

Arctic Fishery Management Plan

A policy outlining commercial fishery management in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone of the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas.



Arctic Fishery Management Policy

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council has adopted a new Arctic Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The Council's action recognizes the different and changing ecological conditions of the Arctic, including warming trends in ocean temperatures, the loss of seasonal ice cover, and the potential long term effects from these changes on the Arctic marine ecosystem. More prolonged ice-free seasons coupled with warming waters and changing ranges of fish species could together create conditions that could lead to commercial fishery development in the U.S. Arctic Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The emergence of unregulated, or inadequately regulated, commercial fisheries in the Arctic EEZ off Alaska could have adverse effects on the sensitive ecosystem and marine resources of this area, including fish, fish habitat, and non-fish species that inhabit or depend on marine resources of the U.S. Arctic EEZ, and the subsistence way of life of residents of Arctic communities.

The Council's management policy for the U.S. Arctic EEZ is an ecosystem-based management policy that proactively applies judicious and responsible fisheries management practices, based on sound scientific research and analysis, to ensure the sustainability of fishery resources, to prevent unregulated or poorly regulated commercial fishing, and to protect associated ecosystems for the benefit of current users and future generations. This management policy recognizes the need to balance competing uses of marine resources and different social and economic goals for sustainable fishery management, including protection of the long-term health of the ecosystem and the optimization of yield from its fish resources. This policy recognizes the complex interactions among ecosystem components, and seeks to protect important species utilized by other ecosystem component species, potential target species, other organisms such as marine mammals and birds, and local residents and communities. All management measures will be based on the best scientific information available.



What it is...

The Council's new Arctic Fishery Management Plan (FMP) is created under authority of the U.S. Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

All Federal waters of the U.S. Arctic will be closed to commercial fishing for any species of finfish, mollusks, crustaceans, and all other forms of marine animal and plant life; however, harvest of marine mammals and birds is not regulated by the Arctic FMP.

The Arctic FMP will not regulate subsistence or recreational fishing or State of Alaska-managed fisheries in the Arctic.

Arctic Management Area

The Council's new Arctic FMP covers the U.S. Arctic EEZ waters offshore Alaska. This area is the Arctic Management Area, and is defined as all marine waters in the U.S. EEZ of the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas from 3 nautical miles offshore the coast of Alaska or its baseline to 200 nautical miles offshore, north of Bering Strait (from Cape Prince of Wales to Cape Dezhneva) and westward to the 1990 U.S./Russia maritime boundary line and eastward to the U.S./Canada maritime boundary.

Authorized Fisheries

No commercial fisheries will be authorized in the U.S. Arctic Management Area. However, the Arctic FMP provides a means for future commercial fishery development when sufficient information becomes available. The FMP establishes two categories of fish species – Target Species and Ecosystem Component Species. Based upon minimal information on fish in the U.S. Arctic EEZ, the Council established a Maximum Sustainable Yield from each of three potential fisheries, but reduced this yield based on ecosystem considerations, scientific uncertainty, and other factors to an Optimum Yield of zero for commercial fisheries.

...and what it does.



The Arctic FMP recognizes international treaties, positions and claims between Russia, Canada, and the US. With changing climate conditions, there are some indications that commercial fish stocks could extend their range northward. Lack of knowledge of Arctic fish stocks and how commercial fisheries could affect this ecosystem is causing concern, and commercial fisheries in the Arctic will be prohibited until sufficient scientific information is available on fish stocks and ecological relationships in this ecosystem to properly manage any future fishery. This action also will assist the U.S. in discussing with other circumpolar Nations appropriate management measures for a changing Arctic.

Recent Legislation

The Council's new Arctic FMP supports new U.S. law initiated by U.S. Senate Joint Resolution 17. Signed by President Bush on June 3, 2008, Public Law 110-243 calls on the U.S. to enter into international discussions and take necessary steps with other Arctic nations to agree on management of migratory, transboundary, and straddling fish stocks in the Arctic Ocean and establish a new international fishery management organization(s) for the Arctic. This law recommends consultation with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and Alaska Native communities of the Arctic.



Sampling plankton in the Beaufort Sea.

Arctic Communities and Outreach

The Council conducted an outreach program to increase Alaska Native and regional community involvement in the process for developing the Arctic FMP. Staff traveled to Arctic communities to explain the proposed Arctic FMP and to answer questions from residents. The Council intends to continue outreach to Arctic communities and residents in future fishery management decision making.

Research Needs

Fishery management under the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires information on fish stocks so that if fisheries develop, they will be sustainable, economically viable and benefit local communities. No comprehensive surveys of the Alaskan Arctic marine ecosystem have ever been completed. Future management will require many years of physical and biological data to facilitate future fish stock assessments.

U.S. Arctic Policy

On 1/9/09, President Bush issued National Security Directive 66 which establishes a new policy of the U.S. with respect to the Arctic region. The Council's Arctic FMP comports with this new policy by establishing a policy for conserving and protecting Arctic species, implementing ecosystem-based management of the Arctic, and sustainably managing Arctic species, taking into account the changing ranges or distribution of some species.

Enforcement of Regulations

The Arctic FMP closes the U.S. Arctic to commercial fishing, and regulations will be put into effect and the public notified. Enforcement of the prohibition on commercial fishing will be accomplished by the U. S. Coast Guard and NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement.



North Pacific Fishery Management Council

www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/current_issues/Arctic/arctic.htm

Phone: 907-271-2809

National Marine Fisheries Service, Alaska Region

www.fakr.noaa.gov

Phone: 907-586-7228

NMFS Alaska Fisheries Science Center

www.afsc.noaa.gov

State of Alaska, Department of Fish & Game

www.adfg.state.ak.us