



Located in Anchorage, Alaska

Jurisdiction: EEZ off Alaska,
(1million square nautical miles)

Five fishery management plans covering 47 groundfish target species, 10 crab stocks, the scallop fishery, and State-managed salmon fisheries.

Council has 11 voting members and 4 non-voting members, and 2 permanent advisory bodies.



Photo: Maria Shawback

Ecosystem-based Management

Strict annual catch limits, and bycatch limits for prohibited species

Numerous habitat-based marine protected areas – over 665,000 nautical miles, or 66% of managed area, subject to gear-based fishery closures

Arctic Fishery Management Plan – closes Arctic EEZ to all commercial fishing

Aleutian Islands Fishery Ecosystem Plan

Alaska Marine Ecosystem Forum – convening member

Marine mammal protection measures/Seabird Avoidance measures

Community Development Quota program

Annual Ecosystem Considerations Report

Active stakeholder-based Ecosystem Committee to advise the Council on all relevant actions

Ban on forage fish harvest

2million mt OY cap for BSAI groundfish

When the Magnuson-Stevens Act passed in 1976, establishing the 200 mile exclusive economic zone and the regional fishery management council system, the total domestic groundfish catch in federal waters off Alaska was around 2,000 mt. Through a period of foreign joint venture fisheries, and an ever increasing domestic harvest capacity, by 1990 foreign and joint venture harvest were completely phased out and the domestic harvest of groundfish by U.S. vessels in this region reached 2.4 million mt. The vision created by the passage of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, guided by the 'fish-first', conservation oriented philosophy of the original North Pacific Council leadership, had been realized.

Along the way to full Americanization of these fisheries, the Council enacted a number of singular fishery management milestones which to this day frame an enduring, ecosystem-based fisheries management approach. Among the more significant actions during this defining period were: development of the original fishery management plans for the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands; establishment of prohibited species (bycatch) limits for halibut, salmon, and crab; implementation of the first domestic fisheries observer program; establishment of numerous closure areas to protect crab, halibut, and marine mammals; defining initial options for limited entry for groundfish and catch share programs for halibut and sablefish fisheries (soon to be a comprehensive individual fishing quota program); establishing the innovative and highly successful community development quota (CDQ) program for western Alaska communities; and, adoption of the 2 million mt overall OY cap for Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands groundfish catch.

During this period, and continuing throughout the 1990s and into the new millennium, one of the cornerstones of the Council's management philosophy was the adherence to scientific advice, and the use of strict annual catch limits for all species – fisheries in the North Pacific were subject to annual catch limits for 30 years prior to the 2006 Magnuson-Stevens Act reauthorization which required annual catch limits for all U.S. fisheries. From 1991 to present, annual groundfish catch limits in the federal waters off Alaska, Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska combined, have ranged between 2.5 and 3.5 million mt, reflecting the very definition of sustainability. This does not include the renowned fisheries for crab and halibut, or the vast State-managed salmon fisheries occurring primarily within State waters. Collectively, these fisheries represent half of the total United States seafood harvest each year, with a value of over \$1 billion annually.



Photo: Karla Bush

Catch Share and Limited Entry Programs in the North Pacific

*Halibut and Sablefish IFQ program
American Fisheries Act pollock cooperatives*

*Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Crab
Rationalization*

Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish program

Amendment 80 cooperatives

*Gulf of Alaska gear sector allocations for
Pacific cod*

License Limitation in all federal fisheries

*Halibut Catch sharing plan for commercial
and charter boat fisheries*

Community Development Quota Program

*Voluntary cooperatives in scallop and cod
freezer longline fisheries*

The ability of fisheries managers to realize these levels of sustainable harvest depend not only upon the naturally rich ecosystem of the North Pacific, but also upon consistent and reliable stock assessments, highly evolved in-season monitoring and accounting programs, and an attitude of long-term sustainability from the fishermen themselves. As the stage was set in the early 1990's with full Americanization of the fisheries, the Council began to focus its attention on unique, and often innovative, management programs designed to enhance the economic value of the fisheries, settle various allocation issues among gear types and user groups, and begin to incorporate a more explicit ecosystem-based management approach. Key among these approaches was the implementation of various forms of 'rationalization,' including limited entry (license limitation), fishery cooperatives, sector allocations, individual fishing quotas, and other forms of 'catch share' programs, all developed with a keen eye towards the preservation and enhancement of fishery dependent coastal communities.

None of these management programs would be possible without the real-time, in-season management and accounting programs in place in the North Pacific. One of the cornerstones of this management program is the comprehensive groundfish observer program – this program, largely paid for by the North Pacific fishing and processing industry at a cost of close to \$20 million annually, places over 500 observers on fishing vessels and in processing plants each year, for a total of over 40,000

observer days annually. A recent restructuring of that program will allow for more flexible observer placement, and will incorporate electronic monitoring options (such as onboard camera systems) for use in certain monitoring applications, including the small vessel fleet.

The North Pacific Council continues to develop adaptive management strategies in an increasingly complex and challenging regulatory environment, with all Council actions subject to analysis and review under a multitude of applicable laws (including the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the 10 National Standards; the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Regulatory Flexibility Act, Executive Order 12866, and several other Acts, Executive Orders, and Policy Directives). Streamlining the regulatory process, and reconciling the various Acts and Statutes affecting fisheries management plans and regulations, will be critical to our continued ability to develop timely fisheries management actions and respond to changing conditions in our oceans and in our fisheries.

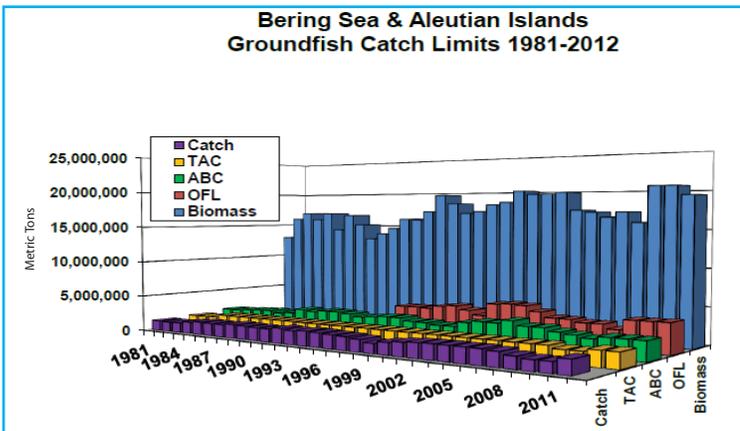


Photo: Karla Bush



Photo: Herman Savitsko