

## **Council Refines Options for Chum Bycatch Management**

*By Becca Robbins Gisclair, Policy Director*

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (the Council) met in Sitka June 7-15. At this meeting the Council refined the options, called "alternatives," it is considering for chum salmon bycatch management measures for the Bering Sea pollock fishery. The current alternatives under consideration include a range of hard caps, which would close the fishery when reached, and trigger caps, which would close a set area when reached. The alternatives also include an option for the fleet to participate in a rolling hot spot system and be exempt from the area closure in regulation; this is the system the fleet currently works under.

The Council did not make any changes to the range of numbers being considered for hard caps and trigger caps at this meeting. The ranges are 50,000 to 353,000 chum salmon for hard caps and 25,000 to 200,000 chum salmon for trigger caps. The alternatives include options for allocating these caps amongst the different sectors of the fleet.

The Council made several changes to the area and timing options for the area closures (trigger caps). The alternatives now include a range of areas encompassing 40 to 60 percent of the areas where chum salmon bycatch has historically occurred. The trigger caps, which are associated with the area closures, could be applied on a cumulative or monthly basis. A special closure area associated with the rolling hot spot system is also now included in the alternatives. This large closure area encompasses 80 percent of the area where bycatch has occurred historically, and would be selected with the rolling hot spot system. Having a large closure area associated with the hot spot system would provide an incentive for vessels to participate in the hot spot system and be exempt from the closure, which would close much of the fishing grounds.

The Council's action also outlines a number of other items to be included in the analysis for this action. The Council's full motion is available online at:

[http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/current\\_issues/bycatch/Chumbycatchmotion610.pdf](http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/current_issues/bycatch/Chumbycatchmotion610.pdf).

Council staff will now prepare an initial review draft analysis of these alternatives. The Council is scheduled to perform an initial review of the analysis at its February 2011 meeting in Seattle. At that point the Council will have another opportunity to refine the alternatives under consideration.

The tentative timeline for action on chum salmon bycatch management is for selection of a preliminary preferred alternative at the June 2011 meeting in Nome and final action in October 2011 in Anchorage.