

Executive Director's Report

Change of Command

Most everyone by now has seen the notice that Steve Pennoyer will be retiring this spring and Jim Balsiger will become the new Regional Administrator for NMFS. We will have a reception to honor Steve on Thursday evening in the Chart Room on the 15th floor at 7 pm. All are welcome to attend and pass on their best wishes to Steve as he prepares to sail off into the sunset.

June Meeting

We will meet in Portland the week of June 5 at the Double Tree Inn. June will be final review time for the two crab rebuilding plans, halibut subsistence, observer regulatory amendments, and inshore co-op structure. We will start the SSC and AP on Monday, and the Council on Wednesday. As we near the end of this week's meeting, we need to reassess the agenda for June and settle whether we need an August meeting, particularly as it may relate to Pacific cod RPAs to protect Steller sea lions.

AP Officers

The Council will need to confirm the newly elected AP officers.

Steller's Eiders

Item B-1(a) contains information on critical habitat for Steller's eiders. It's in the proposal stage right now, and comments are due by May 12, 2000, to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

NMFS Response to Workload Concern

In February, you asked the chairman to send a letter to NMFS expressing our concerns with their using valuable staff on several national issues when there is such as backload of issues needing attention at the regional level. Chairman Lauber's letter to NMFS and their response are under item B-1(b).

Monterey Aquarium Rates the Fisheries

Item B-1(c) is a news article from the Anchorage Daily News on a new initiative of the Monterey Aquarium to raise public awareness of U.S. fisheries problems. Alaska halibut made the "best choice" list while consumers of pollock and snow crab were warned to "proceed with caution".

Gilchrist Legislation

HR 4046, the "Fisheries Recovery Act of 2000", was submitted by Congressman Gilchrist on March 21, 2000. The bill would make extensive revisions to the Magnuson-Stevens Act on reporting methodology, on bycatch, reductions in bycatch, protection of EFH and restrictions on fishing gear, add conservation organization members to the councils, impose a mandatory observer program, beef up ecosystems considerations by requiring Fisheries Ecosystem Plans, strengthen the overfishing provisions of the Act, and impose a precautionary approach in managing fisheries. I will have a marked up version of the Act available at meeting time. We need to track this important legislation.

Meeting Dates and Locations for Years 2003-2005

It's time for Helen to begin making arrangements for meetings beyond 2002. Item B-1(d) is a list of tentative dates and locations for your review. The April meeting week is tentatively scheduled for one week earlier as there will be a conflict with the Pacific Council in 2003; this would also give staff more time to prepare public review drafts of analyses due for final action at the June meetings. We are going to pursue the possibility of switching the February and October meetings (Seattle in February and Anchorage in October) although we haven't had luck with meeting space in Anchorage in October in the past. Any comments should be provided at this meeting so we can begin looking for space.



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
1011 E. Tudor Rd.
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

IN REPLY REFER TO:

AFES/ESO

RECEIVED

MAR 14 2000

MAR 16 2000

Dear Interested Party:

N.P.F.M.C

Enclosed please find informational material pertaining to the recent proposal by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to designate critical habitat for Steller's eiders in Alaska. We hope you find these materials useful in evaluating the proposed designation. The comment period on this proposal will end May 12, 2000.

Questions and comments may be directed to Ted Swem, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 101 12th Avenue, Box 19 (Room 110), Fairbanks, Alaska 99501, or phone (907) 456-0441. You may also send comments to Mr. Swem via FAX at (907) 456-0208.

Sincerely,

Richard Hannan
Chief, Fisheries and Ecological Services

Enclosure

BRIEFING PAPER

CRITICAL HABITAT FOR STELLER'S EIDERS

March 1, 2000

ISSUE

- The Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing to designate critical habitat for the Steller's eider. Proposed designation of critical habitat for the Steller's eider includes nesting areas on Alaska's North Slope and the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta (YKD), and seven marine areas in southwest and southcoastal Alaska where the species molts, winters, and stages during spring migration. The proposed units encompass approximately 16,988 square miles on land, and 8500 square miles of marine waters along approximately 9000 miles of coastline.

BACKGROUND

- The Steller's eider is the smallest of four eider species. The adult male has a white head with a greenish tuft and a small black eye patch, a black back, white shoulders, and a chestnut breast and belly with a black spot on each side. Adult females and juveniles are mottled dark brown. Adults of both sexes have a blue wing speculum with a prominent white border on the anterior and posterior edges.
- Steller's eiders are diving ducks that spend most of the year in shallow marine waters where they primarily feed on bottom-dwelling molluscs and crustaceans. The breeding range of the Steller's eider in Alaska formerly extended discontinuously from the eastern Aleutian Islands around the western and northern coasts of Alaska to the Canada border. They now breed on the North Slope and in extremely low numbers on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta.
- Steller's eiders occur in marine habitats except during the breeding season. In fall, they congregate primarily in lagoons, bays, and estuaries on the north side of the Alaska Peninsula to molt. Densities can be extremely high; tens of thousands may concentrate in a few square miles in Izembek and Nelson lagoons during the peak of molt in August and September, although use of these areas can vary considerably among years. After molt, many disperse to the Aleutian Islands, the south side of the Alaska Peninsula, Kodiak Island, and as far east as Kachemak Bay, although thousands may remain in the lagoons in which they molt unless freezing conditions force them to move to warmer or more protected areas. In March or April, Steller's eiders begin to gradually move northward, again congregating on the north side of the Alaska Peninsula and in Bristol and Kuskokwim bays. Nearly 140,000 have been counted in this region during spring migration.
- The Steller's eider occurs at such low densities in Alaska during the breeding season that precisely estimating population size is currently impossible, but it is thought that hundreds or low thousands occupy the North Slope. Population size on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta is also difficult to estimate, but so few nests have been found in recent decades that it is believed that the species is extremely scarce there. Historical population size and distribution are poorly understood, but it is thought that the species' abundance

and range have decreased considerably in Alaska in the last century. Causes of the decline are unknown.

LISTING AND LITIGATION HISTORY

- In December 1990, the Service received a petition from James G. King to list the Steller's eider as an endangered species. In May 1992, the Service determined that listing was warranted but precluded by higher listing priorities. In 1993, a status review of the species concluded that listing of the Alaska breeding population as threatened was warranted, although the available information did not support listing the species worldwide. A proposed rule was published on July 14, 1994. A final determination on whether listing was warranted was delayed by a national moratorium on listing implemented in April 1995; that moratorium was lifted in April 1996. In June 1997, the Service published a final rule listing the Alaska breeding population of Steller's eiders as threatened without critical habitat (62 FR 31748).
- On March 10, 1999, the Southwest Center for Biological Diversity and the Christians Caring for Creation filed a lawsuit in Federal District Court in the Northern District of California against the Secretary of the Department of the Interior for failure to designate critical habitat for five California species and Alaska's Steller's and spectacled eiders.
- In September 1999, the plaintiffs and the Departments of Justice and Interior entered into an agreement in which Interior agreed to re-evaluate its critical habitat determinations for spectacled and Steller's eiders. The government took this action because over the last few years, a series of court decisions have overturned previous Service determinations regarding a variety of species that designation of critical habitat was not prudent (e.g., Natural Resources Defense Council v. U.S. Department of the Interior 113 F. 3d 1121 (9th Cir. 1997); Conservation Council for Hawaii v. Babbitt, 2 F. Supp. 2d 1280 (D. Hawaii 1998)).
- The agreement stipulates that if a "prudent" determination is made, proposals for critical habitat for spectacled eiders and Steller's eiders would be finalized by February 1, 2000, and March 1, 2000, respectively. Final rules designating critical habitat would subsequently be finalized by December 1, 2000, for spectacled eiders and January 5, 2001, for Steller's eiders. Final "not prudent" determinations, if appropriate, would be finalized by August 1, 2000, for spectacled eider and September 1, 2000, for Steller's eider.

PROPOSED CRITICAL HABITAT: NESTING AREAS

- Nesting areas on the YKD and North Slope are proposed as critical habitat. Identification of critical habitat for nesting is based on the known distribution of Steller's eiders from aerial survey information or historical records and presence of nesting habitat with primary constituent elements.
- Proposed critical habitat on the YKD and North Slope is delineated by township.

North Slope Nesting Unit (~15,800 mi²)

- The proposed North Slope unit extends across the North Slope of Alaska, from the

mouth of the Ututok River on the Chukchi Sea coast, to the Colville River delta, on the Beaufort Sea coast. Primary constituent elements of Steller's eider nesting habitat on the North Slope are described as follows: small ponds and shallow water habitats particularly those with emergent vegetation, moist tundra within 100m of permanent surface waters including lakes, ponds, and pools, the associated aquatic invertebrate fauna, and adjacent nesting habitats. Area: ~15,800 mi² or 10,098,348 acres.

Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta (YKD) Nesting Unit (~1201 mi²)

- The proposed Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Nesting Unit is located within 30 km of the coast, bounded by Kokechik Bay and the Askinuk Mountains to the north, and extending south to include Kigigak Island and the north end of Nelson Island. Primary constituent elements of Steller's eider nesting habitat on the YKD are similar to those described for the North Slope: small ponds and shallow water habitats particularly those with emergent vegetation, moist tundra within 100m of permanent surface waters including lakes, ponds, and pools, the associated aquatic invertebrate fauna, and adjacent nesting habitats. Area: ~1201 mi² or 769,158 acres.

PROPOSED CRITICAL HABITAT: MOLTING, MIGRATION STAGING, AND WINTERING AREAS

- Proposed critical habitat for molting and wintering is based on known distribution of Steller's eiders.
- Proposed critical habitat at sea is described by geographic coordinates, geographic features, and shoreline.
- Primary constituent elements of this habitat include the marine waters up to 10 m (30 ft) deep and the underlying substrate, the associated invertebrate fauna in the water column and in and on the underlying substrate, and, where present, eelgrass beds and associated flora and fauna.
- Areas proposed for designation as critical habitat include: the coastal waters around Nunivak Island; the north side of Kuskokwim Bay; selected lagoons and bays along the north side of the Alaska Peninsula; and nearshore marine waters along the coast of the eastern Aleutian islands, the south side of the Alaska Peninsula, a portion of Kachemak Bay and marine waters in the vicinity of Ninilchik, and waters of the Kodiak archipelago. Area: ~8500 mi² or 5,440,000 acres and 9000 miles of coastline.

NEXT STEPS

- The proposed rule was finalized by the March 1, 2000, Settlement Agreement date. A 60-day public comment period will open when proposed rule is published. Public comments will be accepted during this period and scientific peer review will be sought on the proposal. Requests for public hearings will be accepted.
- The Service will initiate and publish for public comment an analysis of the potential economic effects of the proposal to designated critical habitat for the spectacled eider.

- After considering all comments on the proposal and any economic effects, the Service must complete a final rule designating critical habitat by January 5, 2001.

CONTACT

- David B. Allen, Regional Director, (907) 786-3542, or LaVerne Smith, Assistant Regional Director for Fisheries, Ecological Services, and Marine Mammals (907) 786-3411.



Questions and Answers About Critical Habitat for the Steller's Eider

Q. What is critical habitat?

A. Critical habitat is a term used in the Endangered Species Act. It refers to specific geographic areas that are essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species and that may require special management considerations. These areas do not necessarily have to be occupied by the species at the time of designation.

Q. Do listed species in critical habitat areas receive more protection?

A. Designation of an area as critical habitat provides a means by which an endangered or threatened species' habitat can be protected from adverse changes or destruction resulting from Federal activities or projects. In most cases, critical habitat designation duplicates the protection provided by section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. It does not create a nature preserve or refuge, and does not affect ownership of land in the area. It does not allow Federal or public access to private lands, and does not change the rights of private landowners. It does not limit private, local or State actions unless Federal funding or authorization is involved. Listed species and their habitats are protected by the Endangered Species Act whether or not they are in an area designated as critical habitat.

Q. What protection does the Steller's eider currently receive as a listed species?

A. The Endangered Species Act forbids the import, export, or interstate or foreign sale of protected animals and plants without a special permit. It also makes "take" illegal – forbidding the killing, harming, harassing, possessing, or removing of protected animals from the wild. Federal agencies must also consult with the Service to conserve listed species on

their lands and to ensure that any activity they fund, authorize, or carry out will not jeopardize the survival of a listed species.

Permits may be issued to carry out otherwise prohibited activities involving endangered wildlife species for scientific purposes, to enhance the propagation or survival of the species, or for incidental take in the course of certain otherwise lawful activities.

In addition, the Endangered Species Act requires Federal agencies to pursue actions to recover species to the point where they no longer require protection and can be delisted.

Q. What is the purpose of designating critical habitat?

A. The purpose of designating critical habitat is to require Federal agencies to consult with the Service on actions they carry out, fund, or authorize that might destroy or adversely modify critical habitat.

Critical habitat designation has no effect on situations in which no Federal agency is involved—for example, a landowner undertaking a project on private land that involves no Federal funding or permit.

Q. Do Federal agencies have to consult with the Service outside critical habitat areas?

A. Yes. Even when there is no critical habitat designation, Federal agencies must consult with the Service to ensure any action they carry out, fund, or authorize is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of a listed species.

Q. What is the impact of a critical habitat designation on economic development?

A. The vast majority of human activities that require

a consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proceed with little or no modification.

Q. Does the Act require an economic analysis as part of designating critical habitat?

A. Yes. The Service must take into account the economic impact of specifying any particular area as critical habitat. The Service may exclude any area from critical habitat if it determines that the benefits of such exclusion outweigh the benefits of specifying the area as part of critical habitat unless it determines, based on the best scientific and commercial data available, that the failure to designate the area as critical habitat will result in the extinction of the species.

Q. Does this economic analysis have any effect on the decision to list a species?

A. No. Under the Act, a decision to list a species is made solely on the basis of scientific data and analysis.

Q. For how many species has the Service designated critical habitat?

A. To date, the Service has designated critical habitat for 116 of the 1,206 species listed as threatened or endangered.

Q. Why hasn't the Service designated critical habitat for more species?

A. After a Congressional moratorium on listing new species ended in 1996, the Service faced a huge backlog of proposed species listings. At that point, the Service assigned a relatively low priority to designating critical habitat because it believed that a more effective use of limited resources was to place imperiled species on the threatened and endangered species list. The ESA requires Federal agencies to consult with the Service whenever they carry out, fund, or authorize any activity that may jeopardize a listed species; potential impacts to listed species, including those caused by habitat loss, are considered during the consultation process.

Recent court decisions, however, have required the Service to designate critical habitat for an increasing number of listed species.

Q. Why is critical habitat for the Steller's eider being proposed?

A. At the time Steller's eiders were listed as threatened in 1997, we did not believe that the species would benefit from having critical habitat designated. In 1999, we were sued for failure to designate critical habitat and we agreed to reanalyze the benefit. The proposal is the result of this reanalysis.

Q. How does the Service determine what areas to designate?

A. Biologists consider physical or biological habitat features needed by the species. These include, but are not limited to:

- o space for individual and population growth and for normal behavior;
- o food, water, air, light, minerals, or other nutritional or physiological requirements;
- o cover or shelter;
- o sites for breeding and rearing offspring;
- o habitats that are protected from disturbance or are representative of the historic geographical and ecological distributions of a species.

Q. Are all areas within critical habitat boundaries considered critical habitat?

A. No. Only areas that contain the primary constituent elements required by the species are considered critical habitat. Primary constituent elements are those physical and biological features of a landscape that a species needs to survive. There are many areas within Steller's eider critical habitat boundaries that do not contain the constituent elements and are not considered critical habitat. For example, marine waters deeper than 10 meters (30 feet), certain dry uplands, and existing structures such as buildings, roads, oil platforms, and docks are not considered critical habitat.

Q. Are all Steller's eiders protected by the Endangered Species Act?

A. No. There are three populations of Steller's eiders. Two breed in Russia and one breeds in Alaska. Only the Alaska-breeding population is classified as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

Q. Where does the Alaska-breeding population of Steller's eiders occur?

A. The Alaska-breeding population of Steller's eiders

nests in two general areas: on the North Slope where hundreds or low thousands occur; and on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, where an extremely small but unknown number remain. After nesting, Steller's eiders move from their terrestrial nesting areas to shallow, nearshore marine waters, where they spend the remainder of the year.

The range of the Alaska-breeding population during the non-nesting season remains poorly understood. Over a hundred thousand Steller's eiders that nest in Russia move to Alaska and winter in a huge area including the north and south sides of the Alaska Peninsula, the eastern Aleutian Islands, and southcoastal Alaska including the Kodiak Archipelago and parts of southern Cook Inlet. It is believed that the threatened Alaska-breeding population likely also occurs within this area during winter, but it is not known whether they occur in specific portions or throughout this broad range.

Q. Where do Steller's eiders molt?

A. Like other waterfowl, Steller's eiders undergo a several-week long flightless period in which they "molt", or replace their wing and tail feathers. Steller's eiders molt in a number of locations on the Bering Sea coast, but most concentrate in a few bays and lagoons on the north side of the Alaska Peninsula. The most important molting areas are Nelson and Izembek lagoons, where up to a hundred thousand molt in some years. Banding information shows that at least some Alaska-breeding Steller's eiders molt in these two lagoons.

Q. Why have Alaska-breeding Steller's eiders declined?

A. The Alaska-breeding population of Steller's eiders was listed as threatened because its range in Alaska contracted substantially and its population size declined, increasing the vulnerability of the remaining population to extirpation. Causes of the decline remain unknown but possible contributing factors include over-hunting, lead-poisoning from ingesting spent lead shot while feeding, changes in the number or diet of predators, and changes in the marine ecosystems where Steller's eiders molt and winter.

Q. Will the public have an opportunity to comment on the critical habitat designation?

A. Yes. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be accepting public comment for 60 days following the

publication of this proposal in the Federal Register.

More questions?

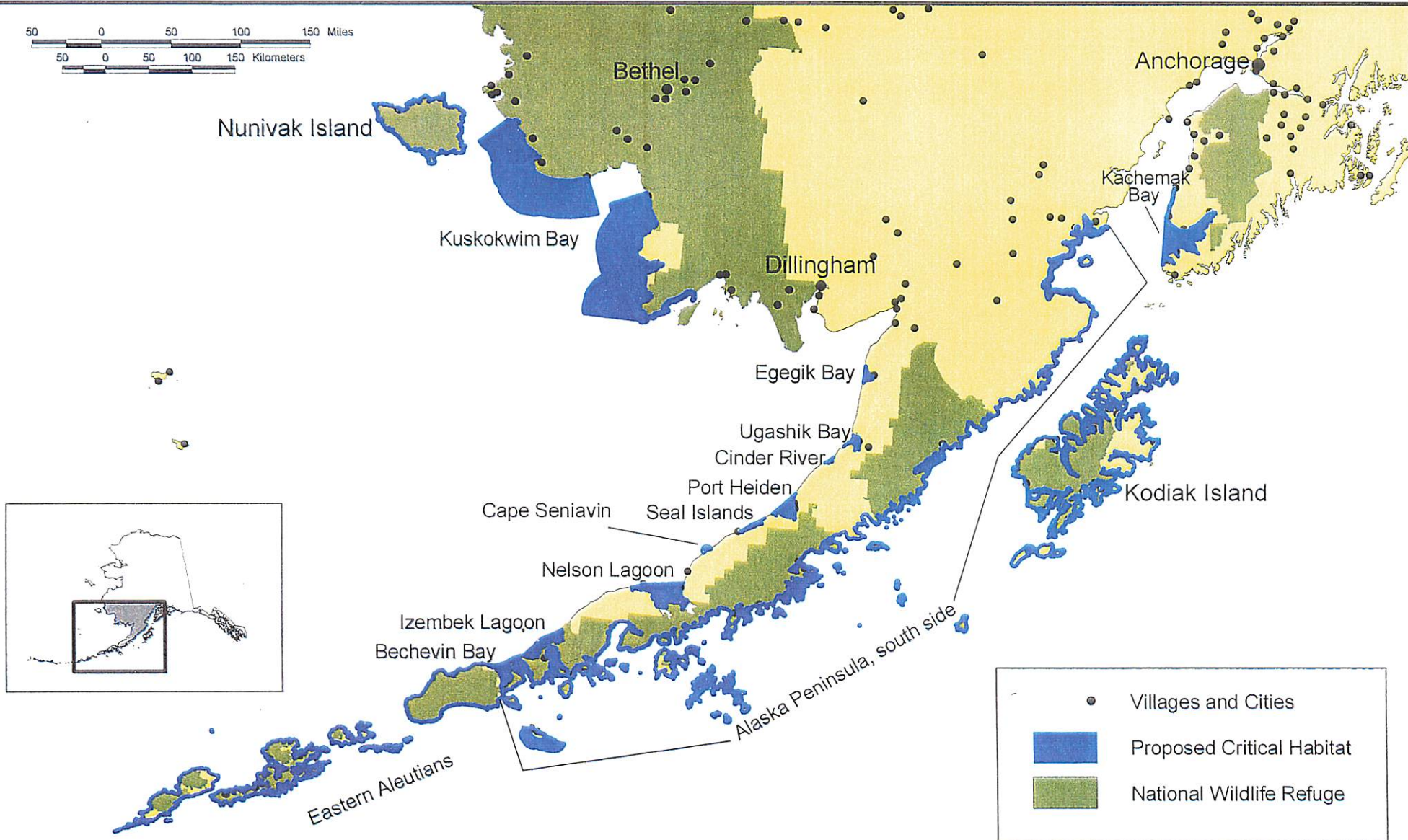
Call or write:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Ecological Services Fairbanks Field Office
101 12 th Ave. Box 19, Room 110
Fairbanks, AK 99701

(907) 456-0203



Steller's Eider Proposed Critical Habitat Marine Units



North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Richard B. Lauber, Chairman
Clarence G. Pautzke, Executive Director



605 West 4th Avenue, Suite 306
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252

Telephone: (907) 271-2809

Fax: (907) 271-2817

Visit our website: <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc>

February 18, 2000

Ms Penelope Dalton
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Ms. Dalton:

I am writing this short note to pass along some concerns raised at our North Pacific Council meeting last week. First, I want to make it very clear that we deeply appreciate the contributions of your Regional staff to our activities. We work closely particularly with the Sustainable Fisheries Division and folks from the Alaska Fisheries Science Center, and they do their utmost to respond to our needs for information and analysis.

Recently we have found, however, that NMFS staff is in high demand and short supply. Rapacious litigation is in part responsible for this situation. But we also sense that new national initiatives, such as the NOAA Fisheries capacity reduction study described in your January 20, 2000 letter, may divert valuable staff away from our very high priority issues such as Steller sea lion protection, American Fisheries Act implementation, and development of cumulative environmental impact statements.

As I noted above, we continue to appreciate the many hours your personnel put in to carry out Council initiatives. Our big worry is that other mandates may bleed off precious staff, leaving us with an intolerable slowdown in our own activities. We request that we receive progress reports on the capacity reduction program from NMFS at our Council meetings, along with an estimate of staff requirements.

I look forward to seeing you at the Chairmen's meeting in Charleston this May and discussing this issue further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard B. Lauber".

Richard B. Lauber
Chairman

copy: Steve Pennoyer
David Benton



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

THE DIRECTOR

MAR 15 2000

RECEIVED
MAR 23 2000
N.P.F.M.C

Mr. Richard B. Lauber
Chairman
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
605 West 4th Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-2817

Dear Mr. Lauber:

Thank you for your letter regarding concerns raised at the February meeting of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) about new national initiatives and their effect on the activities of the Council.

The pace of management changes has increased in recent years because of the Sustainable Fisheries Act, the American Fisheries Act, and changes to other applicable laws. I am aware that the Council has developed several new conservation and management initiatives (e.g., Individual Fishing Quota, Improved Retention and Improved Utilization) to address issues in North Pacific fisheries; the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has endeavored to support Council programs with additional resources. The awareness of possible impacts of fisheries off Alaska on endangered species (e.g., Steller sea lion, short-tailed albatross) has resulted in tremendous efforts by management, scientific, and legal staff of the Alaska Region to respond to public concerns and litigation. Thus, the workload of the Council and the NMFS Region has been extremely heavy. However, while some of the statutory changes and issues have a regional focus, many are national in scope and must be dealt with at that level. In working on large-scale, long-term issues such as capacity reduction, it is very important that NMFS involve its Regions, since that is where many of the impacts of the resulting policies and programs will be realized.

Section 312(b) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act provides the authority for development of a fishery capacity reduction program (program), upon the request of a Council or a state Governor, pursuant to the specific criteria of that program. There are clear indications in some U.S. fisheries of overfishing, excess harvesting capacity, and the need to rebuild the fishery resources, which require significant improvements in conservation and management of these fisheries. NMFS is attempting to be prepared for requests for such programs by developing a process for voluntarily reducing harvesting capacity in limited access fisheries. This effort appropriately involves knowledgeable Regional staff in preparing the foundation for such programs.

THE ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR
FOR FISHERIES

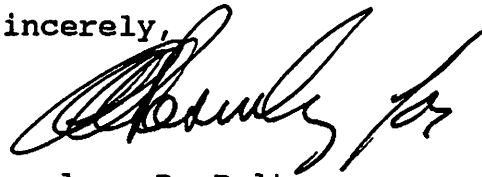


NMFS and the Councils have a shared responsibility in carrying out Congress' intent and meeting the objectives of the various laws, while addressing the concerns of affected industry, local communities, and the public. While I know that these responsibilities and initiatives may result in some delays in other important Council and Regional activities, such decisions must be made, recognizing that there is a necessary tradeoff among several important priorities.

I appreciate, as do you, that the staff of the Alaska Region makes tremendous efforts to support the Council needs for information and analysis. I assure you that I make every effort to balance national and Regional priorities, within the scope of available staff resources.

I will be pleased to discuss this issue with you at any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Penelope Dalton", written in dark ink.

Penelope D. Dalton
Assistant Administrator
for Fisheries

OFF THE



MENU

REVIEWS
 FOOD NEWS

This pamphlet points out the right fish to eat if you don't want to lessen the choices of future diners.



MONTEREY BAY AQUARIUM*

SEAFOOD WATCH™

a pocket guide



For updated information
 check our web site at

www.montereybayaquarium.org

BIG PIXIE SAUTE



WINE OF THE WEEK

The 1998 Steele Cuvee Chardonnay from Steele Vineyards is quite a deal.

Blended from single-vineyard production lots — which cost about as much — this wine exhibits complex, forward and juicy aromas. The mouth is lively, with peach, pineapple, grapefruit and a clean, nonoaky finish.

Costs about \$20.

— Michael McVittie,
 whose picks are available
 at local wine-sellers

Aquarium keeps eye on world's edible fish

By T.C.

Mitchell

iven recent restrictions this winter on crabbing grounds and the ever-present arguments over who should catch what portion of the salmon harvest each year, Alaskans are constantly reminded that fishery resources require deft management practices to ensure that our fish remain an option at dinner time.

What Alaskans might not be reminded of is that seafood resources all over the world aren't necessarily getting the management attention needed to survive. Because of that, stocks are being depleted in certain areas, and some species are disappearing, creating a consumer's dilemma between what's good to eat now and what's available to eat in the future.

Awhile back, Atlantic swordfish became the *cause celebre* of chefs across the country. The popular seafood steaks started showing up less and less on menus because fishery experts determined the population was being overfished by the longliners off the East Coast. Chefs decided to back off on swordfish entrees to educate the public about a harvest that is bringing in juvenile fish as much as 100 pounds lighter than would have been caught a decade ago.

The Monterey Bay Aquarium in California has recently taken up the cause for not only the Eastern Seaboard swordfish but many other species as well with its recent publication of a pamphlet, "Seafood Watch: A Guide for Consumers."

Based on the size of the fish populations and how well they are managed by government regulators and fishermen, the aquarium is providing seafood consumers — in the grocery store and at restaurants — with three lists: "best choices," "proceed with caution" and "avoid."

Citing sources such as the National Marine Fisheries

FOR MORE INFORMATION, try fishin the Monterey Bay Aquarium at www.mbayaq.org.



MAD FOR MINTS

Take a breath. Our love of garlicky foods and specialty coffees has sparked another trend — love of breath mints. The breath-freshener category grew 8.2 percent in 1999 to \$324 million in sales and shows no sign of stopping. It's expected to grow 10 percent annually for the next four years, the Grocery Manufacturers of America says.

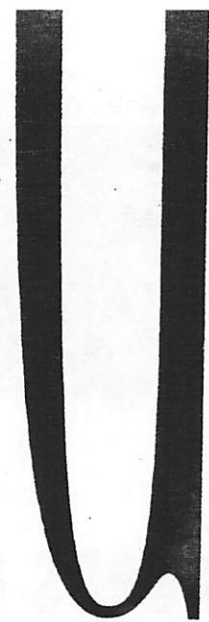
— *Los Angeles Times*



PROPELLER HEADS

Here's a boomer trivia question: What cereal box featured a pink, alien-like character in a green suit with a propeller on its head? It was Quisp, of course. And now the crunchy corn cereal is beaming back into our lives. Quaker Oats, which makes Quisp, was distributing it only in Los Angeles, Atlanta, Chicago, Boston and some stores in Oklahoma and Wisconsin. Now you can get a 9-ounce box for \$2.99 through www.netgrocer.com.

— *Knight Ridder*



can be printed out for free. The "Seafood Watch" pamphlet also can be downloaded and trimmed to put in a wallet or purse for easy reference when shopping or dining.

Alaska fish show up in all three categories.

Let's start with the good stuff. The halibut that's coming in fresh from the cold waters as we speak made the aquarium's "best choices" list.

"Good management is keeping Pacific halibut populations relatively healthy, but the Atlantic halibut fishery has collapsed. Alaska halibut has the lowest level of bycatch."

Bycatch — other fish harvested inadvertently with the target fish — is a concern of the aquarium staff because fisheries in some areas are being depleted as a waste product.

Unlike our neighbors in Washington and Oregon, Alaska salmon are fair game for our tables, too.

"Alaska's wild salmon fisheries are healthy and well-regulated. We believe wild salmon from a well-regulated fishery is the most environmentally sound choice."

Interestingly, skipping down the coast past the Northwest, the aquarium also gave high marks to California's wild-salmon harvest.

The "proceed with caution" list concerns seafood filler many of us take for granted: surimi, or imitation crab made from pollock.

"Although this is a well-regulated fishery, some scientists believe heavy pollock fishing takes too much food from sea lions, disrupting Arctic ecosystems. We're studying this issue."

Also on the bubble from Alaska are Bering Sea snow crab.

"In response to a sudden decline in snow crab stocks, fishery quotas for 2000 have been slashed to less than 15 percent of the 1999 quotas. Managers predict the fishery will be closed completely in 2001 and that these emergency measures will help the snow crab population recover quickly."

Now for the kicker. The aquarium tells us to "avoid" eating rockfish, also called Pacific red snapper or rock cod. California, Oregon and Washington took the brunt of the criticism here, but "off Alaska, the status of most rockfish populations is unknown. Because different species of rockfish share the same habitat, they are often caught together in one net. It's difficult to avoid

See Page 6, **FISH**

SHOULD YOU EAT IT?

BEST CHOICES	PROCEED WITH CAUTION	AVOID
Albacore/Tombo tuna (<i>Pacific</i>)	Bay scallops	American lobster
Calamari/Squid (<i>Pacific</i>)	Bay shrimp/Pacific pink shrimp	Bluefin tuna
Catfish (<i>farmed</i>)	English/Petrale sole	Chilean sea bass/Patagonian toothfish
Clams (<i>farmed; U.S., Canada, New Zealand</i>)	Halibut (<i>California/Oregon/Washington</i>)	Cod (<i>Atlantic</i>)
Dungeness crab	Imitation crab/Surimi/Pollock	Lingcod
Halibut (<i>Alaska</i>)	Salmon (<i>Oregon/Washington, wild-caught</i>)	Monkfish
Mahi-mahi/Dolphinfish/Dorado	Snow crab	Orange roughy
Mussels (<i>farmed; U.S., Canada, New Zealand</i>)	Spot prawns (<i>trap-caught OK</i>)	Rockfish/Pacific red snapper/Rock cod
New Zealand cod/Hoki	Turtle-Safe® shrimp/prawns	Sablefish/Butterfish/Black cod
Oysters (<i>farmed; U.S., Canada, New Zealand</i>)	Yellowfin tuna/Ahi (<i>Hawaii, line-caught OK</i>)	Salmon (<i>farmed</i>)
Rainbow trout (<i>farmed</i>)		Sea scallops (<i>Atlantic</i>)
Salmon (<i>California/Alaska, wild-caught</i>)		Shark (<i>all</i>)
Striped bass (<i>farmed</i>)		Shrimp/Prawns (<i>wild-caught or farmed</i>)
Sturgeon (<i>farmed</i>)		Spot prawns (<i>trawl-caught</i>)
Tilapia (<i>farmed</i>)		Swordfish

Source: Monterey Bay Aquarium



FISH: CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

catching overfished rockfishes while trawling for more plentiful species.”

The Packard Foundation, which founded the Monterey Bay Aquarium in 1984, is spending \$3 million this year to support consumer education, eco-labeling and certification programs for well-managed fisheries.

A well-managed fishery signifies that its operation is environmentally friendly, that it is not taking more fish than can be replenished naturally or not killing other species through harmful fishing practices. A certified fishery can earn a “Forever Fish” logo on its products telling customers the fish has been taken in an environmentally sound way.

One certification group supported by the Packard Foundation is the Marine Stewardship Council, a London-based nonprofit organization set up in 1996 by the World Wildlife Fund and Unilever, a major food sup-

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plier in Europe.

Six weeks ago, the council opened its first U.S. office in Seattle. At a seafood show in Boston two weeks ago, the

council certified its first two fish — the Western Australian rock lobster and the Thames River herring — because the industry that brings them to the market has sound fishing operations. They now bear a “Forever Fish” logo.

Last year, the Alaska Fish and Game Department requested a “Forever Fish” certification from the council, which is evaluating the state’s five runs of salmon: king, silver, pink, red and chum.

**NPFMC
Suggested Meeting Dates and Locations
Years 2003-2005**

Year 2003:

Weeks of: February 3-10, 2003 Anchorage or Seattle
 March 31-April 7, 2003 Anchorage
 June 9-16, 2003 Kodiak
 October 6-13, 2003 Anchorage or Seattle
 December 8-15, 2003 Anchorage

Year 2004:

Weeks of: February 2-9, 2004 Anchorage or Portland
 March 29-April 5, 2004 Anchorage
 June 7-14, 2004 Dutch Harbor (?)
 October 4-11, 2004 Anchorage or Portland
 December 6-13, 2004 Anchorage

Year 2005:

Weeks of: February 7-14, 2005 Anchorage or Seattle
 April 4-11, 2005 Anchorage
 June 6-13, 2005 Kodiak
 October 3-10, 2005 Anchorage or Seattle
 December 5-12, 2005 Anchorage

**Current Meeting Schedule through 2002
(Anchorage, Portland, Kodiak and Sitka space already booked)**

	February Week of/ Location	April Week of/ Location	June Week of/ Location	October Week of/ Location	December Week of/ Location
2000		10/Anchorage	5/Portland	2/Sitka	4/Anchorage
2001	5/Anchorage	9/Anchorage	4/Kodiak	1/Seattle	3/Anchorage
2002	4/Anchorage	8/Anchorage	3/Dutch Harbor	Sept 30/ Seattle	2/Anchorage

Memorandum

Date: April 5, 2000
 To: Rick Lauber, Chairman
 North Pacific Fishery Management Council
 From: Marcus L. Hartley
 Northern Economics
 Re: Fishing Employment Data Initiative in Association with Reauthorization of the MSFCMA

I am writing to call your attention to a high priority issue that in our view merits an amendment to the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Fish harvesters in Alaska and from every other fishing state are not included in State and Federal data that report employment and income. Fishing is reportedly the second largest employer in the State of Alaska, but according to the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (ADOLWD) data only 1,422 Alaskans are employed in the general industry classified as Agriculture Forestry and Fishing. Table 1 below shows official ADOLWD data for 1997 and 1998 for the state and as a whole and for selected boroughs and census areas in the fishery dependent region of Southwest Alaska. The data are taken directly from the ADOLWD's Internet site. The data are clearly inaccurate and misleading.

Table 1: ADOLWD Wage and Salary Employment Data for Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing

	1997	1998
Average Annual Monthly Employment		
Statewide	1,520	1,422
Kodiak Borough	70	69
Lake and Peninsula Borough	0	0
Aleutians East Borough	105	3
Aleutians West Census Area	5	5
Bristol Borough	0	0
Dillingham Census Area	1	1

Source: ADOLWD Research and Analysis Internet site at <http://www.labor.state.ak.us/research/research/emp.htm#eee>

Research conducted by Northern Economics indicates that equally poor fish harvesting employment data are reported by Labor Departments for States throughout the U.S. The problem lies with the definition of employment that is used U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and all States including Alaska. Persons that earn wages and salaries are counted in regular quarterly survey of all employers throughout the U.S. People that harvest fish for a living are considered self-employed and therefore are not counted in this survey. No other regular data collection process is in place to count fish harvesting employees.

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How can we expect reasonable decisions regarding the impacts of fisheries and regulatory changes affecting fisheries if there are no useful data showing the number of persons employed in fish harvesting? In 1999, Northern Economics was involved in 25 different projects that required reasonable estimates of fish harvesting employment in Alaska. Finding reasonable data and making reasonable estimates of fish harvesting employment costs local, state, and federal governments thousands of dollars, if not hundreds of thousands every year. In fact NMFS is currently considering awarding a contract to study community social and economic impacts of fisheries for the Groundfish SEIS. It is anticipated that much of the cost of that analysis will be the estimation of fish harvesting employment.

While the cost of making reasonable estimates is considerable, the cost of using incorrect information may be immeasurable. Imagine a U.S. Senator from middle America asking his staff to make a quick and dirty assessment of the whether to vote yes for the Bill that would provide disaster relief funds for the Pribilof Island as a result of the decline in the Opilio crab fishery. The energetic staffer would very likely go to the Internet and access ADOLWD site at <http://www.labor.state.ak.us/research/research/emp.htm#eee> and find that according to official state labor data from Alaska at most only 5 persons are employed in fishing in the entire Aleutians West Census Area. The staffer would report back to the Senator that at most five persons might be affected and that the Senator should vote against the measure.

Northern Economics has contacted the offices of Senator Stevens and Senator Murkowski. Staff members for both Senators indicated that they understand the issue and would consider ways to provide a mandate to collect fish harvesting employment data and funding to do the job. However, they stated they would have a greater chance of success they knew that the Councils and the fishing industry supported this action. To this end Northern Economics urges the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to make this matter a priority on your agenda for changes in the MSFCMA.