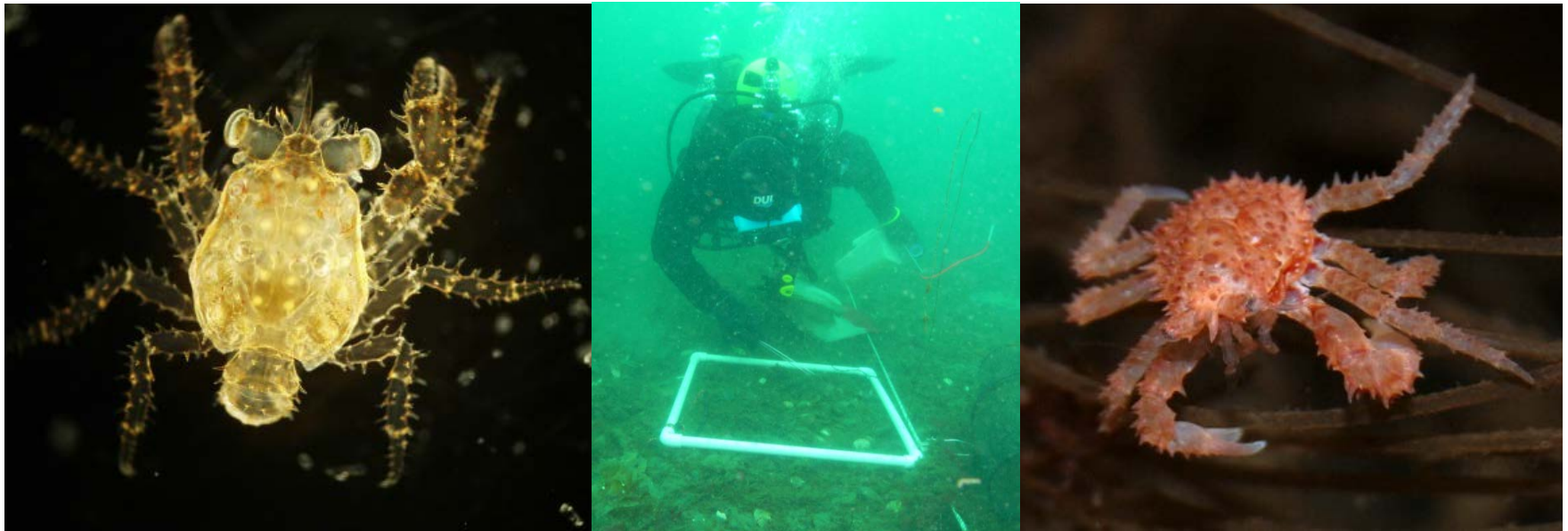
- Working with State regulators by conducting the research that may help determine the appropriate site based permit conditions.
- Using our technical expertise to advance culturing methods of shellfish species that would be of high market value.
- Transferring technology to stakeholders and interested parties.





# Aquaculture Coordinator

- NOAA supports aquaculture in Alaska and will be recruiting for a **NOAA Aquaculture Coordinator**.
- Currently: Acting Aquaculture Coordinator.





# Questions?



**NOAA FISHERIES**