

Alternative 2: Cooperative management with the State

Management Policy and Objectives

The FMP's management policy and objectives guide the development of the Council's management recommendations to the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary) and guide State management of the salmon fisheries in the East Area and West Area. In developing the management policy and objectives, the Council recognized that these objectives cannot be accomplished by an FMP alone. To that end, the FMP represents the Council's and NMFS' contribution to a comprehensive management regime for the salmon fishery that will be achieved in concert with actions taken by the Pacific Salmon Commission and the State. The Council and NMFS, in cooperation with the State, are committed to the long-term management of the Alaska salmon fishery. The goal is to promote stable management and maintain the health of the salmon fishery resource and environment.

Management Policy

The Council's salmon management policy is to facilitate State of Alaska salmon management in accordance with the Magnuson-Stevens Act, Pacific Salmon Treaty, and applicable federal law. This FMP represents the Council's contribution to a comprehensive management regime for the salmon fishery that will be achieved in concert with actions taken by the Pacific Salmon Commission and the State. This policy ensures the application of judicious and responsible fisheries management practices, based on sound scientific research and analysis, proactively rather than reactively, to ensure the sustainability of fishery resources and associated ecosystems for the benefit of future, as well as current generations.

Under this policy, all management measures will be based on the best scientific information available. This management policy recognizes the need to balance many competing uses of marine resources and different social and economic objectives for sustainable fishery management, including protection of the long-term health of the resource and the optimization of yield.

The Council has identified the following seven management objectives to carry out the management policy for this FMP. The Council, NMFS, and the State of Alaska will apply the following objectives in developing this FMP and associated management measures. Because adaptive management requires regular and periodic review, the management objectives identified in this section will be reviewed annually by the Council. The Council, through its salmon committees, will also annually review, modify, eliminate, or create new management measures, as appropriate, to best carry out the management objectives for this FMP.

Objective 1 - Prevent underfishing/overfishing and achieve MSY/OY

Manage the commercial and sport salmon fisheries by delegation to the State of Alaska, in compliance with the MSA and other applicable federal laws to further develop fisheries on stocks that are currently underutilized, prevent overfishing and obtain the number and distribution of spawning fish capable of producing the maximum sustainable yield.

Objective 2 - Manage salmon as a unit throughout their range

Manage the commercial and recreational salmon fisheries of Alaska throughout the range and life cycle of all salmon species. The range of salmon is described as the area of the EEZ offshore of Alaska and all State waters including the benthic, estuarine and freshwater habitats necessary to salmon for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity.

In the East Area, this objective is achieved by delegating management to the State through the FMP. This FMP integrates specific details for each State salmon management area in the East Area, so that salmon stocks can be managed as a unit and delegates authority to the State of Alaska to manage these areas and the fisheries that occur there in compliance with the MSA and other applicable federal laws, including the Pacific Salmon Treaty and ANILCA.

In the West Area, this objective is achieved by closing most of the EEZ, except for the three traditional net fisheries and delegating management authority to the State through the FMP. This amendment to the FMP integrates specific details for the Upper Cook Inlet management area so that salmon stocks can be managed as a unit and delegates authority to the State of Alaska to manage this area and the fishery that occurs there in compliance with the MSA and other applicable federal laws, including the Pacific Salmon Treaty and ANILCA.

Objective 3 - Minimize bycatch and bycatch mortality

To the extent practicable, manage salmon fisheries to minimize bycatch and minimize the mortality of unavoidable bycatch. Decrease, where possible, and account for the incidental mortalities of salmon hooked and released, consistent with allocation decisions and the objective of providing the greatest overall benefit to the people of the United States.

To minimize bycatch and mortality the following priorities and practices shall be followed:

- Use of commercial fishing gear that is appropriate for the target species.
- Prohibit all fishing activities in salmon spawning areas during spawning activities.
- Prohibit catch and release fishing for returning/spawning salmon in estuaries or freshwater.
- Prohibit snagging of naturally spawning salmon stocks in sport fisheries.

Objective 4 - Maximize economic and social benefits to the nation over time

Economic benefits are broadly defined to include, but are not limited to; profits, income, employment, benefits to consumers, and less tangible or less quantifiable benefits such as the economic stability of coastal communities. To ensure that economic and social benefits derived for fisheries covered by this FMP are maximized over time, the following will be examined in the selection of management measures:

- Efficiency of fishing effort.
- Fair and equitable allocation of harvestable surplus of salmon.
- Economic impacts on coastal communities.
- Socio-economic impacts on rural Alaska subsistence users.

This examination will be accomplished by considering, to the extent that data allow, the impact of management alternatives on the quantity and quality of the catch during the current and future seasons and their associated prices, harvesting costs, employment, the distribution of benefits among members of the harvesting, processing and consumer communities, management costs, and other factors affecting the ability to maximize the economic and social benefits as defined in this section. Other benefits are tied to economic stability and impacts of commercial fishing as well as recreational fishing and subsistence fishing.

Objective 5 - Protect wild stocks and utilize hatchery production

Manage salmon fisheries to ensure the maximum sustainable yield of naturally spawning stocks while providing access to hatchery production.

Objective 6 - Promote safety

Promote the safety of human life at sea in the development of fisheries management plans to the extent practicable, including the allowance of emergency temporal or spatial adjustments to the fishery. As appropriate, the Council, NMFS, and the State may provide for temporary adjustments of fishing opportunity, after consultation with the U.S. Coast Guard and fishery participants because of weather or ocean conditions causing safety concerns while ensuring no adverse effect on conservation in other fisheries or discrimination among fishery participants.

Objective 7 - Identify and Protect Salmon Habitat

The Council will be guided by the principle that there should be no net loss of the productive capacity of marine, benthic, estuarine, and freshwater habitats that sustain commercial, subsistence and recreational salmon fisheries. With this policy, the Council will assume an aggressive role in the protection and enhancement of essential fish habitat (EFH).

Protecting, restoring, and enhancing the natural productivity of salmon habitat, especially the estuarine and freshwater areas, is an extremely difficult challenge that must be achieved if salmon fisheries are to remain healthy for future generations. Section 3(10) of the MSA defines EFH as those waters and substrate necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity.

Form a joint Federal and State salmon habitat working group to ensure that salmon EFH for fisheries covered by this FMP are protected. The habitat working groups responsibilities include:

- Continual monitoring for adverse effects to salmon EFH
- Develop an action plan to mitigate, restore and enhance salmon EFH
- Rapid response to identified threats to salmon EFH

The following interpretations have been made by NMFS to clarify this definition: waters include aquatic areas and their associated physical, chemical, and biological properties that are used by fish, and may include historical areas if appropriate; substrate includes sediment, hard bottom, structures underlying the waters, and associated biological communities; necessary means the habitat required to support a

sustainable fishery and the managed species contribution to a healthy ecosystem; and spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity covers a species full life cycle.