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## North Pacific Fishery Management Council

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council develops management plans, programs, and fishing regulations for the commercial groundfish fisheries off Alaska. These fisheries target Pacific cod, pollock, flatfish, mackerel, sablefish and rockfish species using trawl, longline, jig, and pot gear. The Council also makes allocation decisions for commercial and recreational halibut fisheries in concert with the International Pacific Halibut Commission. Other large commercial fisheries for salmon, crab, and scallops are managed jointly by the Council and the State of Alaska.

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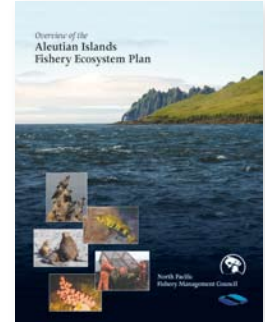




## Opportunities & Challenges

### Implementing Ecosystem-based Management

The North Pacific Council understands that fishing and other activities can impact marine ecosystems. Over the years, the Council has implemented restrictive measures to minimize fishing-related impacts to the marine environment by preventing the overharvest of fish resources, conserving benthic habitat, and protecting marine mammals and seabirds. More recently, the Council has been actively taking steps to implement ecosystem-based management off Alaska in a more comprehensive manner.

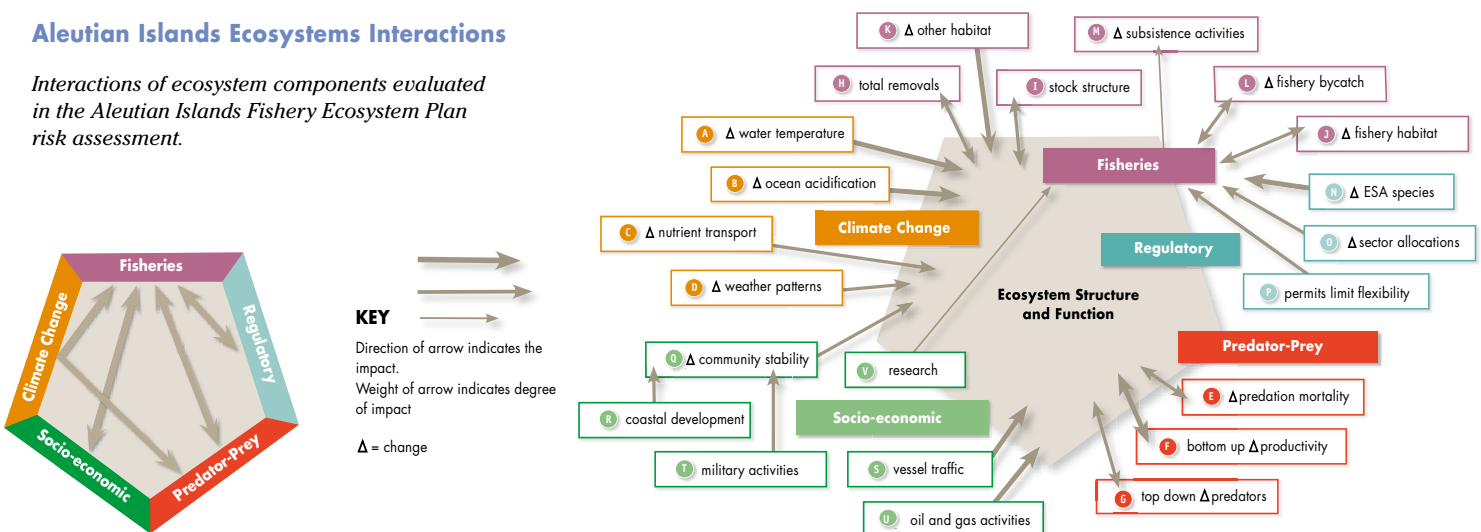


In 2007, the North Pacific Council adopted a Fishery Ecosystem Plan for the Aleutian Islands area. The Fishery Ecosystem Plan is a guidance document that looks holistically at the Aleutian Islands ecosystem, and at the relationships between the different fisheries, physical and biological characteristics of the ecosystem, human communities, and socio-economic activities ongoing in the area. The document includes a non-quantitative risk assessment and discusses implications for management. Development of Fishery Ecosystem Plans for other large marine ecosystems off Alaska could improve the Council's understanding and ability to evaluate fishery management decisions affecting these ecosystems.

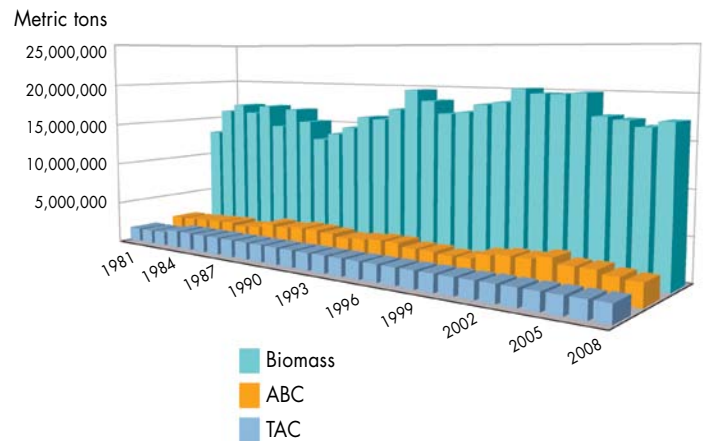
To address non-fisheries issues, such as coastal development and other marine activities, the Council organized the Alaska Marine Ecosystem Forum to bring together representatives from the region's state and federal agencies to meet regularly to communicate issues and coordinate research and management activities. The Forum provides an opportunity to expand regional ecosystem-based management approaches across the full spectrum of state and federal marine agencies.

### Aleutian Islands Ecosystems Interactions

Interactions of ecosystem components evaluated in the Aleutian Islands Fishery Ecosystem Plan risk assessment.



## Bering Sea & Aleutian Islands Groundfish Catch Limits



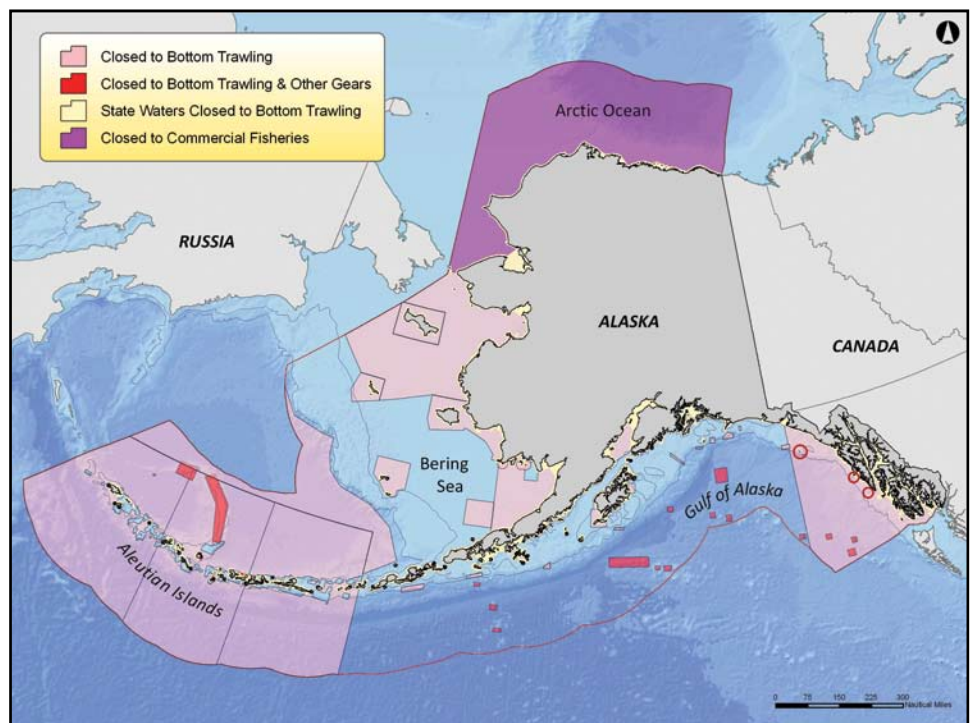
*Annual groundfish harvests are managed not to exceed the total allowable catch (TAC) limits, which are set below scientifically allowable biological catch (ABC) limits. Only a small portion of the biomass is harvested each year.*

### Preparing for Climate Change

With the Arctic ice cap receding, it has become apparent that unregulated commercial fisheries could quickly develop in northern areas. The Council took charge of this situation, and in February 2009, adopted a precautionary fishery management plan for the Arctic region that prohibits all commercial fishing until the science is available to understand the impacts of such activities.

The North Pacific Council has provided responsible stewardship of the region's marine resources for over 30 years. First and foremost, the Council strictly limits the amount of fish that can be removed from the ocean each year. Precautionary, scientifically-based catch limits are annually adjusted to reflect current abundance/biomass for each fish stock, and the Council sets the annual catch quota below these limits. Stock abundance in a given year is a result of the number of young fish recruiting to the stock, which of course depends on environmental conditions for survival. When a catch limit is reached, based on an effective catch monitoring system which includes an observer program, a fishery is closed for the rest of the season. As a result, groundfish stocks are not overharvested and most stocks are abundant and well above biomass levels that produce maximum sustainable yield. Because catches can be quickly adjusted to environmental conditions, the Council's system of setting and monitoring catch limits is well suited to address the challenges and uncertainties associated with climate change.

In addition to limiting how many fish are caught in the North Pacific, the Council develops other regulations to ensure sustainable production and healthy fisheries. Limits have been established to minimize the bycatch, discard, and waste of fishery resources. Gear requirements, together with season and area restrictions, have greatly reduced impacts on marine mammals and seabirds.



Areas off Alaska where bottom trawling and other fishing gears are prohibited year-round.



Gretchen Harrington, NMFS

The Council has also developed an extensive suite of marine protected areas to conserve fish habitat and minimize impacts of fishing on vulnerable species, such as crabs, marine mammals, and deep-sea corals. For example, over 673,000 square miles have been closed to bottom trawling or other fishing gears, which equates to about 62% of entire region. The Council has also established several marine protected areas where all bottom-contact fishing gear is prohibited. These areas, which essentially function as marine reserves, have been designated in discrete areas to protect particularly sensitive habitat types such as deep sea coral communities, unique ecosystems such as pinnacles and seamounts, and in areas where scientific data are limited, such as the Arctic Ocean.

National initiatives to expand the system of marine protected areas and marine sanctuaries may create challenges for the Council in achieving optimum yield of marine resources. Of critical importance is retaining the role of the Council in developing, evaluating, and establishing any new marine protected areas to preserve biodiversity or as a buffer against the effects of climate change, as well as regulating activities within existing marine protected areas.

### Providing Economic Stability

When catch is constrained by annual catch limits, it is natural for fishermen to maximize their catch before the limit is reached and the season ends. Programs that allocate a portion of the annual catch limit to fishermen serve to end this race for fish, resulting in safer, more stable and sustainable fisheries.

The North Pacific Council has implemented limited access privilege programs for many fisheries to date: Alaska halibut and sablefish, Gulf of Alaska rockfish, Bering Sea pollock, Bering Sea crab, and Bering Sea flatfish, rockfish, and mackerel fisheries. Additionally, the Council developed a community development quota program that allocates a portion (10.7%) of the available catch limits for groundfish and crabs, as well as various portions of the commercial halibut harvest, to entities representing 65 small coastal villages in western Alaska. This program provides employment to 2,000 people and generates over \$100 million in revenue annually for these coastal communities.

The greatest challenges for developing limited access privilege programs include limiting consolidation to meet policy goals, providing opportunities for new people to enter the fisheries, and protecting the fabric of coastal communities. The approach afforded by the Council process, with public input at every step, provides a good opportunity to fairly address these challenges.

### First Wholesale Value of Alaska Seafood Products by Major Species Group • 2007

Total: \$3.63 billion

