

	<p><b>AFA Catcher Vessel Inter-Cooperative Agreement</b></p>	<p>U.S. Dept. of Commerce/NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Restricted Access Management (RAM) P.O. Box 21668 Juneau, AK 99802-1668 (800) 304-4841 free / 586-7202 in Juneau (907) 586-7354 fax</p>	
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The American Fisheries Act (AFA) Catcher Vessel Intercooperative Agreement is a voluntary document requested by the Council (see <http://www.alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/afa/coopreports/2013/cvintercoop.pdf>)

The AFA Catcher Vessel Intercooperative Agreement is a summary of the eight active catcher vessel cooperative reports required by the AFA regulations. While the individual coop reports track the annual activities of each cooperative at the vessel level, a summary of AFA catcher vessel harvests in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska fisheries is useful as NMFS allocates the catcher vessel sideboard caps and prohibited species catch (PSC) caps and triggers in the aggregate, not by individual cooperatives.

The Catcher Vessel Intercooperative Agreement provides the Council and the public with a simple means of evaluating the AFA catcher vessel fleets' aggregate fishing performance under the AFA regulations. Additionally, this report provides information beyond the required regulatory elements of the individual coop reports to provide a broader understanding of catcher vessel cooperative activities.

The AFA catcher vessel cooperatives rewrote portions of the Intercooperative Agreement for 2013. The changes focused on improving the Bering Sea cod fishery in terms of improved catch efficiency and the reduction of halibut bycatch. To improve catch efficiency the allocation timing mechanisms for halibut PSC were revised in a manner intended to maximize cod harvest timing at the peak CPUE time of the season. Additionally, all AFA vessels in the Bering Sea cod fishery sub-area are required to:

- ◆ Use a halibut excluder device;
- ◆ Use a codend with a mesh size no smaller than 7 inches (phased in over 3 years);
- ◆ No night fishing allowed.

The Agreement continues to emphasize the commitment by all members towards reducing bycatch in each Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (BSAI) and Gulf of Alaska (GOA) groundfish fishery in which they participate.

The AFA Catcher Vessel Intercooperative Agreement includes the following information

Allocation, monitoring, and compliance of the BSAI and GOA sideboard limits and PSC caps among the AFA catcher vessel cooperative members

Allocation, monitoring, and compliance of BSAI pollock harvest inside the Steller sea lion conservation area

Establishment of penalties for coops that exceed pollock and sideboard allocations

Provides for the harvest of BSAI pacific cod by the "under 1700 mt" exempt vessels while complying with PSC limits

Establishment and monitoring of sideboard species transfers between cooperatives

Promotes compliance of the Council's recommended sideboard measures and PSC limits while allowing for the maximum harvest of AFA pollock and sideboard allocations

Promotes reduction of PSC in the Bering Sea pollock fishery

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***PUBLIC REPORTING BURDEN STATEMENT***

Public reporting burden for this collection-of-information is estimated to average 40 hours per response, including the time for reviewing the instructions, searching the existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to Assistant Regional Administrator, Sustainable Fisheries Division, NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668.

***ADDITIONAL INFORMATION***

Before completing this form, please note the following: 1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection-of-information subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, unless that collection-of-information displays a currently valid OMB Control Number; 2) This information is mandatory and is required to manage commercial fishing efforts under 50 CFR part 679 and under section 402(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (16 U.S.C. 1801, *et seq.*) as amended in 2006; 3) Responses to this information request are confidential under section 402(b) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act as revised in 2006. They are also confidential under NOAA Administrative Order 216-100, which sets forth procedures to protect confidentiality of fishery statistics.

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