TRUTH ABOUT CHUM SALMON BYCATCH

How science and data driven policies will protect Western Alaska salmon

Western Alaska (WAK) chum salmon are an essential part of Alaska culture, subsistence way of life, and ecosystem. Like all Alaskans, the Alaska pollock fishery cares deeply about WAK chum.

As one of the best-managed and sustainable fisheries in the world, the pollock fishery takes pride in responsible practices and is commited to conservation.

99%

OF THE FISH
POLLOCK TRAWLERS CATCH
ARE POLLOCK.

Minimizing incidental catch of other marine species is a priority for the Alaska pollock sector.

We are recognized as "one of the cleanest in terms of incidental catch of other species" by the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Alaska pollock trawlers operating in the Eastern Bering Sea are monitored by trained federal observers and/or cameras who count every fish.

COMMITTED TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

We invest in research – to improve our understanding of the composition of chum salmon bycatch.

We believe that:

Foreign competition and practices are having a devastating impact on WAK chum.

More prescriptive measures informed by science and genetics will lead to better outcomes.

Fishery data, genetics, and local and traditional knowledge can inform where and when effective chum avoidance measures should occur.

EXTERNAL FACTORS IMPACTING CHUM SALMON

Several external factors are impacting the survival rates of salmon resulting in population decline.

ECOSYSTEM + CLIMATE CHANGE: Science suggests ecosystem and climate changes are the leading causes of recent chum salmon declines.
Sources: Farley et al., 2024, DEIS (pg. 9)

WARMING OCEAN WATERS: WAK chum salmon were subject to heat waves in their marine habitats – shifting the food web and altering their diets.
Source: DEIS (pg 9)

INCREASES IN FOREIGN HATCHERY CHUM: WAK chum salmon are affected by increases in pink salmon and Asian-origin hatchery chum salmon.
Sources: Ruggerone & Agler (2008), DEIS (pg. 82)

According to scientific research, chum salmon spawners today are smaller than decades prior.

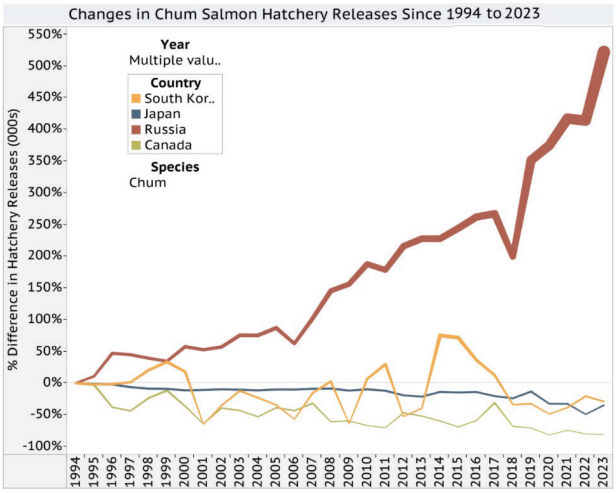
Smaller salmon, impacted by poor marine feeding conditions and climate change, exhibit reduced egg production/reproductive capacity. Fewer juvenile salmon entering the life cycle result in population declines.

FEWER EGGS = FEWER SALMON
=
SALMON POPULATION DECLINE

Sources: DEIS (pg 82), Oke et al. 2020

MAJORITY OF CHUM SALMON IS OF ASIAN AND RUSSIAN HATCHERY ORIGIN.

Russia has explicitly stated its intention to double its hatchery production – flooding the ocean with more hatchery fish than inevitably show up in bycatch numbers.



Studies from 2011 – 2023 show:

Genetic testing confirms nearly 53% of bycatch is of foreign hatchery origin.

> Only **19% of the chum salmon** bycatch **originates from WAK river systems**

> Recently released 2024 data shows that **foreign hatchery fish is 56.4%** while **Western Alaska chum is 13.1%**

Source: Table 1, pg 8, 2024 Bycatch Report

RUSSIAN THREATS ON ALASKA SEAFOOD MARKET

> While the Alaska pollock fishery operates under the highest sustainability standards, **Russia has flooded the global seafood market** with fish caught under questionable practices.

> The **U.S. has taken strong steps by banning Russian seafood imports** – even if processed in China – but the threat remains.

> **Putting non-science-based constraints on the Alaska pollock fishery will inadvertently strengthen Russian power to control global seafood markets.**

Alaskans should unite in promoting the sustainable Alaska pollock fishery and push back against unfair and unsustainable foreign competition.

Alaskans deserve policies that prioritize sustainability, transparency and science.