

Council Motion
Arctic Fishery Management Plan – June 2008
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The Council received a briefing from staff on progress made toward development of a draft Arctic Fishery Management Plan (FMP) and accompanying environmental analyses. The Council recommends the following:

1. Development of the Arctic FMP package should proceed as a high priority. The Council recognizes the heightened national and international interest in the Arctic and potential changes in this region that might arise due to climate warming, and intends to be precautionary in the Arctic FMP by prohibiting commercial fisheries until adequate scientific information on fish stocks and how commercial fisheries might affect the Arctic environment are available. To that end, the Council intends to proceed on a schedule that will allow the Council to adopt an Arctic FMP as soon as practicable. The Ecosystem Committee and SSC have recommended that additional elements be included in the analysis, and NOAA General Counsel has provided guidance in preparing the FMP language. The Council recognizes that drafting the FMP and analyses may require an adjusted schedule to allow more time to incorporate comments and recommendations from the Council's Ecosystem Committee, SSC, and AP, and to consider guidance from NOAA GC. Therefore, the revised schedule tentatively will be initial review of the Arctic FMP package in October 2008, public review from October to December 2008, and final action in December 2008.
2. The Council recognizes that the FMP must comply with the requirements in MSA Section 303. Since the SSC has recommended that the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) provide support in preparing the FMP text, the Council requests that the AFSC give high priority to assisting with development of the Arctic FMP package.
3. Alternative 3 should be worded to clarify Council intent that the exempted red king crab fishery in the southern Chukchi Sea would be for a fishery of the size, scope, and limited geographic location of the reported historical fishery. Suggested language for Alternative 3: "Adopt an Arctic FMP that closes the entire Arctic Management Area to commercial fishing. Amend the scallop and crab FMPs to terminate their geographic coverage at Bering Strait. A red king crab fishery in the Chukchi Sea of the size and scope of the historic fishery in the geographic area where the fishery has historically occurred would be exempt from the Arctic FMP."
4. The analysis of the status quo alternative should recognize the limitations for State management of unregistered vessels in Arctic EEZ waters as authorized under MSA Section 306(a)(3)(C).
5. The Council supports an extensive outreach program to ensure residents of the Arctic region are informed and have the opportunity to provide input.