Public Comment

By: 8th Graders, Keeley Rielly, Mercedes Cordero, Reagan Mitchell, Reese Bunten, and Tommy Pearson
& 7th Grade Life Science teacher, Jessica Cobley
Floyd Dryden Middle School, Juneau, Alaska

Project Overview by Jessica Cobley:

I developed curriculum around a 6-week unit in spring 2018 focused on Ecosystem Based Fisheries Management. The unit reached 105 7th graders in my Life Science class and covered biological and ecological lessons centered on the Bering Sea ecosystem. Throughout the unit, students studied 6 ecosystem components: oceanography, zooplankton, juvenile pollock, seabirds, fur seals, and humans. The project culminated in a mock fisheries management Council process where students presented 2019 quota recommendations for pollock to a panel of (actual) Plan Team, Scientific and Statistical Committee, Advisory Panel, and Council members. The responses below were gathered from my students, now 8th graders, for the purpose of participating in the public comment piece of the management process.

Public comment by 8th grade students:

What We Learned

We learned there are more factors that can affect the quota than we initially thought, like how the weather impacts the zooplankton. The impact of weather on the zooplankton, or the pollock's food, affected how many pollock could be caught. We learned that colder years proved to be better for the zooplankton, and they were more healthy and fatty. In those cold years, young AND older pollock eat better, and in effect, older pollock would not be eating as much of their own young. Having cold weather would allow us to raise the pollock quota, seeing as there would be more food available. There would be more fish in total with a cold year, as opposed to a warmer year, when the zooplankton is not as healthy, leaving the pollock with less food and less in numbers.

What We Enjoyed Most

Mercedes Cordero*:* What I enjoyed most about the EBFM project was learning more about my community and how we decide how much fish to take. I enjoyed studying and giving my input to help my state's ecosystem.

Reece Bunten*:* What I enjoyed most about the project learning about EBFM was seeing what I was working on for the first time compared to those whose entire career is studying this topic. At the beginning of this project I didn't expect much out of it but it truly was an interesting project that I am thankful to have been a part of.

Keeley Riley*:* What I enjoyed most about the project learning about EBFM was how this applies to our everyday life. I also think it shows us that we can impact our future and help the ecosystem so that the future is the best that we can make it.

Tommy Pearson: I was able to see into the process that they *actually use* when deciding these things. I really enjoyed seeing how real world problems are solved, and how science can be applied to the real world and our lives.

Reagan Mitchell: What I enjoyed most about the project learning about EBFM was looking into the past weather behaviors and predicting what will happen in later years.

Our Quota Recommendations

We studied 6 components of the ecosystem and we learned about indicators for pollock health. As a result, we thought that because the climate is in a warm trend, meaning a hotter year for the zooplankton, and a poor year for healthy pollock and pollock survival, the quota should be decreased.