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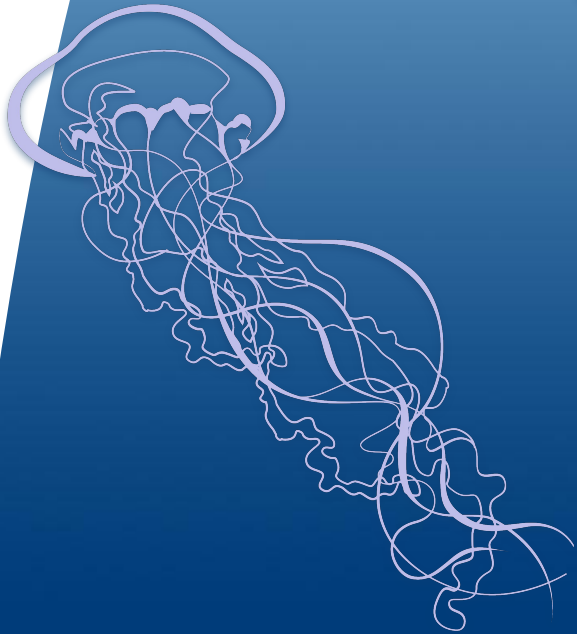
# Alaska Region Issues & Perspectives

Jim Balsiger  
Alaska Regional Administrator

Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission  
74th Annual Meeting  
August 24-25, 2021

# Overview

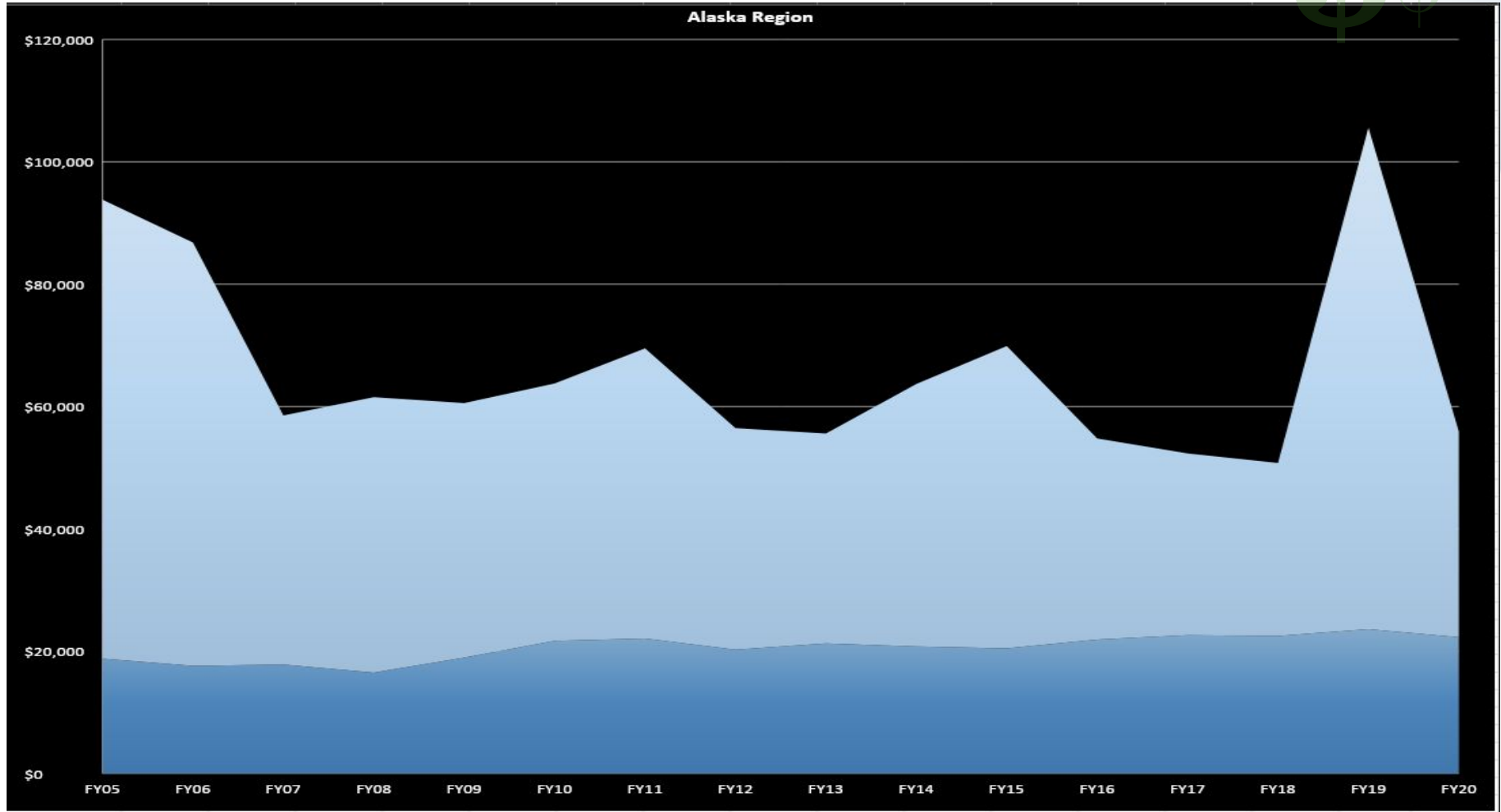
Budget History  
Fisheries Disasters  
Sustainable Fisheries  
Protected Resources  
Habitat  
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# Budget

## Alaska Region Budget History FY05 - FY20



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# Fisheries Disasters

## Awarded FY21

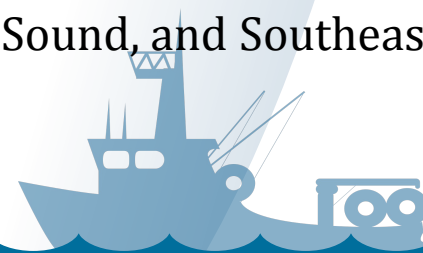
- \$10 million allocated to address 2018 Alaska Chignik Sockeye Salmon disaster
- \$24 million allocated for 2018 Gulf of Alaska Pacific Cod fishery disaster
- Grants Administered by PSMFC, Spend plans developed by the State of Alaska
- Projects started 8/1/21

## Declared-Alaska Norton Sound Red King Crab, 2019

- Approved 6/29/21
- Allocation yet to be determined by Congress

## Pending Determination

- Alaska 2018 East Side Set net and 2020 Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Fisheries
- Alaska Copper River Salmon Fisheries, 2018 and 2020
- Alaska Bering Sea Tanner Crab Fishery, 2019/2020
- Alaska Gulf of Alaska Pacific Cod Fishery, 2020
- Alaska Norton Sound, Yukon River, Chignik, Prince William Sound, and Southeast Alaska Salmon Fisheries, 2020
- Alaska Kuskokwim River and Salmon Fisheries, 2020

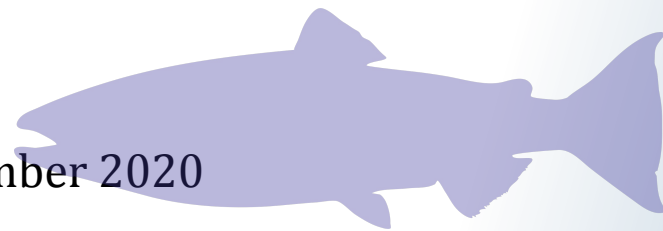


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# Sustainable Fisheries

## Amendment 14 to the Salmon FMP

- Council recommended Amendment 14 in December 2020
- NMFS published an NOA on May 18, 2021
- NMFS published a proposed rule on June 4, 2021
- NMFS approved Amendment 14 on August 12, 2021
- NMFS will publish a final rule implementing Amendment 14 by December 11, 2021

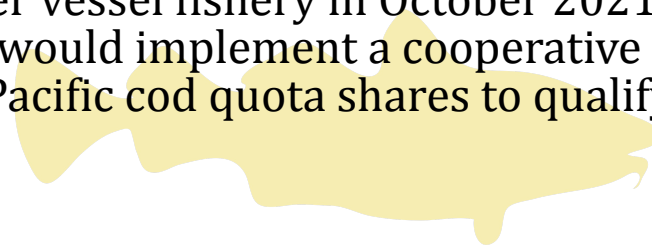


This action is controversial because it closes a portion of an area traditionally used by upper Cook Inlet drift gillnet salmon fishermen.

This action is necessary in response to a Ninth Circuit Court decision. The Council worked through its public process from 2017 to 2020.

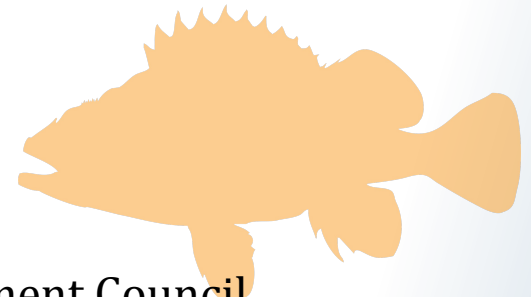
## BSAI Pacific cod Trawl CV LAPP

- The NPFMC is scheduled to take final action on the development of a Limited access privilege program (LAPP) to manage the BSAI Pacific cod trawl catcher vessel fishery in October 2021.
- This action would implement a cooperative based management program to allocate Pacific cod quota shares to qualifying LLP holders and processors.



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# Sustainable Fisheries



## Emergency Rules

On February 10, 2021, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council recommended NOAA Fisheries implement **four emergency** or expedited changes to Federal fishing regulations.

- Effective March 19, 2021, issued an emergency rule to modify the fishing season start date for fishing vessels participating in a rockfish cooperative as part of the **Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Program** (Rockfish Program) for the 2021 fishing year (86 FR 14851, March 19, 2021).
- Effective March 30, 2021, NOAA Fisheries issued a temporary rule (emergency rule) to modify the temporary transfer provision of the Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program for the fixed-gear commercial **Pacific halibut and sablefish fisheries** for the 2021 IFQ fishing year (86 FR 16542, March 30, 2021).
- Effective May 26, 2021 through December 31, 2021, NOAA Fisheries issues a final rule to **remove limits on the halibut IFQ vessel use caps** in IFQ regulatory areas 4A (Eastern Aleutian Islands), 4B (Central and Western Aleutian Islands), 4C (Central Bering Sea), and 4D (Eastern Bering Sea) for the 2021 IFQ fishing year (86 FR 28294, May 26, 2021).
- On April 15, 2021, NOAA Fisheries informed the NPFMC that their request for emergency action to **suspend the Adak CQE residency requirement** had been denied.





# Observer Program Update

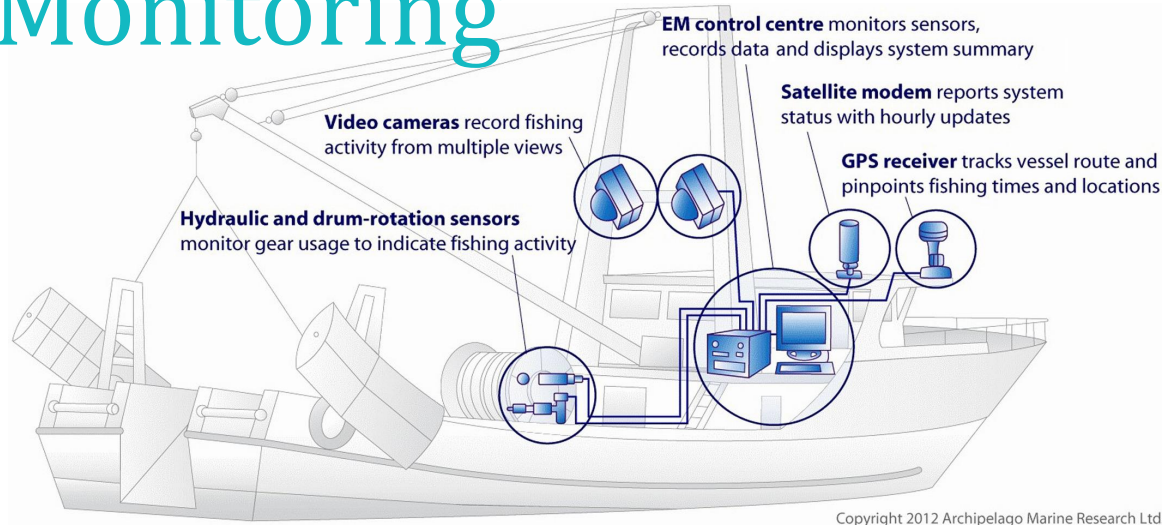


- Starting in March 2020, COVID-19 pandemic created travel limitations and “shelter in place” restrictions, particularly in remote Alaska.
  - NMFS responded to protect public health and ensure safety of fishermen and observers
  - Temporarily waived observer requirement for some vessels in the Partial Coverage Category
  - Despite challenges, NMFS was able to safely continue majority of observer program operations.
- 
- Large component of Alaska groundfish fisheries were NOT impacted:
  - Vessels and processors in the full coverage category, including all catcher processors and limited access privilege programs, were NOT issued waivers.
  - Deployment of EM was NOT waived.
  - Overall, for all federal fisheries off Alaska, 4,072 trips (44.8%) and 375 vessels (38.2%) were monitored by either an observer or EM system in 2020.



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# Electronic Monitoring



## Fixed Gear (pot and longline)

- Regulated program in place since 2018.
- Voluntary: vessels can choose to be in EM instead of observers
  - 168 vessels in fixed-gear EM in 2021
- 30% of trips randomly selected for EM recording
- EM used to estimate discards of all species

In both Alaska EM programs, video is reviewed by PSMFC team in Portland

## Trawl gear

- Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) started in 2020
- Evaluating use of EM on pollock catcher vessels using pelagic trawl gear in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska.
- 70 vessels participating in 2021.
- EM used for compliance monitoring of maximized retention.
- Catch accounting catch and bycatch is done via landing reports and shoreside plant observers.



# Protected Resources

## Species Recovery Grants to States (ESA Section 6)

- President's budget would result in about \$12M available nationally for new awards in FY22 (if level funding, ~\$3.4M)
- Applications now open, deadline is November 1, 2021

## Marine Mammal Coordination with ADF&G

- NMFS recently proposed that our agencies schedule regular meetings (e.g., every 2 months) to help us stay in sync

## Recent ESA Decisions Incorporating ADF&G Comments

- Humpback whale critical habitat: excluded Bristol Bay area, Central Peninsula area, Cook Inlet area, and Southeast Alaska
- Harbor seals in Iliamna Lake: found that listing is not warranted

## Challenges Remain

- State of Alaska Notice of Intent to sue NMFS over finding that petition to delist ringed seals was not warranted



# Habitat

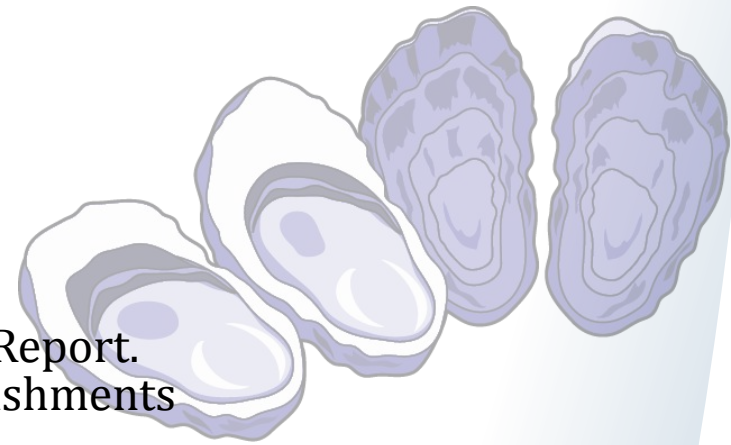
## Large Scale Habitat Restoration to Build Climate Resilience Grant Program

- The FY22 President's Budget includes a proposed increase of \$40M for a this new Program.
- This new national program would increase our ability to do more large-scale habitat restoration, allowing us to restore more coastal wetlands and open more rivers in support of fish.

## Species distribution mapping is key to ecosystem-based fisheries management and understanding climate change impacts on fish

- We are working to modernize our species distribution models (SDM) to improve our definitions of Essential Fish Habitat.
- Future - Modeling fish habitat in the nearshore and innovative and dynamic modeling approaches that consider links between environmental variables and local habitat impacts on overall fish productivity.

# Aquaculture



## Investing in Alaska Aquaculture

- New AKR and AFSC Aquaculture positions
- Alaska Mariculture Workshop and Summary Report.
- Aquaculture Action Plan and annual accomplishments

## Alaska Aquaculture Permitting Portal and Guidance Document

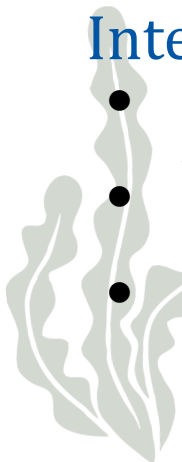
- Will serve as a central location for local, state, and federal application instructions, farm siting guidance, and resources for new and current farmers.

## Aquaculture Opportunity Area

- (AOA) exploration and identification in Alaska.

## Internal Aquaculture Funds:

- D&I-focused project to develop a dulse mariculture classroom unit focused on Alaska Native youth education, stewardship, and food sovereignty
- Herring deterrent project responding to an industry need to keep herring from laying eggs on seaweed crops.
- Determine population structure of kelp species in Alaska





# Thank You



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