



Marine Conservation Alliance

promoting sustainable fisheries to feed the world

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Adak Fisheries, LLC

Alyeska Seafoods

Alaska Crab Coalition

Alaska Draggers Association

Alaska Groundfish Data Bank

Alaskan Leader Fisheries

Alaska Pacific Seafoods

Aleutian Islands Brown Crab
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*Akutan, Adia, False Pass, Nelson Lagoon, Nikolski,
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Naknek, Topak, Twin Hills, Ugashik*

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St. Paul

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*Alakanuk, Emmonak, Grayling, Kotik, Mountain
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MCA Backs Closure of Arctic Waters Precautionary approach warranted given pace of Climate Change

The Marine Conservation Alliance (MCA) supports action today by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) to close all federal waters north of the Bering Strait to commercial fishing until a management plan is fully developed.

“Climate change is having a significant effect on the Arctic, opening previously ice-covered waters and drawing cold water species further north,” said MCA’s Dave Benton. “The Council is right to look at closing these waters as a precautionary measure. This gives us the opportunity to conduct the scientific review necessary to develop a plan for how fisheries might be conducted in the Arctic in the future.”

The NPFMC today initiated a process to close all federal waters north of Bering Strait to commercial fishing until a management plan is developed. The intent is to take a precautionary approach in the Arctic region and provide the opportunity to assess the impacts of climate change on Arctic ecosystems before commercial fishing is allowed.

“MCA supports this action and we see it as an opportunity to work with scientists, managers and the communities of the region to ensure that fisheries, if they occur sometime in the future, are done in an environmentally responsible manner that addresses local concerns,” Benton said.

“The Council’s science-based, precautionary approach to fishery management has made it a model for the rest of the world and today’s action again demonstrates its leadership even in the face of such daunting challenges as climate change,” Benton added.

In addition to supporting the precautionary closure of the Arctic, the MCA has taken other actions to support healthy oceans and sustainable fisheries:

- Successfully pushed to apply the “Alaska Model” of sustainable, science-based fishery management to the nation’s other fisheries during renewal of the Magnuson Stevens Act (MSA).
- Supported NPFMC action to protect Essential Fish Habitat in the Gulf of Alaska, Aleutian Islands and Northern Bering Sea. The amount of habitat area closed to bottom trawling now totals over 530,000 square miles, almost as large as the land mass of Alaska itself.
- Promotes the use of ecosystem-based fishery management practices by building on existing management actions and science programs, and through applied scientific research to find practical solutions to conservation issues.
- Published popular wheelhouse guides to help fishermen and other mariners avoid conflicts with northern Right whales, Short Tailed Albatrosses, and other seabirds.
- Coordinates cooperative research efforts between fishermen and scientists such as the effort that developed a successful prototype halibut excluder that reduced halibut bycatch by cod trawlers by over 50 percent.
- Coordinates marine debris cleanup efforts throughout Alaska, including Prince William Sound, St. Paul and St. George Islands, Unalaska, Sitka, and Unalakleet.

The Juneau-based Marine Conservation Alliance is a coalition of seafood processors, harvesters, support industries and coastal communities that are active in Alaska fisheries. The MCA represents approximately 75 percent of the participants in Alaska shellfish and groundfish fisheries and promotes science based conservation measures to ensure sustainable fisheries in Alaska.

<http://www.marineconservationalliance.org/>

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