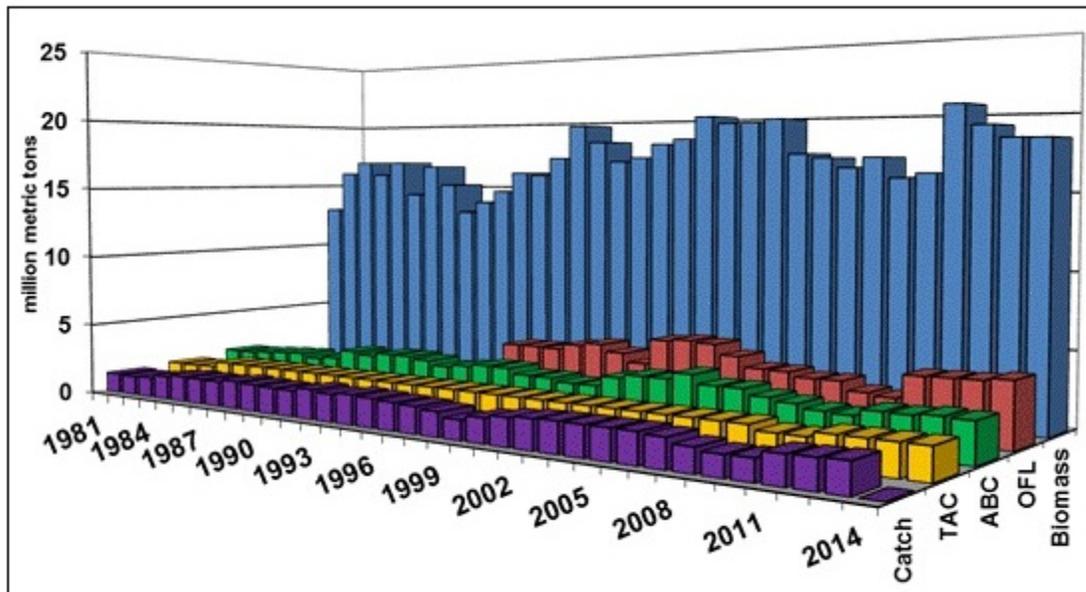


OFLs, ABCs, TACs, and Apportionments. The sums of the recommended ABCs for 2014 and 2015 are 2,574,868 t and 2,476,738 t, respectively. These compare with the sum of the 2013 ABC (2,639,317 t). BSAI catches through November 9, 2013 totaled 1,866,580 t (93 percent of total TACs).

Overall, the status of the BSAI stocks continues to appear favorable. The abundances of EBS pollock, EBS Pacific cod, sablefish; all rockfishes managed under Tier 3 except AI blackspotted/roughey, and all flatfishes managed under Tiers 1 or 3 are projected to be above  $B_{MSY}$  or the  $B_{MSY}$  proxy of B35% in 2014. The abundances of four stocks are projected to be below  $B_{35\%}$  for 2014: AI pollock by about 2 percent, sablefish by about 1 percent, Greenland turbot by about 13 percent, and AI blackspotted/roughey rockfish by about 7 percent.

The sum of the biomasses for 2014 is nearly the same as reported for 2013, following declines of 5 percent from 2013 to 2012 and 6 percent from 2012 to 2011. Pollock and Pacific cod biomasses were fairly flat at increased levels, after a period of decline. Pollock biomasses have been decreasing, after peaking in 2011. Pacific cod biomass peaked in 2012. Flatfishes are generally increasing. Biomass of Greenland turbot has been increasing due to recent increased recruitment, but is still low. Following recent declines, biomass of Atka mackerel is increasing.



**TAC-setting.** In setting TACs for 2014 and 2015 the Council accounts for guideline harvest levels (GHLs) for groundfish fisheries in state waters. Since 2006 the Council has set its Federal TAC for BSAI Pacific cod to account for a state water Pacific cod fishery in the AI, with a GHL set equal to 3 percent of the BSAI ABC. In 2013 the Alaska Board of Fisheries created a new state water Pacific cod fishery in the Bering Sea (GHL = 3 percent of the BSAI ABC).

Complicating the formula for the GHLs, the SSC has indicated its intent to set separate OFLs and ABCs for EBS Pacific cod and AI Pacific cod in 2014. Therefore the state water fisheries for each of the two areas would be set at 8,103 t, as shown below.

**Pacific cod harvest specifications (tons) for 2014 based on BSAI Plan Team recommendations**

| Area | OFL     | ABC     | GHL (3% of BSAI ABC) | TAC     | CDQ    | ITAC    | ICA   | DFA   |
|------|---------|---------|----------------------|---------|--------|---------|-------|-------|
| AI   | 20,100  | 15,100  | 8,103                | 6,997   | 749    | 6,248   | 2,000 | 4,248 |
| BS   | 299,000 | 255,000 | 8,103                | 246,897 | 26,418 | 220,479 | *     |       |
| BSAI | 319,100 | 270,100 |                      | 253,894 | 27,167 | 226,727 |       |       |

Note: the Council may set the TACs less than ABC for socio-economic reasons.

If NMFS determines that any allocation or apportionment of a TAC has been or will be reached, then NMFS determines the amount of an individual TAC that will be taken as the incidental catch allowance (ICA) in other target fisheries. For example, Alaska plaice caught incidentally in a yellowfin sole target fishery contributes to the Alaska plaice ICA. After deducting the ICA, the remaining TAC is the directed fishing allowance (DFA), which allows vessels full retention of the target species or species group. The directed fishery closes once the DFA is reached.

**Flatfish flexibility.** In addition to accounting for state water GHLs in setting TACs, there is a pending FMP amendment that would affect annual harvest specifications for flathead sole, rock sole, and yellowfin sole in 2015, at the earliest. Amendment 105 would allocate the ABC reserve (i.e., the difference between the ABC and TAC, minus a discretionary buffer amount that the Council could determine based on social, economic, or ecological considerations) for these three flatfish species among the Amendment 80 cooperatives and CDQ groups, using the same formulas that are used in the annual harvest specifications process. These entities would be able to exchange their flathead sole, rock sole, or yellowfin sole quota share for an equivalent amount of their allocation of the ABC reserve for these three species. The Amendment 80 cooperatives would provide annual reports to the Council no later than December 1st, each year, to include information on their use of ABC reserve exchanges and quota share transfers, actual harvest, and annual changes in catch capacity so that the current year's information could inform the Council's decision on future annual harvest specifications as to whether to establish a buffer reducing the amount of the ABC reserve available to be exchanged by eligible entities. With respect to implementation, NMFS noted at the time of final action that due to changes required for the catch accounting system, the amendment (if approved), is unlikely to be effective before 2016. Therefore it is extremely unlikely for an in-season adjustment to 2014 TACs since proposed rulemaking is still being drafted. The Council may wish to recommend 2015 harvest specifications in the event implementation and modification to the CAS has occurred in time for 2015, or wait until the December 2014 harvest specification cycle for 2015/2016. The Council also would need to provide its rationale or criteria it may use on whether it is necessary to incorporate a buffer in the ABC reserve for these three flatfish species in a particular year, and if so at what level. For example, the Council may wish to obviate the need for a more conservative ICA by restricting eligible entities from taking the full amount of the ABC surplus. Alternatively, the Council may wish to respond to market conditions by restricting the harvestable amount for a particular species. By being as explicit as possible in its rationale for the need for the restricted flexibility, the Council would streamline the justification and rulemaking process for the annual harvest specifications (particularly in its first year of application).

**Categories used for prohibited species catch limits**

**Trawl fisheries**

1. Greenland turbot, arrowtooth flounder and sablefish
2. rock sole, flathead sole, and “other flatfish”
3. yellowfin sole
4. rockfish
5. Pacific cod
6. pollock, Atka mackerel and “other species”

**Non-trawl fisheries**

1. Pacific cod
2. other non-trawl (longline sablefish and rockfish, and jig gear)
3. groundfish pot (exempt in recent years)

**Adopt prohibited species catch limits for Pacific halibut, crab, and herring**

Since 2008, the head and gut trawl catcher/processor sector, which targets flatfish, Pacific cod, Pacific ocean perch, and Atka mackerel, have been allocated groundfish TACs and PSC limits and members of the “Amendment 80” sector have been allowed to join cooperatives to manage their allocations. Regulations require that crab and halibut trawl PSC limits be apportioned between the BSAI trawl limited access and Amendment 80 sectors after subtraction of prohibited species quota (PSQ) reserves. Crab and halibut trawl PSC limits assigned to the Amendment 80 sector is then sub-allocated to Amendment 80 cooperatives as PSC cooperative quota (CQ). PSC CQ assigned to Amendment 80 cooperative(s) is not allocated to specific fishery categories. Regulations require the apportionment of each trawl PSC limit not assigned to an Amendment 80 cooperative be assigned into PSC bycatch allowances for seven specified fishery categories (**Item C-7(c)**).

*Trawl Fisheries:* The halibut PSC limit are apportioned to the trawl fishery categories as shown in the box at right. The overall PSC limit is fixed under Amendment 80 at 3,526 t, as of 2012. Additional reductions of 5 percent would occur if PSC limit amounts are transferred from the trawl limited access sector to the Amendment 80 trawl sector during a fishing year.

**Halibut Trawl PSC Limits**

|         |                                   |
|---------|-----------------------------------|
| 3,526 t | Total Trawl Halibut Apportionment |
| 2,325 t | Amendment 80                      |
| 875 t   | Trawl Limited Access              |
| 326 t   | CDQ                               |

*Fixed Gear Fisheries:* A 900 t non-trawl gear halibut mortality limit can be apportioned by fishery categories. Beginning in 2008, Amendment 85 divided the halibut PSC limit for the hook-and-line Pacific cod fishery between the hook-and-line CP and CV sectors (CVs  $\geq 60$  ft (18.3 m) LOA and CVs  $< 60$  ft (18.3 m) LOA combined). The Council can provide varying amounts of halibut PSC by season to each sector, tailoring PSC limits to suit the needs and timing of each sector.

*Crab:* Prescribed bottom trawl fisheries in specific areas are closed when PSC limits of Tanner crab *C. bairdi*, snow crab *C. opilio*, and red king crab are reached. A stair step procedure for determining PSC limits for red king crab taken in Zone 1 trawl fisheries is based on the abundance of mature Bristol Bay red king crab. Based on the 2013 estimate of effective

spawning biomass of 49.3 million pounds, the PSC limit for 2014 remains unchanged at 97,000 red king crabs. Up to 25% of the red king crab PSC limit can be used in the 56° - 56°10'N strip of the Red King Crab Savings Area. The red king crab PSC limit has generally been allocated among the pollock/Atka mackerel/other species, Pacific cod, rock sole, and yellowfin sole fisheries.

PSC limits for *C. bairdi* in Zones 1 and 2 are based on a percentage of the total abundance minus an additional reduction implemented in 1999 of *C. bairdi* crab as indicated by the NMFS trawl survey. Based on the 2013 model estimated total abundance (945,562,422 crabs), the PSC limit in 2014 for *C. bairdi* is unchanged from last year: 980,000 crabs in Zone 1 and 2,970,000 crabs in Zone 2.

| <b>PSC limits for red king crab and <i>C. bairdi</i> Tanner crab</b> |             |  |                               |
|--|-------------|--|-------------------------------|
| <b>Species</b>   | <b>Zone</b> | <b>Crab Abundance</b>                            | <b>PSC Limit</b>              |
| Red King Crab  | Zone 1      | ≤ 8.4 million mature crab threshold or           | 32,000                        |
|  |             | 14.5 million lb effective spawning biomass (ESB) |                               |
|  |             | > threshold, but < 55 million lb ESB             | 97,000                        |
|  |             | ≥ 55 million lb ESB                              | 197,000                       |
| Tanner Crab  | Zone 1      | 0-150 million crab                               | 0.5% total abundance - 20,000 |
|  |             | 150-270 million crab                             | 730,000                       |
|  |             | 270-400 million crab                             | 830,000                       |
|  |             | > 400 million crab                               | 980,000                       |
| Tanner Crab  | Zone 2      | 0-175 million crab                               | 1.2% total abundance - 30,000 |
|  |             | 175-290 million crab                             | 2,070,000                     |
|  |             | 290-400 million crab                             | 2,520,000                     |
|  |             | > 400 million crab                               | 2,970,000                     |

Snow crab (*C. opilio*) PSC limits are based on total abundance of *opilio* crab as indicated by the NMFS standard trawl survey. The limit is set at 0.1133% of the total snow crab abundance index, with a minimum limit of 4.5 million snow crabs and a maximum limit of 13 million snow crabs; the limit is further reduced by 150,000 crabs. The 2013 model estimate of 10,005,200,000 crabs result in a 2014 PSC limit of 11,185,892 crabs. Snow crab taken within the "*C. opilio* Bycatch Limitation Zone" accrues toward the PSC limits established for the trawl sectors.

**Herring:** In 1991, an overall herring PSC limit of 1 percent of the EBS biomass of herring was implemented. This limit is apportioned to the seven PSC fishery categories. The ADF&G estimate of herring spawning biomass for the eastern Bering Sea for 2014 is 217,153 t (**Item C-7(d)**). The corresponding herring PSC limit for 2014 at 1 percent of this amount is 2,172 t.

Seasonal apportionment of PSC limits The Council may also seasonally apportion the PSC limits. Regulations require that seasonal apportionments of bycatch allowances be based on information listed below.

**Factors to be considered for seasonal apportionments of bycatch allowances**

1. Seasonal distribution of prohibited species;
2. Seasonal distribution of target groundfish species relative to prohibited species distribution;
3. Expected prohibited species bycatch needs on a seasonal basis relevant to change in prohibited species biomass and expected catches of target groundfish species;
4. Expected variations in bycatch rates throughout the fishing year;
5. Expected changes in directed groundfish fishing seasons;
6. Expected start of fishing efforts; and
7. Economic effects of establishing seasonal prohibited species apportionments on segments of the target groundfish industry.

**Item C-7(e)** provides PSC use as of November 9, 2013 for trawl and non-trawl gear.