



- Alyeska Seafoods
- Alaska Draggers Association
- Alaska Groundfish Data Bank
- Alaskan Leader Fisheries
- Alaska Pacific Seafoods
- Aleutian Islands Brown Crab Coalition
- Aleutian Pribilof Island Community Development Association
Akutan, Aika, False Pass, Nelson Lagoon, Nikol'ski, St. George
- At-Sea Processors Association
- Bristol Bay Economic Development Corp.
Aleknagik, Clark's Point, Dillingham, Egegik, Ekuk, Ekwook, King Salmon, Lovelock, Manokotak, Naknek, Pilot Point, Port Heiden, Portage Creek, South Naknek, Tokeak, Twin Hills, Ugashik
- Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association
St. Paul
- City of Unalaska
- Coastal Villages Region Fund
Chefornak, Chevak, Eek, Goodnews Bay, Hooper Bay, Kipnuk, Kongiganak, Kwigillingok, Mekoryuk, Napakiak, Napaskiak, Newtok, Nightmute, Oscarville, Platinum, Quinhagak, Scammon Bay, Toksook Bay, Tunutuliak, Tununak
- Groundfish Forum
- High Seas Catchers Cooperative
- Icicle Seafoods
- McCarty and Associates
- Mid-Water Trawlers Cooperative
- Motherhood Group
PV Excellence
PV Ocean Phoenix
PV Golden Alaska
- North Pacific Fisheries Research Foundation
- North Pacific Longline Association
- Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation
Brevig Mission, Diomedes, Eilm, Gambell, Golovin, Kayak, Nome, Saint Michael, Savoonga, Shaktoolik, Stebbins, Teller, Unalakleet, Wales, White Mountain
- Pacific Seafood Processors Association
- Prowler Fisheries
- Southwest Alaska Municipal Conference
- Trident Seafoods Corp.
- United Catcher Boats
Akutan Catcher Vessel Assoc.
Arctic Enterprise Assoc.
Northern Victor Fleet
Pater Plan Fleet Cooperative
Unalaska Co-op
Unisea Fleet Cooperative
Westward Fleet Cooperative
- U.S. Seafoods
- Waterfront Associates
- Western Alaska Fisheries, Inc.
- Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association
Atakanuk, Ezhmonak, Grayling, Kotik, Mountain Village, Nunam Iqaa

Press Release
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STRENGTHEN ROLE OF SCIENCE IN FISHERY MANAGEMENT **MCA Cites Alaska as Model in Hearings on Magnuson Stevens Act**

America's marine fisheries can be strengthened by following Alaska's strict adherence to scientific recommendations on matters of conservation according to MCA Executive Director David Benton. In testimony before a Congressional delegation considering reauthorization of the Magnuson Stevens Act (MSA), Benton called the management of fisheries off Alaska a model for the rest of the nation.

"The record speaks for itself," Benton said. "There are no overfished stocks of groundfish in Alaska. Fisheries are managed under strict caps and are closed when harvest limits are reached. Federal observers and vessel monitoring systems ensure compliance with closures. Over 380,000 square nautical miles are closed to bottom trawling to protect marine habitat. And ecosystem considerations are taken into account in fishery management plans."

Even with these measures in place, Alaska produces over half the nation's commercial fisheries landings by volume. Fisheries account for about 35,000 jobs in Alaska and are valued at over \$1 billion dollars. Most coastal communities depend on the sea and its resources, and Alaskans work hard to ensure that fish resources are managed for long term sustainability.

"This success story hinges on the regional fishery management council system embodied in the Magnuson Stevens Act," Benton said. "The regional councils can develop and implement science driven, conservation oriented management regimes while providing the public, affected user groups, communities, scientists, and other interested parties with unprecedented access to the decision making process. And we can make it better."

Strengthen Science

Using Alaska as a model, MCA strongly supports strengthening the role of science by amending the MSA to require all councils adopt catch limits as recommended by their Scientific and Statistical Committees (SSC). That's what the North Pacific Council has done and a similar position was recently endorsed by the chairs of all eight regional fishery management councils. MCA also supports increased funding for science programs and more peer review to ensure that the methods used for stock assessment are up-to-date and can withstand tough scrutiny.

The MCA does not support proposals to split the science process and the SSCs from the Regional Councils, as it would only politicize the scientific process and further remove the science from the overall decision making. "The excellent conservation record in the North Pacific demonstrates the benefits of maintaining and strengthening this important partnership," Benton said. "A strong Council-SSC relationship is central to that process."

Work Toward Ecosystem Management

The MCA supports the move to ecosystem-based management as an important goal for the nation and agrees with the United States Commission on Ocean Policy which recommended steps toward ecosystem management should be taken in a careful, deliberate manner. "In the North Pacific, our cautionary approach is already consistent with the National Academy of Science's guidelines on ecosystem management such as habitat protection, prohibition of fishing on forage fish, controls on bycatch, and protections for seabirds and marine mammals," Benton said.

MCA supports better coordination of fishing and non-fishing activities as they pertain to the marine ecosystem but does not support creation of a national ecosystem management authority or regional ecosystem councils. Another layer of management will only create confusion, duplication, and be expensive. MCA supports a simpler approach that relies on existing regulatory authorities including the regional fishery councils.

MCA also does not support the development of national criteria for ecosystem-based management. Other such mandates have only led to lengthy administrative processes and litigation. "National criteria are no more appropriate than other 'one-size fits all' solutions," Benton said. "To be successful, any ecosystem-based approach has to be founded on solid scientific information. MCA believes that a solid commitment to long term funding for expanded research on the structure and function of marine ecosystems is paramount to the success of ecosystem-based approaches to management."

Strengthen Existing Councils

MCA strongly supports the existing regional council system because it recognizes the remarkable diversity of issues facing the different regions of the country and provides the public access to a transparent and science-driven fishery management process. The individual councils can be strengthened by requiring each new council member receive training before being seated and the continuation of existing financial disclosure and recusal requirements.

“The regional council process established under the Magnuson Stevens Act plays a vital role in the health of our communities, our fisheries, and in the conservation of the rich marine resources off Alaska’s shores,” Benton concluded. “We urge you to carefully consider the successes we’ve had in Alaska when others ask you to change this system. Adding new statutory requirements or new layers of bureaucracy would only undermine what is widely regarded as one of the world’s most successful management systems.”

The MCA is a coalition of seafood harvesters, processors, coastal communities, Community Development Quota organizations, and others interested in and dependent upon the Alaska’s groundfish and shellfish fisheries and represents about 80 percent of the harvesting and processing capacity of groundfish and shellfish off Alaska.

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MCA Testimony:

<http://www.marineconservationalliance.org/news/MCAMSATestimonyBenton.pdf>

www.marineconservationalliance.org