

Overview of the Subsistence Fisheries in the Norton Sound-Port Clarence and Arctic-Kotzebue Management Areas

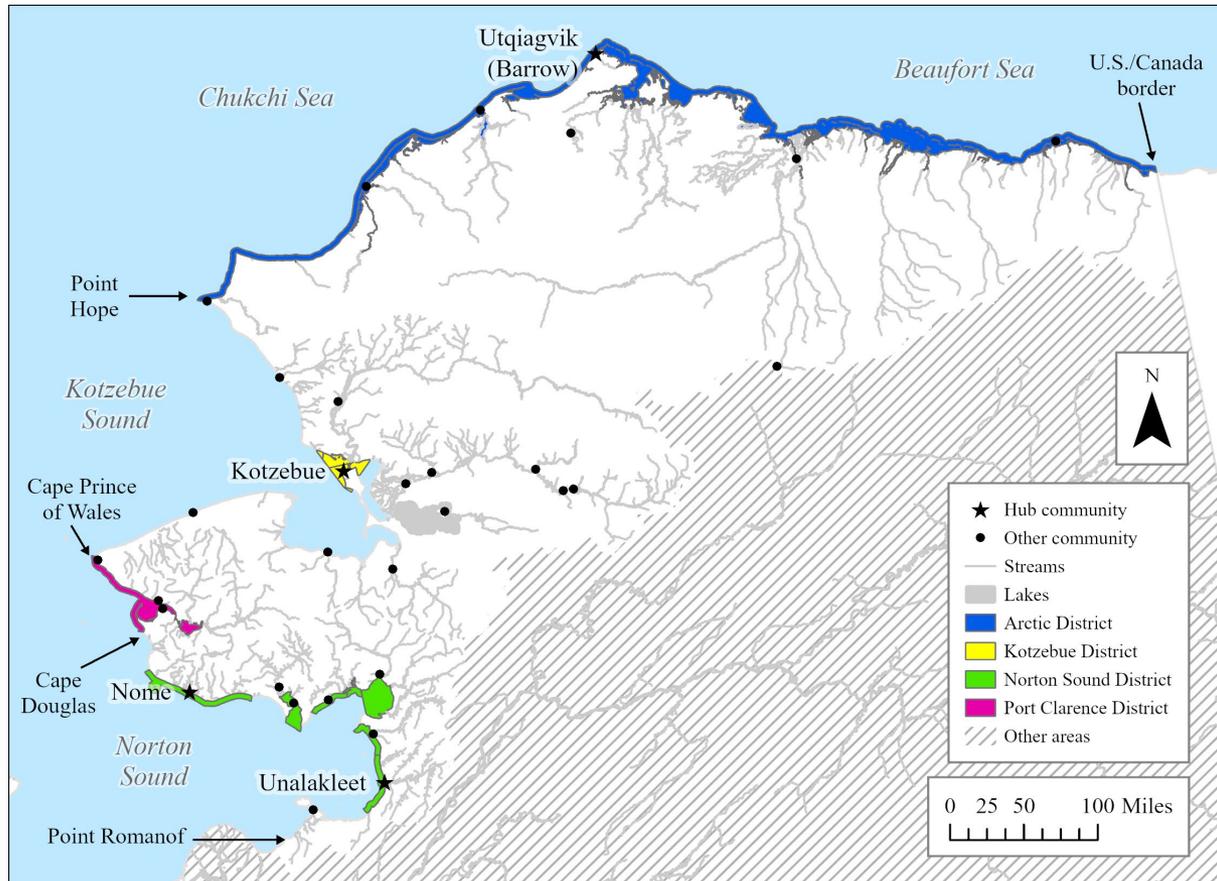


Oral report to the Board
November 2025

Helen Cold
Division of Subsistence

Introduction to the Arctic Region

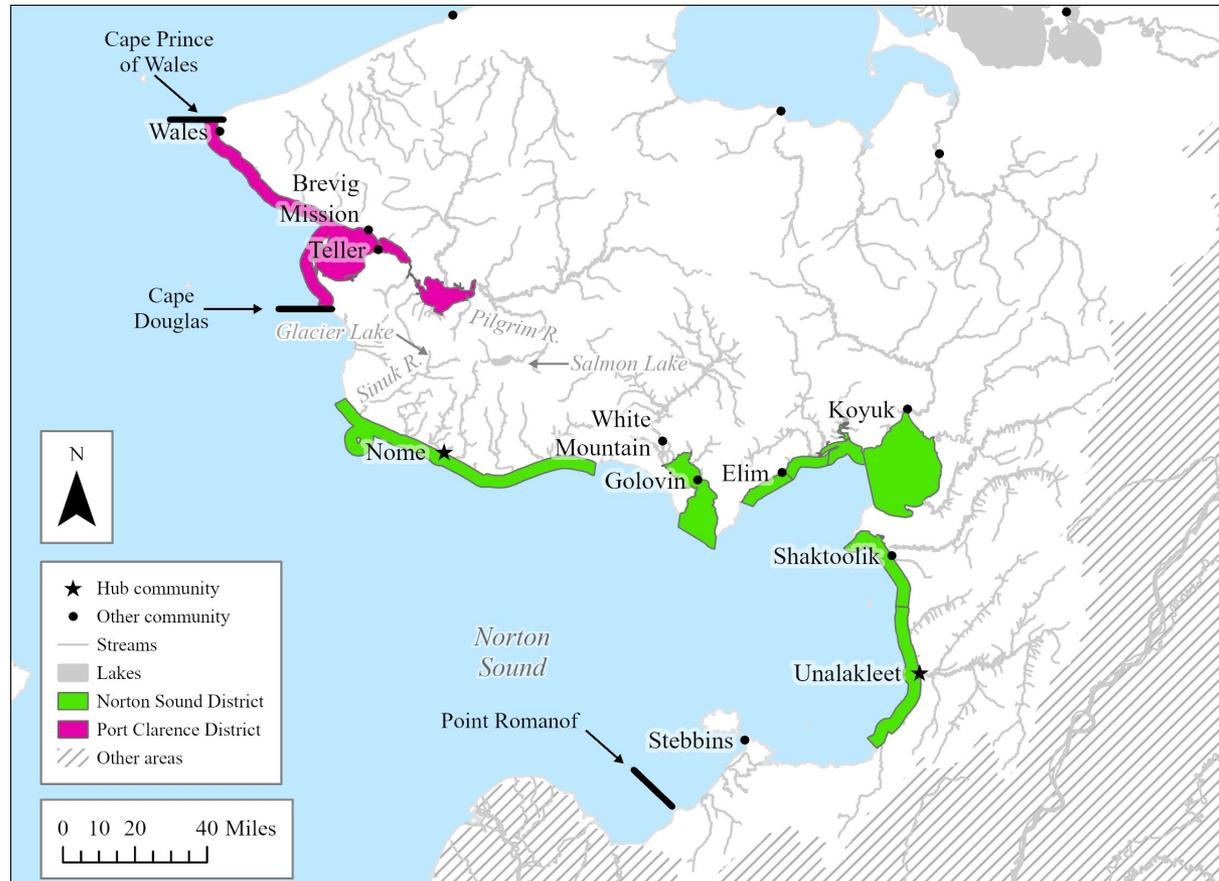
- Fish important throughout region, salmon more central to Norton Sound, Port Clarence and Kotzebue District communities
- Commercial fishing contributes to local subsistence economies



Fishing gear and methods

Norton Sound and Port Clarence Districts

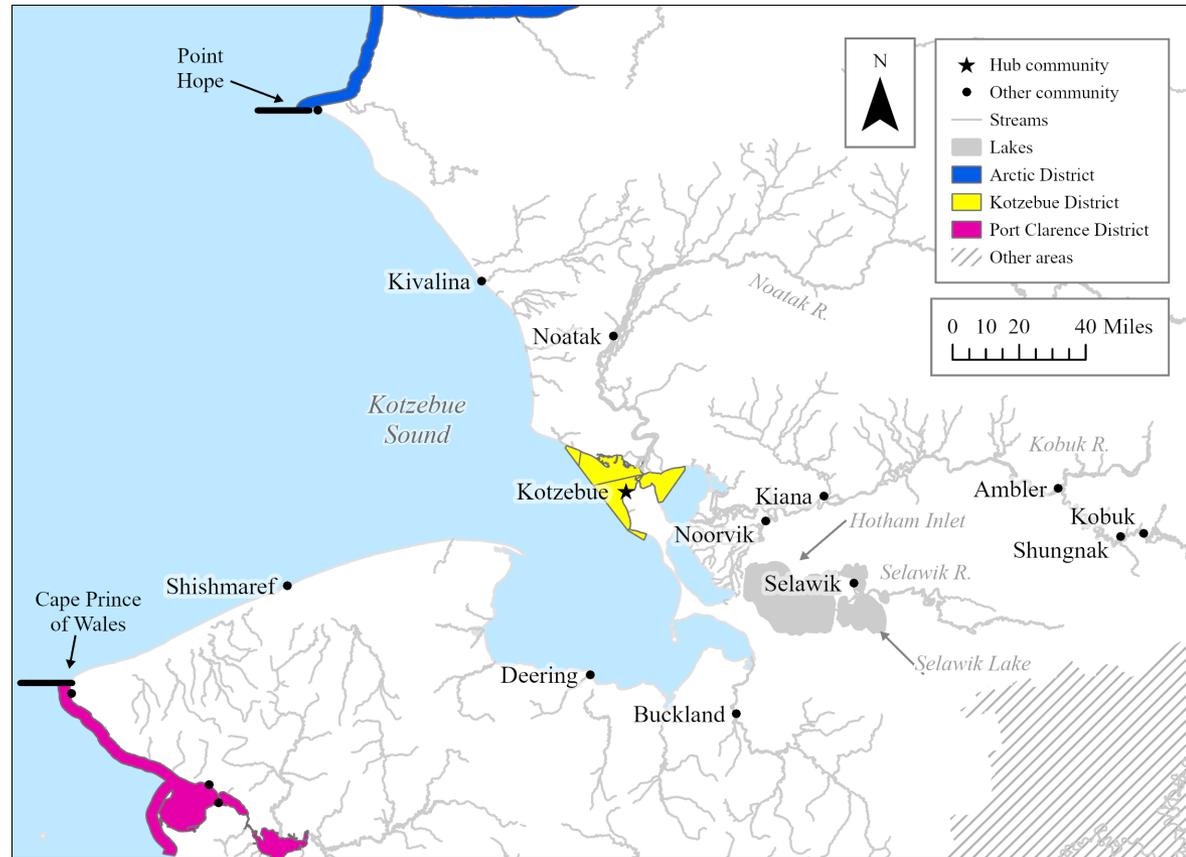
- 12 communities, population ~7,500
- Nome regional hub
- Salmon (chum, pink) primary food source
- Sockeye found in two Seward Peninsula River systems



Fishing gear and methods

Kotzebue District

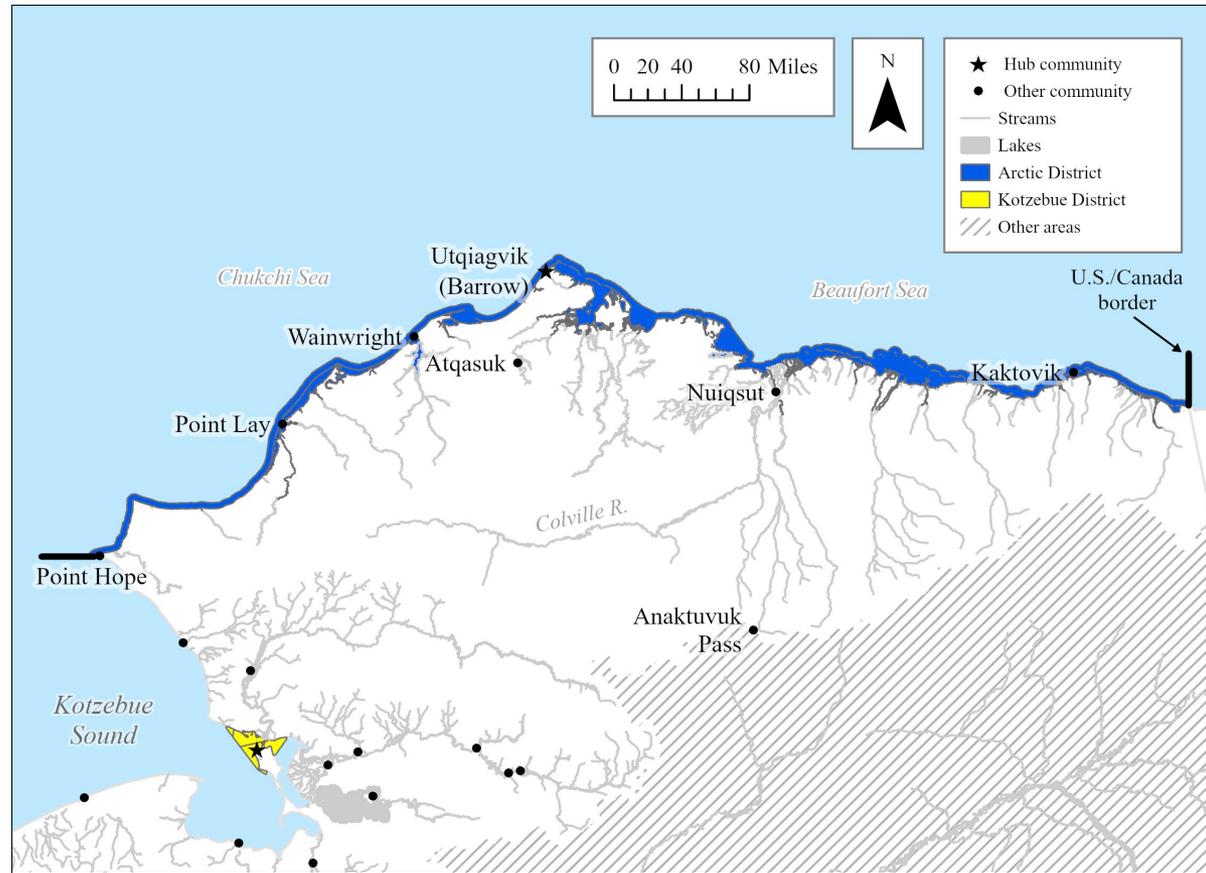
- 14 communities, population ~9,600
- Kotzebue regional hub
- Chum and pink salmon key food source
- Nonsalmon fish important for subsistence: sheefish, char species, whitefishes



Fishing gear and methods

Arctic District

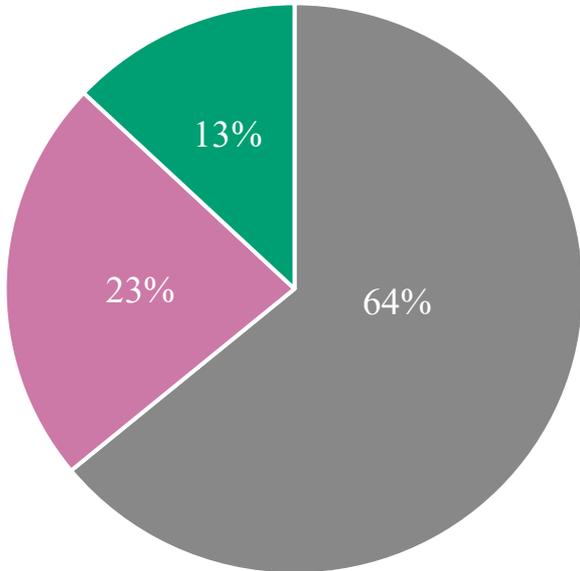
- 8 communities, population ~7,900
- Utqiagvik (Barrow) regional hub
- Nonsalmon fish more important than salmon for subsistence
- Salmon present in small numbers



Subsistence harvest composition by weight

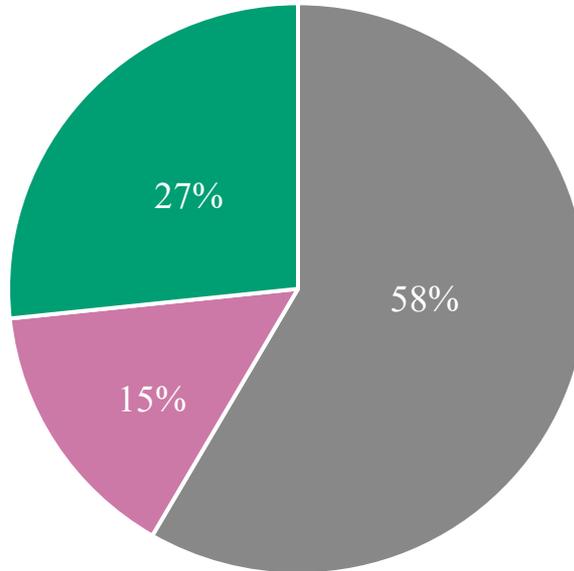
Average per capita harvest (lb), 2011–2023

Norton Sound District



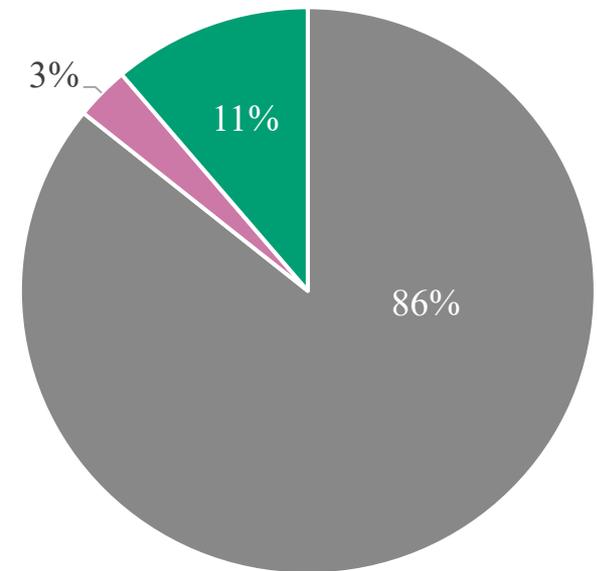
$n = 4$

Kotzebue District



$n = 10$

Arctic District



$n = 5$

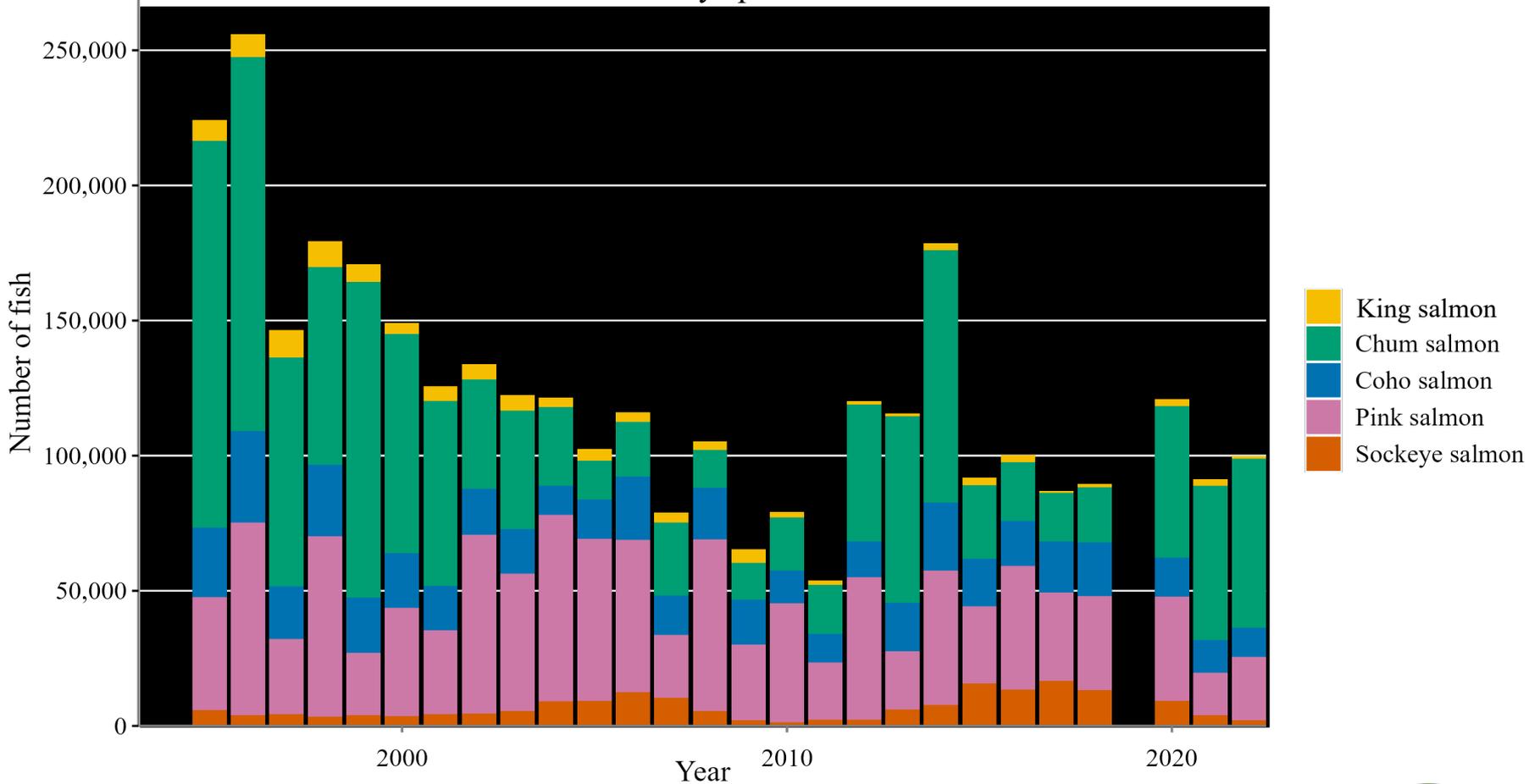
Salmon Nonsalmon fish Other wild resources

Source: ADF&G Division of Subsistence CSIS database



Subsistence salmon harvests, 1995–2022

Total subsistence harvest by species for Norton Sound



Source: ADF&G Alaska Salmon Fishery Database



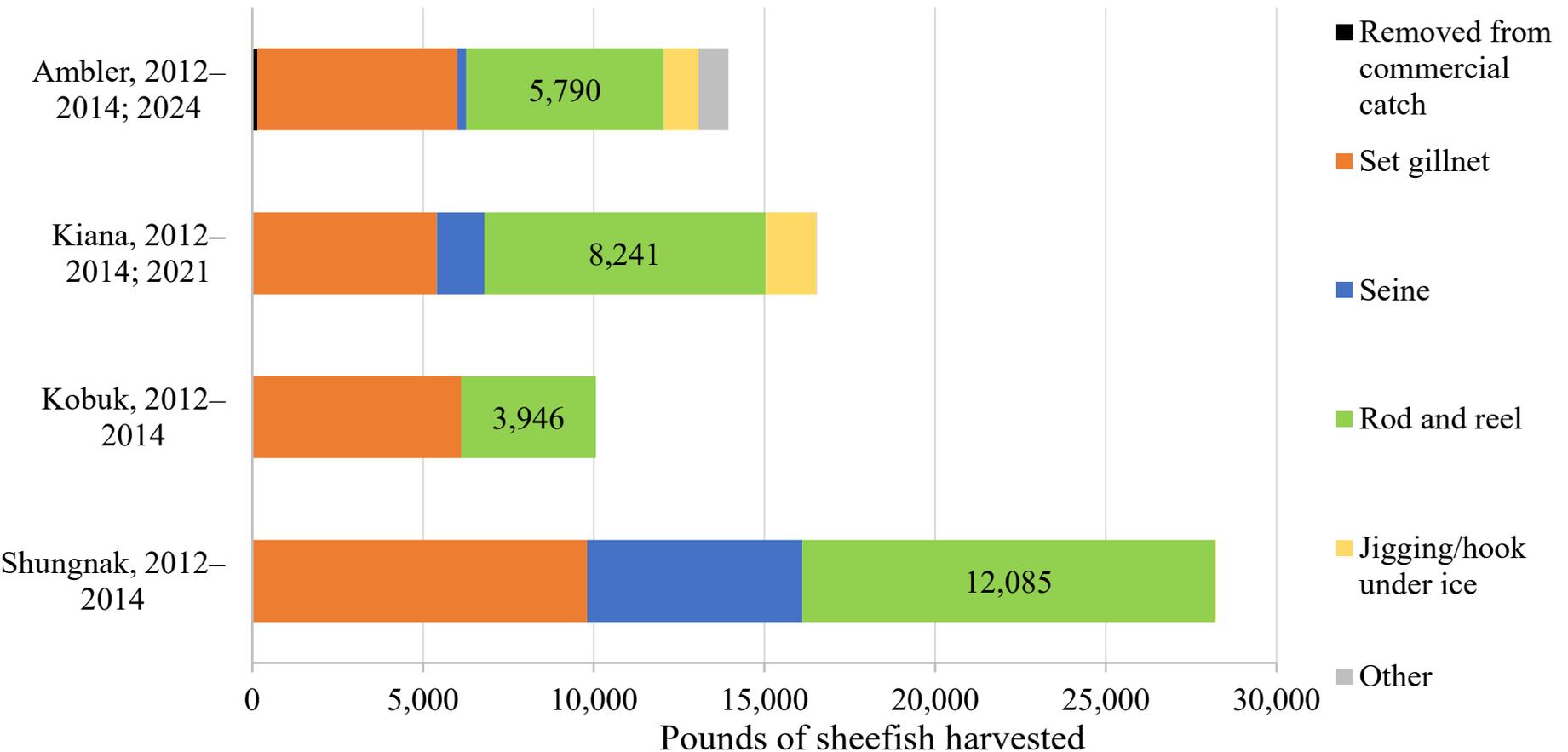
Sheefish harvests in Kotzebue District

- High harvests in Kotzebue, Selawik, and villages along the Kobuk River
- Winter, summer and fall harvests
- Commonly harvested for subsistence using set gillnets, jigging, and rod and reel
- Limited participation in commercial opportunity



Sheefish harvests by gear type

Average harvest by gear type



Source: ADF&G Division of Subsistence CSIS database



Sheefish harvests by community and year

Kotzebue District, 1991-2014

Appendix F2.—Kotzebue District reported subsistence harvests of sheefish, 1991–2014.

Year ^a	Number of households interviewed	Reported harvest	Average catch per household
1991	40	2,180	55
1992	43	2,821	66
1993	46	2,441	53
1994	171	3,181	19
1995 ^b	314	9,465	30
1996 ^b	389	6,953	18
1997 ^b	338	9,805	29
1998 ^b	435	5,350	12
1999 ^b	191	8,256	43
2000 ^b	237	7,446	31
2001 ^b	363	3,838	11
2002	101	3,882	38
2003	488	7,823 ^c	16
2004 ^d	440	10,163	23
2012 ^d	360	11,694	32
2013 ^{d,e}	618	22,116	36
2014 ^f	866	31,909	37

Note: Subsistence surveys were not conducted 2005–2011 and after 2014.

- ^a Due to limited survey effort during many years, total catch and effort should be regarded as minimum numbers only and are not comparable year to year.
- ^b Subsistence sheefish harvests are from villages on Kobuk River.
- ^c Includes 10 fish reported from commercial salmon fishery and used for subsistence.
- ^d Subsistence surveys were not conducted in the town of Kotzebue.
- ^e Villages surveyed were Ambler, Buckland, Kiana, Kobuk, Noatak, Noorvik, Shungnak, and Selawik.
- ^f Villages surveyed were Ambler, Buckland, Kiana, Kobuk, Noatak, Noorvik, Shishmaref, Shungnak, Selawik, and Kotzebue.



Conclusions

- Salmon and nonsalmon fish important for social, cultural, economic, and food security reasons across Arctic Region
- Overall contributions of salmon to subsistence economies varies, decreases as move north
- Nonsalmon fish especially important resource in Kotzebue District (sheefish, Dolly Varden) and Arctic District (whitefishes)
- Harvest information limited in some districts



Questions?

