

Alaska Region Issues & Perspectives



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Overview

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Fisheries Disasters

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Sustainable Fisheries

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Tribal Engagement



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Grants

Newly Awarded Grants in FY22

- Expand Adoption of Electronic Monitoring in Alaska: total award \$2 million
- Alaska Fishery Information Network (AKFIN), new 5 year Award: \$3.7 million for year 1, total award \$17.2 million
- Pacific Coastal Fisheries Management, Science, Administration and Logistical Support, new 5 year Award: \$1.9 million for year 1, total award \$5.9 million

Current & Ongoing Grants

- AKFIN: \$13.9 million
- Commercial Economic Data Collection: \$1 million
- Electronic Technologies for Fisheries of the North Pacific: \$8.2 million
- Pacific Coastal Fisheries Management, Science, Administration, and Logistical Support: \$8.3 million



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Fisheries Disasters

Declared and in process of spend plan development

- \$9.4 million for 2018 Upper Cook Inlet East Side Setnet Salmon and 2020 Upper Cook Inlet Salmon Fisheries
- \$34.3 million for Copper River & Prince William Sound Salmon Fisheries, 2018 and 2020
- \$12.9 million for Bering Sea Tanner Crab Fishery, 2019/2020
- \$17.8 million for Gulf of Alaska Pacific Cod Fishery, 2020
- \$55.9 million for Norton Sound, Yukon River, Chignik, Kuskokwim, and Southeast Alaska Salmon Fisheries, 2020 & 2021
- \$1.4 million for Norton Sound Red King Crab, 2019

Requested and pending Secretary of Commerce decision

- Kuskokwim River Salmon Fishery, 2021
- Norton Sound Red King Crab Fisheries, 2020 and 2021
- Norton Sound Salmon Fisheries, 2021
- Bering Sea Crab Fisheries, 2021/2022
- Chignik Salmon Fishery, 2021



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Alaska Region Strategic Plan

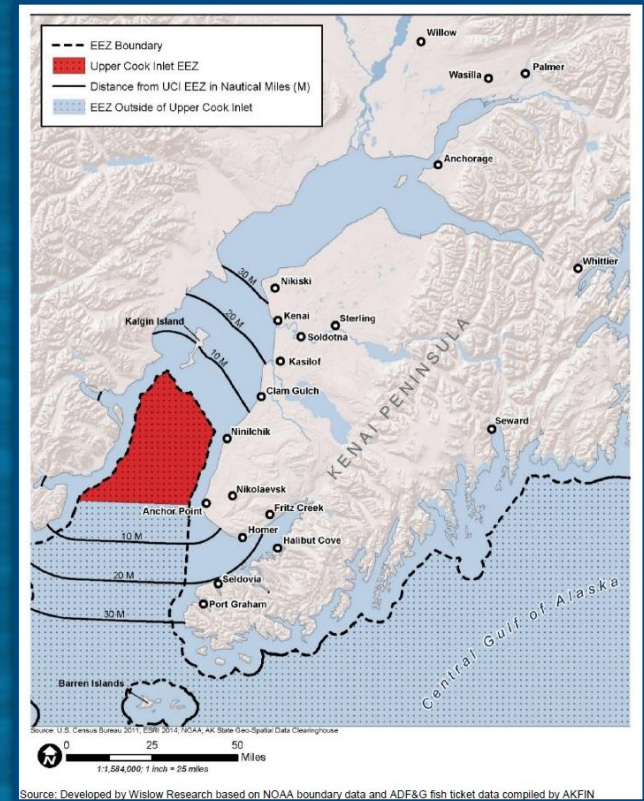
- In May 2021 we began developing a new Alaska Region Five-Year Strategic Plan
- As part of that process we interviewed internal and external stakeholders (including PSMFC and ADF&G) to help us define the trends, developments, and challenges facing our Region
- We developed 22 Objectives addressing Clients and Outcomes; Products and Services; Internal Processes; People; and Financial Resources
 - Two of those Objectives targeted improving our relationship with ADF&G
 - We are currently working with ADF&G to identify prioritized topics and form an interagency team to develop a communications and engagement plan



Sustainable Fisheries

State/Federal Salmon Fishery Management in Cook Inlet

- Repeated litigation by Upper Cook Inlet Drift Association seeking active federal management under Magnuson-Stevens Act
- ADF&G declined to accept delegated management authority
- Final rule published November 2, 2021 closed EEZ waters traditionally used by upper Cook Inlet drift gillnet salmon fishermen
- June 21, 2022: U.S. District Court for the District of Alaska vacated the implementing regulations; remedy phase forthcoming



BSAI Pacific cod Trawl CV LAPP

- **October 2021:** NPFMC recommended a limited access privilege program to manage the BSAI Pacific cod trawl catcher vessel fishery.
- Action would implement a cooperative based management program to allocate quota shares to qualifying permit holders and processors.
- NMFS is preparing a proposed rule.



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Bycatch Reduction Efforts

- Halibut Abundance-Based Management
 - New program through which allowable bycatch levels will adjust annually based on fluctuations in halibut abundance versus having a static bycatch allowance that is proportionately large during periods of lower abundance.
 - NOAA Fisheries is developing the regulations.
- Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force
 - NOAA Fisheries is providing support and information to assist this state-led review.
- Working through NPFMC on salmon bycatch
 - NPFMC motion in June 2022 included voluntary measures to reduce chum bycatch, a discussion paper to highlight chum bycatch issues, and establishment of a working group of tribal members, scientists, industry members, and other experts to recommend next steps.



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Sustainable Fisheries

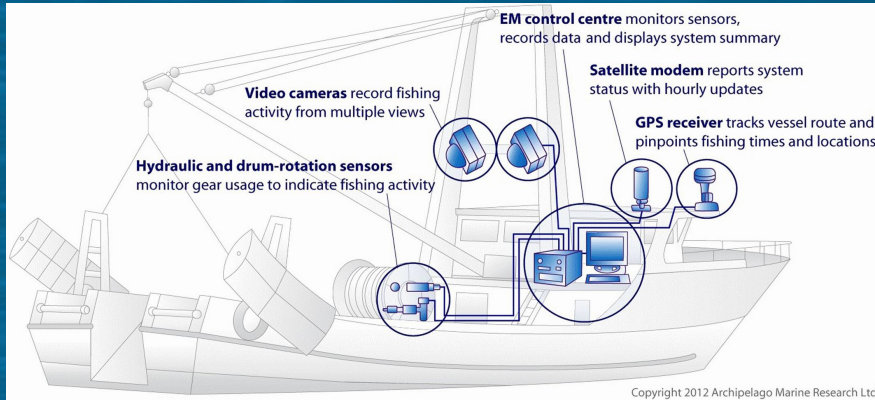
Emergency Rule Requests from NPFMC

- Reviewed and denied a February 2022 request for emergency regulations to allow the temporary transfer of catcher vessel halibut and sablefish IFQ for all individual quota shareholders for the 2022 fishing season (because continued impacts of COVID-19 were not unforeseen circumstances and the Council chose not to initiate a long-term action prior to the expiration of the 2021 emergency action)
- Published expedited proposed and final rules to remove limits on the maximum amount of halibut IFQ that may be harvested by a vessel, commonly known as vessel use caps, in the Aleutian Islands and Bering Sea for the 2022 IFQ fishing year
- Published an emergency temporary rule to suspend the recent participation requirements for Catcher Vessel Crew and Catcher Processor Crew Quota Shares under the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Crab Rationalization Program for the 2022/23 fishing season



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Electronic Monitoring



Trawl gear

- Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) started in 2020.
- Anticipated implementation of regulated program in 2024.
- Evaluating EM on pollock catcher vessels using pelagic trawl gear in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska.
- EM used for compliance monitoring of maximized retention.
- Catch accounting catch and bycatch is done via landing reports and shoreside plant observers.
- 79 vessels participating in 2022.

Fixed Gear (pot and longline)

- Regulated program in place since 2018.
- Voluntary: vessels can choose to be in EM instead of observers
 - 171 vessels in fixed-gear EM in 2022
- 30% of trips randomly selected for EM recording
- EM used to estimate discards of all species

In both Alaska EM programs, video is reviewed by PSMFC team in Portland



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Observer Program Update



- Impacts of COVID-19 on observer deployment:
 - Due to limitations on transportation and health mandates, observers were deployed on randomly selected trips from a limited set of specific ports in 2021.
 - Starting in September, 2021, NMFS was able to deploy from all ports throughout Alaska.
 - In 2022, observer deployment from all ports throughout Alaska and observers are able to work in processing facilities.
- Overall, for all federal fisheries off Alaska, 3,737 trips (43.1%) and 421 vessels (44.0%) were monitored by either an observer or an Electronic Monitoring (EM) system in 2021.



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- Multi-agency project among NMFS, ADFG, IPHC and supported by PSMFC.
- Provides a single location for electronic reporting of commercial fisheries landings, production, and effort (logbooks)
- Over the last 5 years, eLandings averaged 429 industry users and 45,411 reports per year. eLandings also averages roughly 3,000 user support calls and over 10,000 user or technical support emails per year, most of which are answered by staff contracted through the PSMFC.

Protected Resources

Species Recovery Grants to States (ESA Section 6)

- Two new projects funded for ADF&G:
 - Effects of marine heatwave on Steller sea lions (\$358K in FY22, \$876K total)
 - Surveying subsistence harvest of ice seals (\$82K in FY22, \$266K total)
- Added North Pacific right whales to the Section 6 cooperative agreement between NMFS and ADF&G for FY23

Marine Mammal Coordination with ADF&G

- NMFS initiated bimonthly coordination meetings to help our agencies stay in sync
- NMFS and ADF&G collaborate closely on Steller sea lion surveys and entanglement response
- NMFS and ADF&G jointly chair the Cook Inlet Beluga Whale Recovery Implementation Task Force

Recent ESA Decisions Incorporating ADF&G Comments

- Humpback whale critical habitat: excluded Bristol Bay area, Central Peninsula area, Cook Inlet area, and Southeast Alaska
- Harbor seals in Iliamna Lake: found that listing is not warranted
- Cook Inlet beluga whale 5-year review



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Protected Resources

Regional/National Marine Mammal Deterrent Workshops

- NMFS collaborated across regions and held virtual Alaska, Greater Atlantic, and National Marine Mammal Deterrent Workshops to listen and learn from fishermen about deterrents they have used, what works, what does not work, and ideas for new, effective deterrents.



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Habitat Restoration

Fish Passage, Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Restoration Center grants in FY22

- **Restoring Fish Passage through Barrier Removal:** Up to \$65 million in funding to support projects that reopen migratory pathways and restore access to healthy habitat for fish around the country.
- **Restoring Priority Tribal Fish Passage through Barrier Removal:** Up to \$12 million in funding for fish passage and tribal capacity building.
- **Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grants:** Up to \$85 million in funding to support sustainable fisheries, contribute to the recovery of threatened and endangered species, promote resilient ecosystems and communities, and yield socioeconomic benefits.
- **Coastal Habitat Restoration and Resilience Grants for Underserved Communities:** Up to \$10 million to engage underserved communities in habitat restoration activities that promote resilient ecosystems and communities

Large Scale Habitat Restoration to Build Climate Resilience Grant Program

- New national program would increase ability for more large-scale habitat restoration, allowing us to restore more coastal wetlands and open more rivers in support of fish.



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Habitat

Metlakatla community partnership on invasive green crab early detection

- In our third year partnering with the Metlakatla Indian Community Department of Fish and Wildlife, we together discovered the first population of invasive green crabs in Alaska.
- We are working with the tribe as well as ADF&G and other partners to explore options for responding to the threat this serious invasive species poses to multiple marine resources of value to Alaskans.



Left: Location of green crab discovery on Annette Island with extensive eelgrass beds.

Right: One of the specimens recovered.

Photos by LShaw

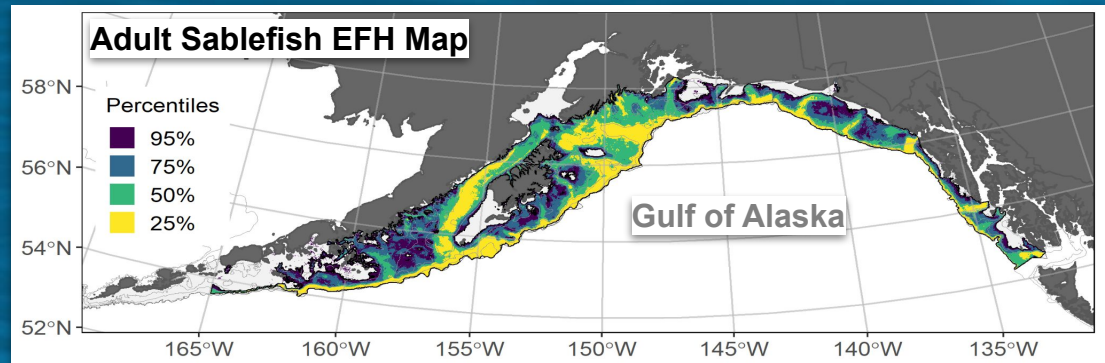


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Habitat

Species distribution mapping is key to ecosystem-based fisheries management and understanding climate change impacts on fish

- We have updated our species distribution models (SDM) with a new ensemble approach to improve Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) descriptions and maps (inset).



- We are working with the stock assessment community to develop stock-specific ecosystem metrics and indicators for integration with fishery management processes
- Future - Model and map fish habitat in the nearshore, expanding our approach from recent case studies with new fish and environmental data.
- Future - Continue to develop innovative SDM approaches that consider links between dynamic environmental variables such as temperature and species distribution to understand climate change impacts on fish.



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Aquaculture

Aquaculture Action Plan and annual accomplishments - The five-year action plan aligns our work in Alaska with national goals and objectives and identifies annual priorities. The accomplishment report highlights our progress.

Alaska Aquaculture Permitting Portal and Guide - Serves as a central location for local, state, and federal application instructions, farm siting guidance, and resources for new and current farmers. This project was done in partnership with state (ADF&G, ADEC, ADNR) and federal (NMFS, USFWS, USACE) agencies and Alaska Sea Grant.

Site Suitability Analysis - We're gathering GIS data for existing ocean uses and relevant biological and physical parameters, which could aid in identifying Aquaculture Opportunity Areas in the future.



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Tribal Engagement

- 228 Federally recognized tribes in Alaska
- NOAA Fisheries has longstanding co-management relationships with Alaska Native organizations for subsistence use of marine mammals, but plenty of room for improvement in other areas
 - We've handled tribal consultation under E.O. 13175 and other tribal engagement activities as collateral duties
 - We've long discussed the need to do more
- January 26, 2021: President Biden issues memorandum on Tribal Consultation and Strengthening Nation to Nation Relationships
- Currently recruiting for a Tribal Liaison to improve and expand upon our engagement, outreach, consultations



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Thank You



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