

NPFMC Critical Ongoing Monitoring Research Priorities for 2024-2028*

Information provided by monitoring activities in this category (1) provide an essential management function; (2) cannot likely be acquired through other means; or (3) are required by regulation. Postponement would have a significant and immediate impact on management.

Research ID	Title	Description
144	District-wide survey for demersal shelf rockfish in Southeast Alaska	Conduct a district-wide survey for demersal shelf rockfish in Southeast Alaska on a biennial or triennial basis. Survey information is becoming extremely dated.
145	Continuation of State and Federal annual and biennial surveys	Continuation of State and Federal annual and biennial surveys in the GOA, AI, NBS, and EBS, including crab pot surveys, is a critical aspect of fishery management off Alaska. It is important to give priority to these surveys, in light of recent federal budgets in which funding may not be sufficient to conduct these surveys. Loss of funding for days at sea for NOAA ships jeopardizes these programs. Budgetary concerns have resulted in cuts to not only days at sea, which increases uncertainty, but also sampling the deepest strata, which threatens the value of trawl surveys as a synoptic ecological survey. These surveys provide baseline distribution, abundance, and life history data that form the foundation for stock assessments and the development of ecosystem approaches to management. Although an ongoing need, these surveys are considered the highest priority research activity, contributing to assessment of commercial groundfish and crab fisheries off Alaska.
150	Maintain the core biological and oceanographic data (e.g., biophysical moorings, stomach data, zooplankton, age 0 surveys, benthic production) necessary to support integrated ecosystem assessment	Maintain the core data and process studies needed to support integrated ecosystem assessments. Core data include inputs for single- or multi-species management strategy evaluations, food web, and coupled biophysical end-to-end ecosystem models (e.g. biophysical moorings, stomach data, zooplankton, age 0 surveys (i.e. BASIS surveys), benthic production). Develop and maintain indices of sea ice formation, sea ice retreat, and timing/extent of the spring bloom for the EBS. For this, maintenance of moorings, especially M-2, is essential. If recent changes in ice cover and temperatures in the Bering Sea persist, these may have profound effects on marine communities.
159	Evaluate interactions between fisheries and pinnipeds	Studies of the interactions between fisheries and protected species, such as Steller sea lions in the Central and Western Aleutian Islands (areas 541, 542, 543), and northern fur seals on the eastern Bering Sea shelf are needed. These studies should be conducted at appropriate spatial and temporal scales with an emphasis on seasonal prey fields, diet, and movement of fisheries and pinnipeds.
160	Assess vital rates of Steller sea lions	Assess vital rates (i.e., reproduction and survival) of Steller sea lions in the western DPS (including Russia) at sufficient frequency to track population dynamics.
161	Assess the health of Stellar sea lions	Assess possible indirect effects of fisheries removals via periodic health assessments, indices of body condition, survival of pups and juveniles, and natality of Steller sea lions in the western DPS.
165	Conduct routine surveys of subsistence in the northern Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean	Conduct routine surveys of subsistence use of marine resources in the northern Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean. These surveys will become increasingly important under ongoing warming ocean temperatures because range expansions of harvested fishery resources may occur. If range expansions or shifts occur, data will be needed to adjust standard survey time series for availability.

*Adopted by the Council during their triennial review of research priorities in [June 2024](#).

Research ID	Title	Description
186	Collect and maintain zooplankton and meroplankton biomass and community composition time series	Collect and maintain zooplankton and meroplankton biomass and community composition time series in the eastern Bering Sea. Develop, collect and maintain time series of zooplankton biomass and community composition for the GOA, AI, Arctic.
187	Continue to develop and improve the use of indicator-based ecosystem assessments throughout the range of the Council's managed resources	Maintain indicator-based ecosystem assessment for EBS.
190	Collect and maintain time series of ocean pH	Collect and maintain time series of ocean pH in the major water masses off Alaska to improve understanding of ocean acidification and its effects on managed species, upper level predators and lower trophic levels
192	Collect, analyze, and monitor diet information	Collect, analyze, and monitor diet information (species, biomass, energetics), from seasons in addition to summer, to assess spatial and temporal changes in predator-prey interactions, including marine mammals and seabirds. The diet information should be collected on the appropriate spatial scales for key predators and prey to determine how food webs may be changing in response to shifts in the range of crab and groundfish.
207	Collect and analyze fishery effort and observer data for scallops	Collect and analyze fishery effort and observer data for scallops. Standardize CPUE data to correct for factors contributing to variable CPUE.
209	Continue to collect guided angler sector data for the halibut fishery	Continue to collect the guided angler sector data for the halibut fishery. Continue to explore factors that affect angler demand and trip supply. (note the IPHC collects unguided angler sector data)
218	Survey capability for forage fish	Develop a long-term survey capability for forage fish (partially underway). The NPRB funded GOA and Bering Sea projects are currently describing the spatial and temporal variability in the structure of forage fish communities and the effect of this variability on predators. This work should be continued and methods for long-term monitoring should be developed.
226	Monitor the economic effects from fishery policy changes on coastal communities.	Monitor the socio-economic effects from fishery policy changes on coastal communities. This includes understanding socio-economic impacts (both direct and indirect) and how the impacts are distributed among communities and economic sectors.
228	Monitor subsistence harvest (patterns, norms, quantities) in communities affected by Council actions.	Monitor the subsistence harvest patterns, norms and quantities in communities that depend upon resources that may be affected by Council action.
249	Monitor the movement of Steller sea lions and northern fur seals	Monitor the movement of Steller sea lions and northern fur seals in response to environmental variability to understand the spatial changes of predator-prey interactions.
552	Expand statewide scallop survey	The State of Alaska fishery independent dredge survey has been conducted in a limited number of known beds. Expansion of the survey beyond the edges of known beds into previously un-surveyed areas will improve knowledge of bed size and true scallop distribution..
611	Collection of socio-economic information	Collect socio-economic information on commercial, recreational, and charter fishing, as well as fish processing, to meet the requirements of the MSFCMA sections 303(a)(5, 9, 13), 303(b)(6), and 303A.
612	Maintain observer program	Maintain the observer data collection activity and ensure that fishery dependent data collected provides a valid representation of the catch and can be compared easily to the previous data collection methods and time series remain intact.