

*Science, Service, Stewardship*



# **65<sup>th</sup> Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission Annual Meeting**

## **Alaska Updates**

*Pete Jones*

*Chief of Operations, NMFS Alaska Region*

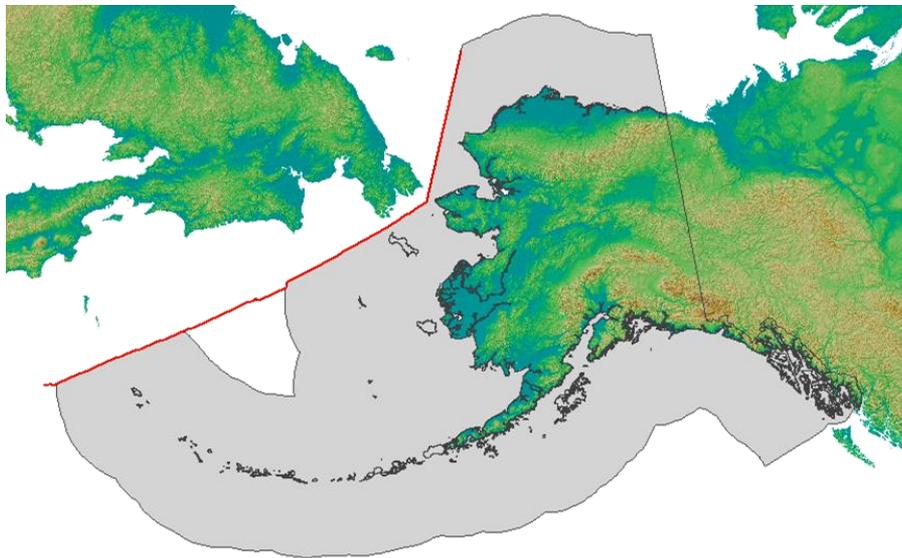
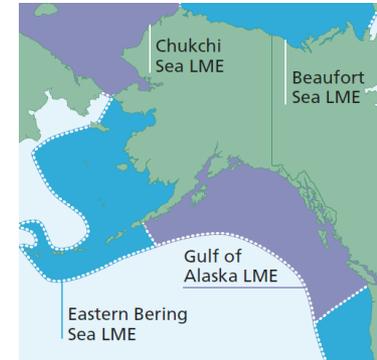
August 30, 2012

**NOAA  
FISHERIES  
SERVICE**



## Physical Environment:

- 28% of the USEEZ
- 66% of the U.S Continental Shelf
- 47,300 miles of tidal shoreline
- 4 Large Marine Ecosystems

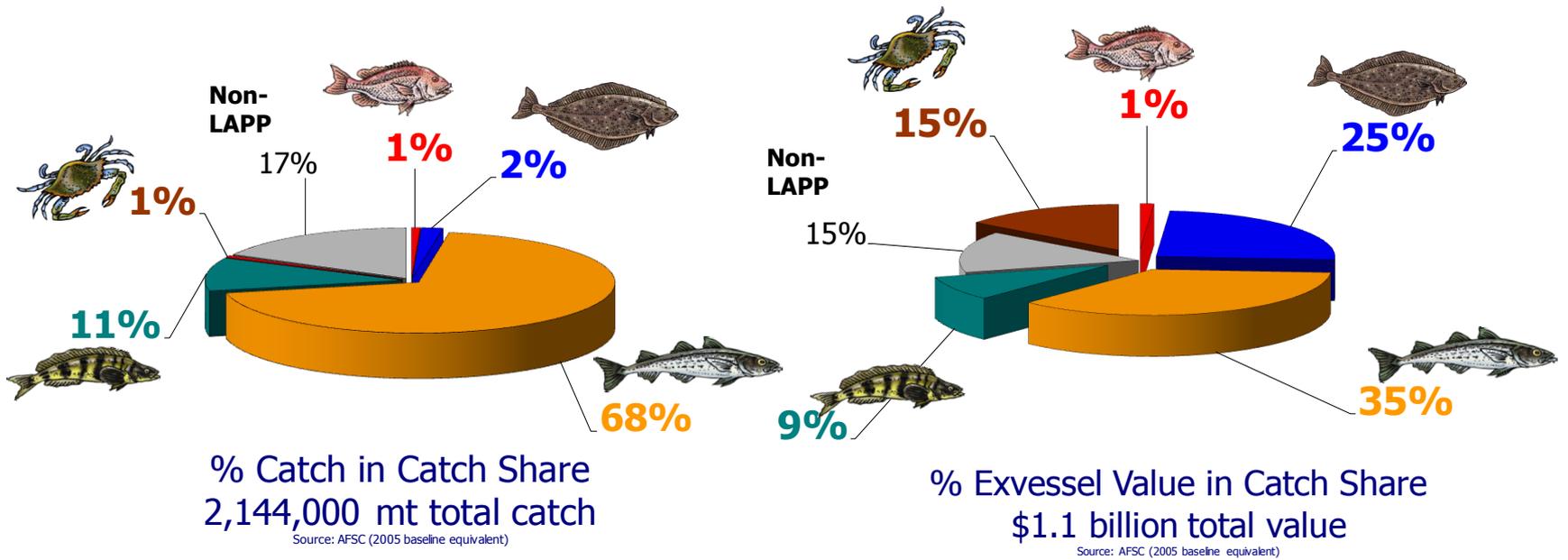


## Alaska Fisheries:

- 55% of total U.S. catch
- Largest private sector employer
- Significant fishery-dependent communities



# ~85% of Federal fisheries off Alaska managed under Catch Share Program



**BSAI/GOA  
Halibut & Sablefish  
Began: 1995**



**BSAI Pollock  
Began: 1998**



**BSAI Crab  
King and  
tanner crab  
species  
Began: 2005**



**Central GOA Rockfish  
Trawl rockfish,  
sablefish, and some  
Pacific cod  
Began: 2007**

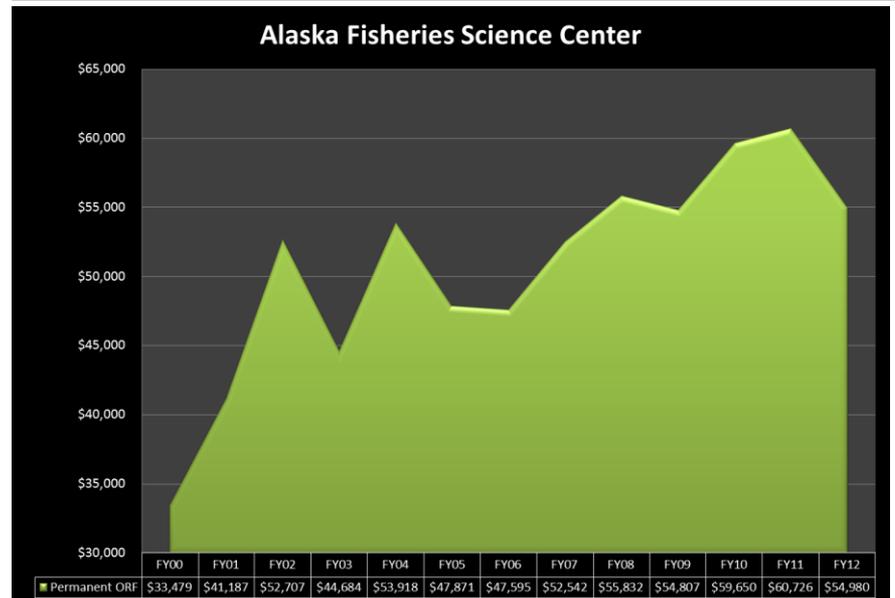
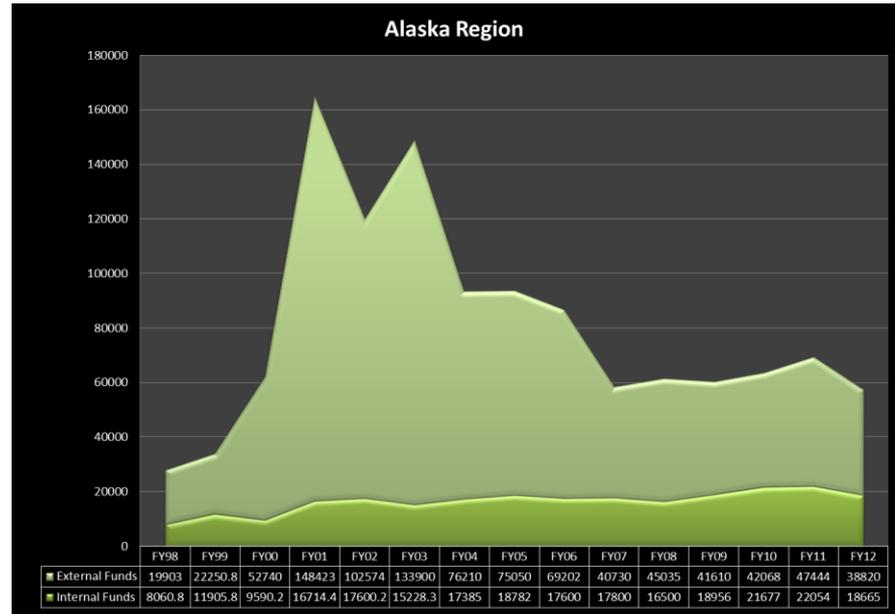


**BSAI Amendment 80  
Flatfish, Pacific cod, Atka  
mackerel, Aleutian Island  
Pacific Ocean Perch  
Began: 2008**





# NOAA Fisheries Alaska Budget History





## Region and Science Center Updates

### Sustainable Fisheries:

- Observer Program Restructuring
- Halibut Catch Sharing Plan
- Chinook Bycatch

### Endangered Species Act:

- Delisting of eDPS SSL
- Protection Measures wDPS SSL
- Proposed listing of ringed and bearded seals

### Emerging Arctic Mission



## Implementing the Restructured Observer Program

- Expands coverage to over 50,000 observer days/year
- New controls to reduce bias and fill gaps
- Now targeting smaller vessels
- Fee based beginning in 2014: Federal start-up funding given for 2013.
- Final Rule is being drafted with program implementation in 2013.
- Contracts for observer deployment have been bid and are in review with an award expected soon.
- Electronic monitoring is a component of this effort.



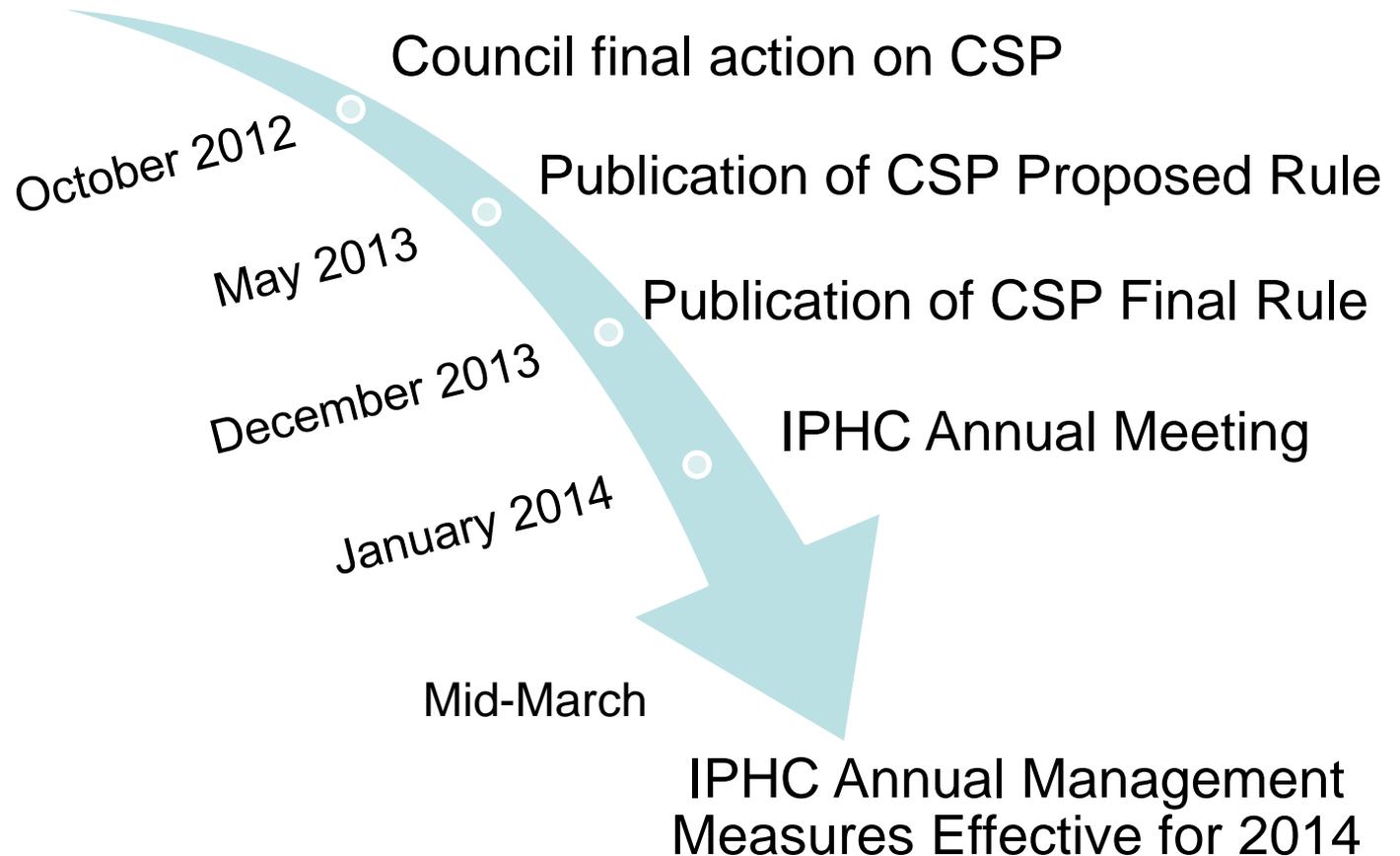
## **The Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP)**

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council is scheduled to recommend a new catch sharing management approach for southeast Alaska and the central Gulf of Alaska to:

- Establish allocations of halibut for the guided recreational (charter) and commercial fishing sectors;
- Annually implement harvest restrictions for charter anglers that are intended to limit charter harvests to the annual charter catch limit; and
- Authorize annual transfers of commercial halibut IFQ, called Guided Angler Fish (GAF), to charter halibut operators to provide anglers additional harvest opportunities.

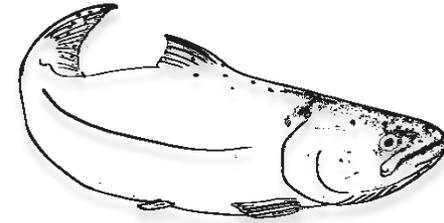


## What's Next?





## Chinook Salmon Bycatch Research



- **Stock composition analysis**
- AFSC Genetics Program provides stock composition estimates for both the Chinook and chum salmon bycatch annually to the NPFMC
- 2010 samples were collected by observers as part of their species composition samples, not randomly, hence the stock composition estimates apply to the sample set; they may not represent the entire salmon by catch
- Nonetheless, 2010 results show higher proportions for Coastal Western Alaska and Upper Yukon
- In 2011, the AFSC implemented a statistical sampling design for salmon bycatch commensurate with the implementation of BSAI Groundfish Plan Amendment 91 and these samples are being currently analyzed



## **Proposed Delisting of the Eastern Distinct Population Segment of Steller Sea Lions**

- Removal from the list of threatened species appears to be warranted because the population has met the criteria identified in the Recovery Plan and no longer meets the definition of a threatened species
- Proposed rule published April 18, 2012
- Currently reviewing public comments (~1150 received)
- Expect to make a final decision by spring of 2013



## **Reviewing Protection Measures for the Western Distinct Population Segment of Steller Sea Lions**

- NMFS is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement to evaluate the effects of measures to protect endangered sea lions in the Aleutian Islands, per a U.S. District Court order
- NPFMC's Steller Sea Lion Mitigation Committee will advise on alternative measures to be analyzed
- Center for Independent Experts is completing its review of the 2010 NMFS Biological Opinion that examined the effects of groundfish fisheries on sea lions; Report due in September



## **Proposed Listing of Ringed and Bearded Seals Under the Endangered Species Act**

- The biggest threat to ice-associated seals is habitat alteration due to global climate change, which is expected to affect seal populations by mid-century
- On December 10, 2010, NMFS published proposed rules to list ringed and bearded seals as threatened
- NMFS completed two rounds of external peer review due to the degree of scientific uncertainty
- NMFS is currently developing the final determination as to whether to list the species, with a decision expected very soon



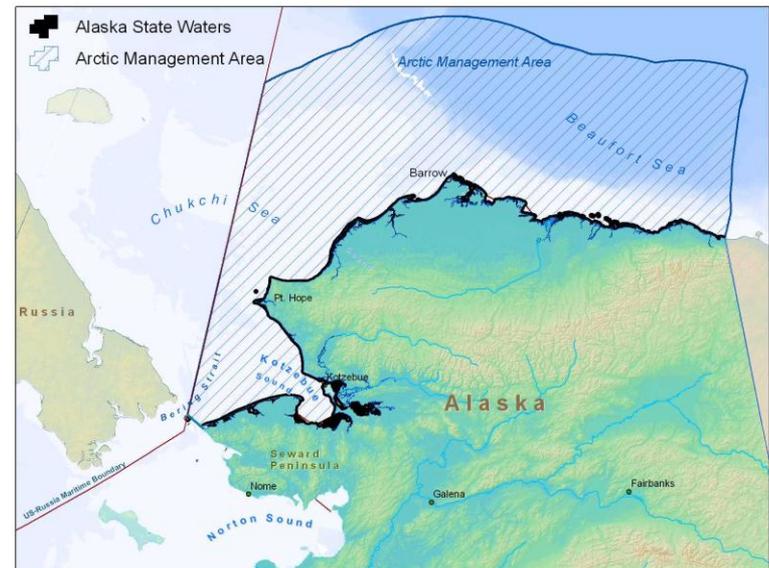
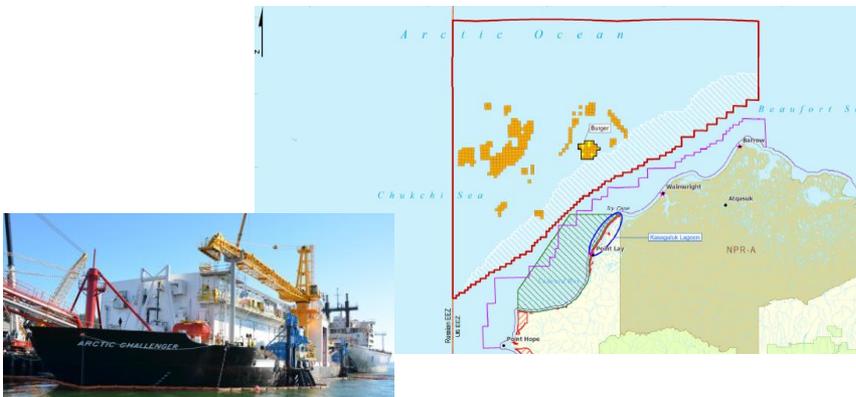
# Responding to a Changing Arctic

## Evidence of Change:

- Atmosphere
- Sea Ice
- Ocean

## Near Term Mission Driver:

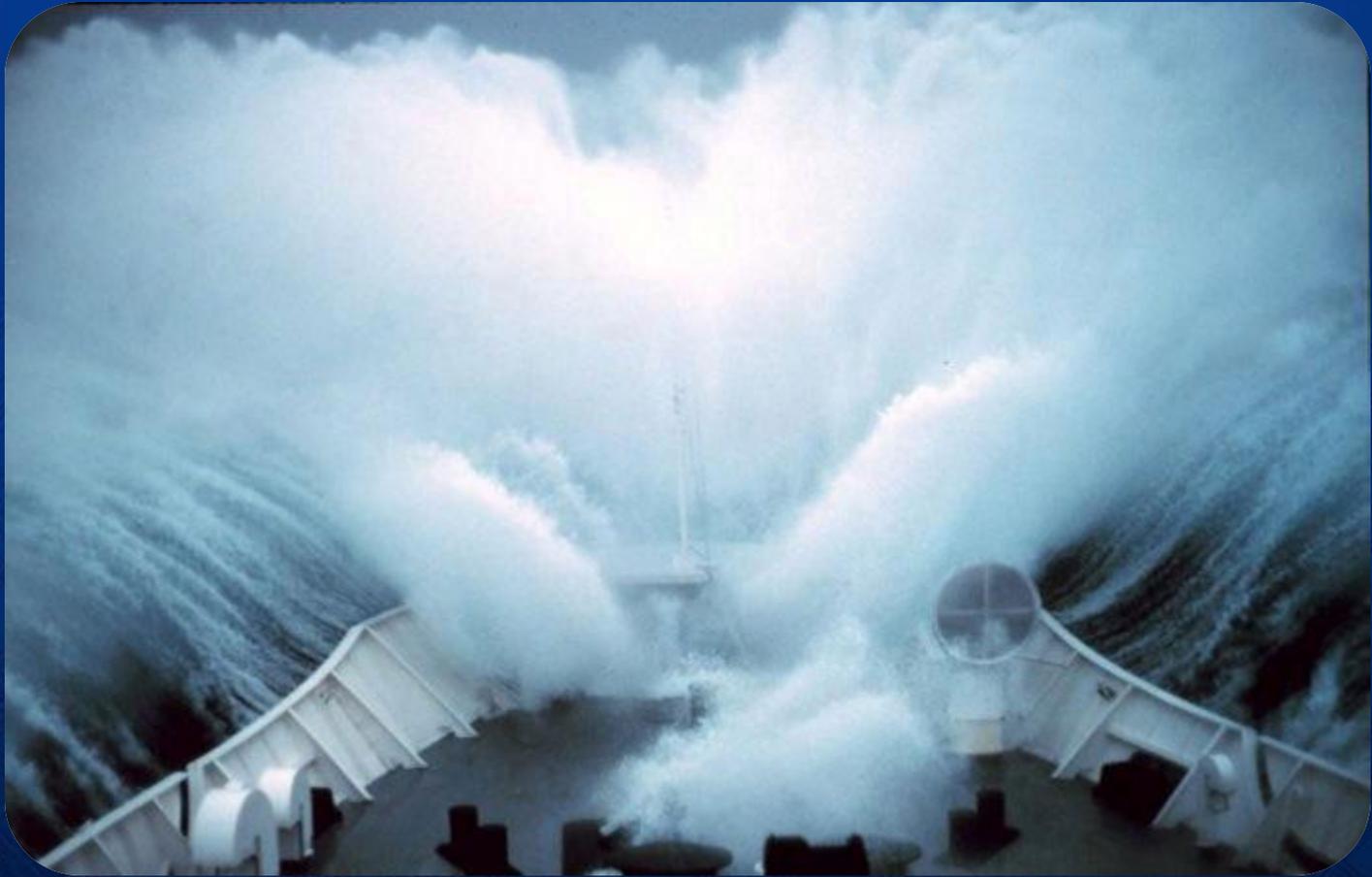
- OCS Energy Exploration





## Alaska Fisheries Science Center's Arctic Research Portfolio

- Driven by NOAA's need to understand potential effects of oil/gas activities in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas
- Mostly funded by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
- FY12 Activities (10+ projects with over \$10M in funding) include:
  - ❖ Ice seal abundance surveys
  - ❖ Ecosystem surveys in the Chukchi Sea
  - ❖ Bottom-trawl survey in the Chukchi Sea
  - ❖ Aerial surveys of Arctic marine mammals
  - ❖ Arctic whale ecology study (passive acoustics, oceanographic sampling, satellite tagging , visual surveys)
  - ❖ Chukchi acoustics, oceanography, and zooplankton study
  - ❖ Nearshore surveys and arctic cod ecology and toxicity work



[alaskafisheries.noaa.gov](http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov)