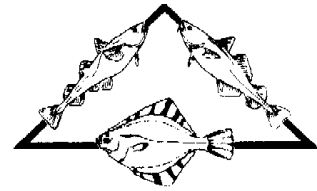


Alaska Groundfish Data Bank

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Statement from Alaska Groundfish Data Bank on Unprecedented Salmon Incident in the Central Gulf of Alaska Pollock Fishery

On September 22, two fishing vessels in the Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA) targeting Pollock experienced an extremely unprecedented amount of Chinook salmon in a large biomass of pollock. Before the fishery began on September 1, the entire fleet of 50 trawl vessels planning to target pollock GOA-wide had proactively agreed to voluntarily report salmon hotspot areas to share with the fleet so areas with potentially high salmon could be avoided.

When this event occurred, both vessels were adhering to best fishing practices, including monitoring for salmon and communicating to each other on the grounds. When the first vessel determined there was an unprecedented amount of salmon, the other vessel fishing nearby was immediately notified and that vessel hauled its gear and ceased fishing, likely resulting in significantly less salmon. The vessels immediately reported the hotspot information to the Alaska Groundfish Data Bank (AGDB) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in-season management was notified of the event. Both vessels had observer coverage for the trip and the observers were able to fully identify, count, and collect data on all the Chinook salmon from both vessels after the delivery.

The salmon count was shared with the fleet as part of their pre-season agreement, and based on these counts, the fleet chose to suspend fishing for Pollock, and continues to do so, until the official data is fully available to determine next steps. AGDB has been working with processors to ensure all data is accurately submitted as soon as possible and providing NMFS with regular updates since September 22.

The fleet met on September 24 to understand the consequences of the large salmon event and discuss how the fishery may be resumed. The fleet will meet again today to further discuss the fishery's status, and if the fishery can continue operating, what additional measures are necessary to minimize additional salmon bycatch. Kodiak is a local commercial fishing community; the fleet is primarily locally owned and operated, has the largest resident processing workforce, and countless support businesses that rely on our fisheries, including pollock, to operate.