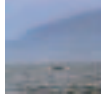




Alaska Commercial Fisheries, an Almanac for 2004

Page 2



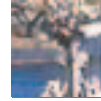
NOAA Proposes Critical Habitat for Endangered Right Whales

Page 3



MCA Backs Ocean Science Bowl Teams

Page 4



Bob King Named Marine Debris Coordinator

Page 4

MCA

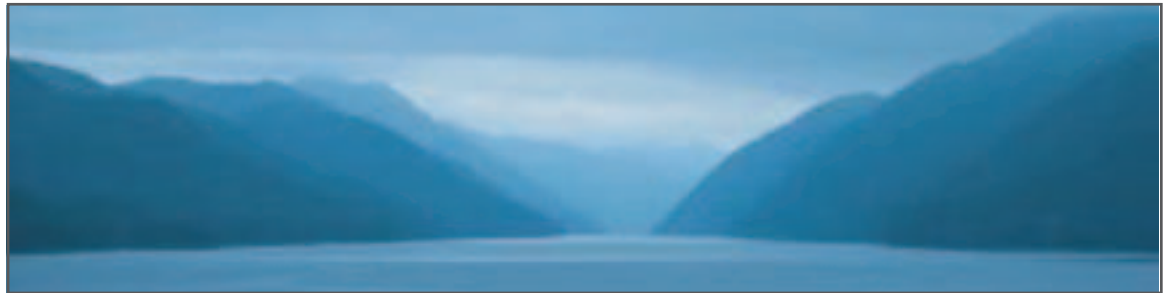
January 2006

Currents

A Quarterly Newsletter of the Marine Conservation Alliance

In this Issue

MSA Reauthorization	1
Alaska Commercial Fisheries Almanac	2
NOAA Proposes Critical Habitat for Endangered Right Whales	3
MCA Backs Ocean Science Bowl Teams	4
Bob King Named Marine Debris Coordinator	4
2006 Calendar	5
In the News	6



MSA Reauthorization Advances

Reauthorization of the landmark Magnuson Stevens Act (MSA) passed out of the Sen. Ted Stevens' Commerce Committee in mid December and appears headed for a vote by May in the full Senate.

"Thanks to Sen. Stevens' leadership, a strong bill is working its way through the Senate that promotes science-based management and conservation of the nation's fish stocks," said MCA executive director Dave Benton. "MCA will continue to monitor the progress of this critical legislation and provide support as needed to ensure a bill that strengthens our fish and fisheries."

Much attention is currently being focused on the issue of quotas in the New England fishery but even that has cast Alaska fishery management in a good light. Among some of the quotes in the news:

"**The system works well in Alaska,**" noted the Boston Globe in a December 14 editorial. "The Magnuson reauthorization wisely establishes

national guidelines for quotas. Further resistance to such measures on the part of local fishermen and elected officials endangers not only stocks but the long-term economic health of fishing families themselves."

"**There is a system that works well in Alaska** and the bill needs to require the same model for the rest of the country," said Sarah Chasis of the National Resources Defense Council in a December 15 press release.

And Grist Magazine added, "The bill needs to be strengthened to more fully implement some of the most important lessons that have been learned in the past decade from the one fishery region in the country that's thought to be in good shape -- **the Alaska region, managed by the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council.**"

The House of Representatives is still working on its version of the reauthorization bill and final action on the legislation is not expected until October 2006



Marine Conservation Alliance

431 N. Franklin Street, Suite 305
Juneau, Alaska 99801

promoting sustainable fisheries to feed the world

Alaska Commercial Fisheries, an Almanac for 2004

Top Species

- 3,351 - Pollock landed in Alaska in 2004, in (M) millions of pounds, worth \$271 million.
- 809 - Salmon landed in Alaska in 2004, in millions of pounds (168 million fish), worth \$272 million.
- 505 - Cod landed, in millions of pounds, worth \$131 million.
- 302 - Flatfish (flounders, sole, etc.) landed, in millions of pounds, worth \$53 million.
- 109 - Atka mackerel landed, in millions of pounds, worth \$11 million.
- 68 - Herring landed, in millions of pounds, worth \$9 million.
- 61 - Shellfish (king and snow crab) landed, in millions of pounds, worth \$170 million.
- 59 - Halibut landed, in millions of pounds, worth \$177 million.
- 34 - Sablefish landed, in millions of pounds, worth \$107 million.
- 0 - Groundfish stocks in Alaska considered "overfished."

Top Ports

- 1 - Rank of Dutch Harbor among national fishing ports in volume: 886 million pounds.
- 2 - Rank of Dutch Harbor in value of fish landings: \$155 million.
- 4 - National rank of Kodiak in volume: 331 million pounds, and value: \$91 million.
- 7 - Number of other Alaska communities among the Nation's top 50 fishing ports: Sitka, Homer, Ketchikan, Naknek, Dillingham, Kenai and Juneau.
- 9 - Rank of Alaska harvest compared to that of other fishing nations of the world.

Landing Values

- 1.2 - Value of the 2004 Alaska fishery landings in 2004, in \$ (B) billions.
- 5.4 - Alaska fishery landings, in (B) billions of pounds.
- 9.6 - Fishery landings of the entire US, including Alaska, in (B) billions of pounds.

Economic Impact

- 24 - State general fund appropriation, in \$ million, for Division of Commercial Fisheries.
- 36 - State taxes, in \$ million, generated by commercial fishing in fiscal year 2004.
- 134 - Revenues generated, in \$ million, by the Community Development Quota (CDQ) program in 2004.
- 350 - Value of CDQ corporation assets in 2004, in \$ million.
- 640 - Revenues, in \$ million, generated by the CDQ program since its inception in 1992.
- 1,500 - Training opportunities provided by the CDQ program in 2004, valued at \$2 million.
- 1,800 - Jobs created by the CDQ program in 2004 with wages of \$12 million

Fishing Related Jobs

- 70,000 - Estimated annual full and part time jobs in Alaska's fishing industry.
- 40,000 - Estimated annual harvesting jobs.
- 17,000 - Peak monthly processing jobs, in July.
- 6,500 - Average monthly processing jobs.
- 1 - Rank of Alaska fishing industry among private sector employers in Alaska.

Sources: *The Fisheries of the United States 2004*, National Marine Fisheries Service, State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game; Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development; Department of Labor; Department of Revenue; Office of Management and Budget; International Pacific Halibut Commission; United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization; Alaska SeaGrant Program.

NOAA Proposes Critical Habitat for Endangered Right Whales

MCA Defends Industry Record

Looking for reasonable regulations that protect right whales and at the same time recognize that the seafood industry has no history of conflict with these highly endangered animals, MCA has recommended a modification of the area proposed as critical habitat in the Bering Sea based on the range of observed right whale sightings. NOAA is proposing to designate critical habitat for right whales in the North Pacific in response to a ruling by a federal judge last year. Areas in both the Bering Sea and in the Gulf of Alaska are under consideration.



In a January letter on the proposed rule published in November, executive director Dave Benton noted that there have been no documented interactions between fishing vessels or fishing gear and right whales in Alaska. MCA agreed that NMFS correctly determined that fisheries do not target or affect the copepod populations that the whales feed upon and are the primary factor for the habitat designation, and that no fishing or related activity like at-sea processing or transiting would be expected to be restricted or otherwise altered as a result.

Still, the proposed 27,700 square mile area includes areas where the whales have not been sighted in recent memory, prompting MCA to recommend the area be reduced along its southern and western borders.

"A review of NMFS' sighting data suggests that the area proposed in the Bering Sea is larger than needed," Benton said. "Although there is little likelihood that the designated area will

have any adverse consequences for the fishing industry, such a possibility cannot be completely discounted, and a modification of those boundaries would reduce the possibility of any even hypothetical future impact on fishing activities."

The reduced area of 24,000 square miles is still ten times larger than the critical habitat areas designated in the Atlantic, where there are higher concentrations of both whales and vessel traffic and almost two vessel strikes each year, compared to only two sightings annually in the Bering Sea and no history of conflicts with fishing vessels.

The 16-page letter also points out the proactive steps the MCA has taken to avoid any such conflicts, including distribution of a right whale guide for mariners. The laminated guide shows the observed range of the endangered whale in the Bering Sea and western Gulf, how to identify them from other whales, and list recommendations of

what skippers should and shouldn't do if they encounter one.

Over 3,400 copies of the guide have been sent to NMFS' RAM division and the state's Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission for distribution to permit holders in federal and state waters. Other copies have been sent to the Coast Guard, Alaska Department of Fish and Game and NPFMC. Because it has proven so useful, the Alaska Sea Life Center in Seward requested several copies of the guide for use as part of their right whale exhibit and the guide is translated into Russian for distribution to mariners from the Far East.

NOAA is proposing the critical habitat designation for right whales in response to a ruling last year by federal Judge Alsup. Comments on the proposed designation closed earlier in January this year.

MCA Backs Ocean Science Bowl Teams

Calling it an investment in the future scientists who will work to improve our fisheries and oceans, MCA is supporting teams from the Unalaska and Juneau high schools to participate in the 9th annual Alaska Region Ocean Science Bowl.

The academic competition pits teams of high school students who work on ocean or fishery-related research projects and then present their findings. The student teams also compete against each other in jeopardy-style timed quiz.

"This really is an investment in our future," said MCA board member Frank Kelty as he presented a \$500 check to Monica Southworth of Unalaska's "Ocean Raiders" team. "We depend on science to ensure the health and sustainability of our fisheries and events like the Ocean Science Bowl help broaden interest in the field to attract the next generation of fisheries scientists." The Ocean Raiders are studying ecosystem impacts to mussels, an important local subsistence food. Juneau is fielding three teams that are studying ecosystem management of local sockeye salmon, halibut and eulachon stocks.

Funds donated by MCA will help the Unalaska and Juneau teams attend the Alaska Region Ocean Science Bowl in Seward February 10 thru 12. Teams compete for scholarships and other prizes and the winning Alaska team goes on to the National Ocean Science Bowl in Monterey, California in May.



Bob King Named Marine Debris Coordinator



working with MCA Foundation to address it," King said.

Born and raised on the east coast, King moved to Alaska in 1978 after graduating from college. He served as News Director at public radio station KDLG in Dillingham for 17 years where he reported extensively on the fishing industry in Bristol Bay and the Bering Sea. In 1994, he was named Press Secretary for Gov. Tony Knowles and served in that role through his two terms in office.

Former Bristol Bay reporter Bob King has been named to coordinate the MCA Foundation's marine debris program. "Having walked the beaches in Bristol Bay and elsewhere in the Bering Sea region, I'm familiar with the issue of marine debris and I'm pleased to be

King has also written numerous articles dealing with the fishing industry and provided materials for the International Pacific Halibut Commission, the Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation, and has written MCA

newsletters for the past six months. A student of Alaska history, King has published articles on aspects of Alaska fishing history and recently made presentations on before the American Fisheries Society, the Alaska Historical Society and the University of Alaska School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences.

CALENDAR 2006

January 17	Comments due on GOA Amendment 69 www.fakr.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/amds/default.htm	February 6	Comment deadline for February BOF.
January 17-20	IPHC Annual Meeting, Bellevue. www.iphc.washington.edu/halcom/newsrel/2005/nr20051107.htm	February 7	NPFMC Ecosystem Committee, Seattle www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/Cmteemtg.htm
January 20	NMFS hearing on intent to prepare EIS for SSL/fur seal research, AFSC, Seattle www.fakr.noaa.gov/notice/70fr76780.pdf	February 13-16	Two seafood workshops will be held in Naknek in February. www.pacificseabirdgroup.org/index.php?f=meeting&t=Annual Meeting&s=1
Jan 22 - Feb 1	BOF SE and Yakutat Finfish, Ketchikan. www.boards.adfg.state.ak.us/fishinfo/meetinfo/fcal.php	February 15	ASMI Committee Chairs, Juneau
January 22-25	Alaska Marine Science Symposium, Anchorage. www.gem.state.ak.us/Symposium/index.cfm Agenda: www.gem.state.ak.us/Symposium/Agenda.cfm	February 15-16	ASMI Board Meeting, Juneau
January 23	NMFS hearing on intent to prepare EIS for SSL/fur seal research, Hilton, Anchorage www.fakr.noaa.gov/notice/70fr76780.pdf	February 16-20	American Association for the Advancement of Science Annual Meeting, St Louis, MO www.aaas.org/meetings/Annual_Meeting/
January 29-31	Seafood Summit, Seattle www.seafoodchoices.com/	February 20-24	Ocean Sciences 2006, Honolulu www.agu.org/meetings/os06/
Jan 30-Feb 3	14th Annual Western Groundfish Conference Newport, OR www.iphc.washington.edu/halcom/groundfish/gc2006/welcomeb.htm	February 20-26	SE and Yakutat Groundfish, Dungeness, Shrimp, Misc Shellfish, Ketchikan. www.boards.adfg.state.ak.us/fishinfo/meetinfo/fcal.php
February	Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee, Fort Lauderdale www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ocs/mafac/	February 21-22	Pribilof Islands Collaborative, Homer. Meeting will focus on declines of some seabird populations around the Pribilof Islands.
February 2-3	SWAMC Annual Conference, Anchorage, Captain Cook www.swamc.org/conference/index.html	February 23	ASMI International Marketing Committee, NorQuest, Seattle
February 3	ASMI International marketing Committee, NorQuest, Seattle 1PM	Feb 26 - Mar 2	Sharing the Fish - Allocation Issues in Fisheries Management 2006 Conference, Perth, Australia. www.fishallocation.com/
February 3	Joint BOF/NPFMC meeting, 4th Avenue Theatre - Lathrop Room, Anchorage, 0830 to 1700	March 3	Comment deadline for March BOF. www.bostonseafood.com/special_events.asp
February 6-9	AYK Sustainable Salmon Initiative Symposium: Sustainability of the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Salmon Fisheries, Captain Cook in Anchorage. www.aykssi.org/prod/index.htm	March 5-8	Pacific Fisheries Technologists, Anchorage www.pftinfo.org/
February 6-14	NPFMC, Seattle. www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/schedule.htm	March 6-7	14th Conference for Shellfish Growers, Shelton, WA www.wsg.washington.edu/education/conferences.html
		March 8-9	NOAA Science Advisory Board, Washington DC area
		March 10	Wild Seafood Exchange, Seattle www.wildseafoodexchange.com/

More events at our website:
www.marineconservationalliance.org/calendar.html

IN THE NEWS:

"Alaska is proud of our record of stewardship to ensure that our fisheries remain sustainable. Our record on addressing bycatch is one reason that Alaska fishery management is often considered a model for the nation."

David Benton in letter to the editor of the *Washington Post*, December 1.

Alaska has a better (bycatch) program "than any (other) place in the world," said Randy Rice, technical director for the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute. "I certainly think you could take elements of this program nationwide." *Seattle PI*, December 1.

"The Alaska fisheries are tremendous fisheries because they've made great progress in controlling bycatch," Ransom Myers of

Dalhousie University in Canada in the *Seattle PI*, December 1.

"Alaska comes out looking pretty clean in a new report showing that the U.S. fishing industry discards more than 25 percent of what it hauls aboard vessels each year." *Juneau Empire* December 2

"One environmentalist, while biting his lip, recently described (Sen. Ted) Stevens as 'sticking up for conservation' because of his proposal to boost safeguards for the nation's hard-pressed coastal fisheries." *Christian Science Monitor* December 27, 2005.

"It is unfortunate that environmentalists have to 'bite their lips' when they

acknowledge the leadership of Senator Ted Stevens in protecting ocean resources. Those of us in the Alaska fishing industry don't hesitate to praise Sen. Stevens' conservation record, because his vision puts conservation first and yet keeps decisions in the hands of the people who depend on healthy fish stocks for their livelihood. It's a system that works here in Alaska." Dave Benton responding to the *Christian Science Monitor*, January 11, 2006.

"(Sen. Ted) Stevens has done a remarkable job so far in managing this bill; all sides seem to credit him with having an open and fair legislative process." *Washington Post* editorial, December 30, 2005



Marine Conservation Alliance

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The MCA is an Alaska non-profit organization formed by conservation minded Alaska and North Pacific coastal residents, communities, fishermen, vessel owners and crew, seafood processors, fishing organizations, CDQ groups, support industries, consumers, and others who are directly and indirectly involved in the North Pacific groundfish fisheries.

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