

With every aspect of its fisheries strictly regulated, closely monitored, and rigidly enforced, Alaska's successful management practices are considered a model of sustainability for the entire world. And that has helped to ensure that Alaska will continue to be one of the cleanest and most natural marine environments on earth, and one of the world's most abundant sources of wild seafood for generations to come.



GLOSSARY

- Alaska Department of Fish & Game – ADFG or Department
- Acceptable Biological Catch – ABC
- Exclusive Economic Zone – EEZ
- Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands – BSAI
- Alaska Board of Fisheries – BoF or Board
- Community Development Quota – CDQ
- Escapement – the annual estimated number of salmon that escape capture in a fishery and then go on to spawn
- Food & Agriculture Organization of the United Nations – FAO
- Individual Fishing Quota – IFQ
- International Pacific Halibut Commission – IPHC
- Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act – MSFCMA, sometimes referred to as MSA
- Marine Protected Areas – MPAs
- National Marine Fisheries Service – NMFS, also called NOAA Fisheries



- National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration – NOAA
- North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission – NPAFC
- North Pacific Fishery Management Council – NPFMC
- Office for Law Enforcement – OLE
- Run – migration of spawning salmon
- Scientific and Statistical Committee – SSC
- Total Allowable Catch – TAC
- Vessel Monitoring System – VMS



ALASKA

SUSTAINABILITY FOR THE FUTURE

Many think of sustainability as a relatively recent phenomenon, but Alaska has been practicing the sustainable management of its resources for the past five decades. Since the territory became a state in 1959, its Constitution has mandated that “fish...shall be utilized, developed and maintained on the sustained yield principle”—making Alaska the first and still the only state in the U.S. to have written such conservation language into its basic founding principles.

1867

U.S. purchased the future state of Alaska from Russia

1878

First salmon canneries built in southeast Alaska

1924

Federal government adopted the White Act, to conserve and rebuild Alaska salmon stocks

1949

Alaska territorial legislature created

1952

First international fisheries commission established, with Japan, U.S. and Canada cooperating to study, manage and conserve their valuable migratory salmon resources

1956

First area-licensing regulations imposed on commercial salmon fishermen

1959

Alaska became the 49th state, with a State Constitution mandating that "fish... shall be utilized, developed and maintained on the sustained yield principle"—the only state in the U.S. to have such language in its Constitution

1960

Fulfilling a *cause celebre* of statehood, Alaska took over management of salmon fisheries, immediately banning the use of fish traps, which non-Alaskan companies had been using to overharvest. Alaskans learned how to manage the fisheries more sustainably; since then, the damaged salmon stocks have been rebuilt



1972

Alaska Board of Fisheries (BoF) created as a separate entity from the Alaska

Department of Fish & Game (ADFG), making the three main functions of fisheries management—science, regulation, and enforcement—more transparent

1973

State of Alaska initiated "limited entry" licensing for the growing commercial salmon fishing industry, with its motorized boats and more efficient gear. By limiting the number of licensed fishermen, fishery managers could reduce pressure on the resource and better manage salmon populations for sustainable yield

1973

Endangered Species Act became law. No species of Alaska seafood has ever been listed as threatened or endangered under this Act

1976

The Fishery Conservation & Management Act (later called the Magnuson-Stevens Act, or MSA) becomes Federal law, extending American marine jurisdiction from 12 nautical miles (nm) to 200 nm offshore, and creating the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). This allowed the U.S. to more sustainably manage its marine fisheries (including groundfish such as pollock, cod and flatfish) out to the rich feeding waters of the edge of the continental shelf

1976

First meeting of the new North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC), marking the beginning of conservative, sustainable management of the fisheries resource in the EEZ. The Council's organization included an Advisory Committee—a broad cross-section of stakeholders who observe, understand, and participate in the federal fisheries management process, and a Scientific and Statistical Committee—an impartial panel which determines the scientific basis for fisheries management decisions

1977

NPFMC produced mandated Fishery Management Plans for groundfish, Tanner crab, and salmon. These public documents, which are based on state-of-the-art science, serve as a transparent and sustainable tool of fisheries management

1978

First limits imposed on foreign fishing in the EEZ, restricting the ability of other countries to fish—and potentially overfish—the U.S. coast and clearing the way for the creation of a North Pacific American groundfish industry

1978

Alaska assigned subsistence use by Alaska Natives as the highest priority among beneficial human uses of fish and wildlife resources



1980

Congress passed American Fisheries Promotion Act, a policy for the Americanization of Alaska's groundfish fisheries. The Act allowed certain countries to keep fishing in the EEZ off Alaska, in exchange for access by American seafood products into those countries' markets, and participation in "joint ventures" where fish caught by American boats were bought at-sea by foreign processing ships

1983

State of Alaska took over management of Bering Sea/Aleutian Island king crab fisheries from the Federal government, imposing Guideline Harvest Levels, which also serve to better limit the high bycatch of crab in the federally managed groundfish trawl fisheries



1989

Foreign fishing in the EEZ off Alaska ended, putting the fishery completely in American hands and creating a permanent mindset of conservation and sustainability

1991

NPFMC adopted Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) system for halibut and sablefish, a form of "rights-based" fishery management in which each harvester has a right to catch a certain fraction of the total harvest. IFQ benefits include better product quality, less waste, safer fishing, and more precise fishery management

1991

NPFMC adopted the first of several sea lion protection measures (including no trawl zones), to minimize potential for disturbance or competition for prey

1992

North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC) created to carry on the work of the international commission created in 1952; now the cooperation extends to five nations (including Korea and Russia, in addition to Canada, the U.S. and Japan), and Alaska participates as part of the American delegation, not as a stand-alone entity. NPAFC is even better for conservation of salmon, because all North Pacific salmon nations actively collaborate

1992

Community Development Quota (CDQ) fishing began, another rights-based fishery program in which small coastal communities own a percentage of the harvests. CDQ have generated significant economic development in many impoverished coastal communities

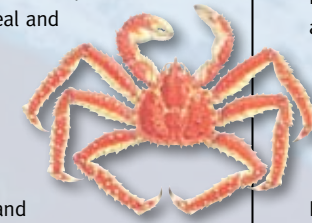
1996

The Magnuson-Stevens Act was amended to include the Sustainable Fisheries Act, which included new national standards for communities and bycatch, and major provisions for preserving essential fish habitat and preventing overfishing



1996

New regulations implemented for Bering Seas/Aleutian Island cod, pollock, and flatfish, prohibiting the discard of non-target species that are caught during the trawl process. Non-target species must now be used for something, for example rendered into fish meal and oil, rather than being thrown away



1997

Fishing of forage fish such as capelin and Pacific sand lance (which are a fundamental part of the marine food web) was prohibited

1998

Bottom trawls prohibited in Bering Sea/Aleutian Island pollock fishery, helping to reduce bycatch and protect seabed habitat

1998

North Pacific Fishery Management Council adopted more conservative scientific definitions of "overfishing," dependent upon how vulnerable a given stock is to overharvest, and the extent of scientific knowledge about the stocks



2001

Extensive measures adopted in the Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands, and Gulf of Alaska to mitigate impact of cod, pollock, and mackerel fisheries on Steller sea lions. Even more stringent measures have been adopted in recent years, with severe restrictions on the timing and type of fishing that may be conducted near sea lion habitat

2001

Measures to protect seabirds adopted for long-line fishing fleets; even more stringent methods have been implemented in recent years

2004

North Pacific Fishery Management Council adopted a comprehensive, "rights-based" rationalization program for the king and snow crab fisheries of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands

2006

Reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, mandating that all regional fishery management councils set firm limits on harvests (called firm Total Allowable Catch limits or "hard TACs") based on scientific recommendation. These requirements were explicitly based on the successful track record of sustainability by the NPFMC

2007

NPFMC closed an additional 132,000 square nautical miles (nm²) of seabed to bottom trawling, bringing the total closed area to 517,000 nm²

2008

NPFMC closed the American EEZ in the Arctic Ocean to commercial fishing, as a precautionary measure to protect new fish stocks which might appear in that region because of climate change, until sufficient scientific understanding can be developed



2009

Alaska celebrated 50 years of statehood. Fishing and seafood processing employ more people than any other industry in Alaska. Alaska produces over half of the nation's wild-caught commercially harvested seafood, and is considered a model of sustainability for the world

