



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New Federal Data Exposes Continued Waste of Pacific Salmon by B.C. Trawl Fleet

Victoria B.C. (September 3, 2025) – Newly published [federal data](#) shows that Pacific salmon continue to be caught in large numbers as bycatch by B.C. 's groundfish trawl fleet under enhanced monitoring requirements. **The 2025 report reveals nearly 30,000 salmon caught, with Chinook salmon making up the vast majority, in the 2023/2024 fishing season.** This year's results provide an updated and comprehensive picture of salmon bycatch following the mandatory retention policy initiated in 2022.

Enhanced monitoring shows salmon bycatch is as much as **712 percent higher** than reported under standard monitoring procedures in the groundfish trawl fishery. While overall groundfish catches are falling, salmon bycatch is increasing. These numbers suggest **standard monitoring may have dramatically understated salmon losses for years.**

Key Findings:

- In the 2023/24 fishing season, an estimated **28,145 salmon** were caught, similar to the [previous year's tally](#) of **28,183 fish**.
- Chinook salmon made up most of the bycatch, accounting for **21,696 fish** (77%).
- Most coded-wire tag recoveries came from U.S. stocks, while Canadian-origin salmon were primarily from the Fraser Fall 4(1) management unit, including the Harrison and Chilliwack Rivers. The Harrison River indicator stock was assessed as threatened by COSEWIC in 2018.

Why it Matters:

- High levels of Chinook bycatch strips critical prey from Southern Resident killer whale feeding grounds, worsening food scarcity for this critically endangered population.
- The total salmon caught as bycatch in the last two fishing seasons could have sustained **5-7 Southern Resident killer whales for an entire year**. With only around 74 whales left, every Chinook salmon is vital to their survival.
- High Chinook bycatch in the groundfish trawl fishery undermines the millions of dollars the government has invested in conservation, while devaluing the sacrifices made by commercial, recreational, and sport fishers inshore.

Policy Response:

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has announced a new bycatch cap of **9,500 Chinook salmon annually in an effort to mitigate impact and incentivize further bycatch avoidance.**



Pacific Wild's Role:

Last year, before DFO officially published results, Pacific Wild released preliminary bycatch data to raise awareness. DFO quietly released this latest report, and Pacific Wild is working to bring this issue once again to a wider audience to ensure the urgent need for stronger protections receives continued attention.

“Pacific Wild urges DFO to expand monitoring efforts beyond salmon, to include other ecologically, culturally, and economically important species such as Pacific herring,” said Sydney Dixon, Marine Specialist at Pacific Wild.

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[High Resolution Images & B-roll.](#)

About Pacific Wild:

[Pacific Wild](#) is a leading voice for wildlife conservation in the Great Bear Rainforest and beyond. Through evidence-based advocacy, strategic campaigns, and powerful storytelling, Pacific Wild promotes conservation policies rooted in ecological science and ethics, Indigenous knowledge, and long-term sustainability for the benefit of ecosystems, communities, and future generations.



BACKGROUNDER:

Salmon Bycatch Monitoring and Sampling Results for the Pacific Region 2023/24 Groundfish Trawl Fishery

Lagasse, C.R., Fraser, K.A., Braithwaite, E., Komick, N. 2025. Salmon Bycatch Monitoring and Sampling Results for the Pacific Region 2023/24 Groundfish Trawl Fishery. Can. Manuscr. Rep. Fish. Aquat. Sci. 3298: vi + 41 p. <https://doi.org/10.60825/doi4-pp46>

Where and When Salmon Were Caught

- West Coast Vancouver Island (WCVI): The hotspot, with 14,689 Chinook (67% of total, mostly in Pacific hake trawls.
- Strait of Georgia: 2,798 Chinook caught, largely tied to the resident hake fishery.
- Queen Charlotte & Johnstone Strait: 2,607 Chinook caught, mostly by freezer-trawlers targeting pollock.
- North Coast: 1,235 salmon, including 1,199 Chinook primarily by midwater gear.
- Bycatch also included 3,894 pink, 1,952 chum, 501 coho, 30 sockeye, and 72 unidentified salmon.

Bycatch Rates (Catch per Unit Effort)

- Highest bycatch rates occurred in Walleye Pollock trawls (avg. 20.4 Chinook/hr).
- Hake trawls in the Strait of Georgia averaged 6.1 Chinook/hr.

Stock Composition

- Genetic and coded-wire tag analysis showed 41% of Chinook bycatch was of Canadian origin (~10,800 fish, mean estimated bycatch).
- The Fraser Fall 4(1) stock management unit (SMU) was dominant, representing 71% of Canadian-origin Chinook (~7,652 fish). This SMU includes Harrison and Chilliwack River Chinook, with the Harrison stock assessed as Threatened by COSEWIC (2018).

Coded-Wire Tag Recoveries

- 82.5% of recovered tags were from U.S. origin stocks.
- Canadian tags were mostly from the Fraser Fall 4(1) group, with notable recoveries from Harrison and Chilliwack River indicator stocks.

Age Composition



- Most bycatch fish were age 3 (69%), followed by age 2 (20%) and age 4 (10%).

Long-Term Trends

- Salmon bycatch remains far above historical averages — while total groundfish landings have dropped (due in part to reduced hake), salmon bycatch has risen sharply under enhanced monitoring.

Management Response

- In light of these findings, DFO has introduced a new salmon bycatch management plan for 2024/25:
 - Fleetwide cap: 9,500 Chinook annually.
 - Vessels exceeding their cap will be prevented from fishing until reconciled.
 - The enhanced salmon bycatch monitoring program will continue during the 2024/25 fishing season.