



Marine Conservation Alliance

promoting sustainable fisheries to feed the world

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Alaska Crab Coalition
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, Adia, False Pass, Nelson Lagoon, Nikolski, St. George
At-Sea Processors Association
Bristol Bay Economic Development Corp.
Aleknagik, Clark's Point, Dillingham, Egegik, Ekuk, Ekwook, King Salmon, Levelock, Manokotak, Naknek, Pilot Point, Port Heiden, Portage Creek, South Naknek, Topgan, Twin Hills, Ugashik
Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association
St. Paul
City of Unalaska
Coastal Villages Region Fund
Cheforiak, Chevak, Eek, Goodnews Bay, Hooper Bay, Kipruk, Korngiganak, Kwigillingok, Makooyak, Napakiak, Napaskiak, Newtok, Nightmute, Oscarville, Platinum, Quinhagak, Scammon Bay, Toksook Bay, Tunutuliak, Tununak
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Brevig Mission, Diomedes, Elm, Gambell, Golovin, Koyuk, Nome, Saint Michael, Savoonga, Shaktook, Stebbins, Teller, Unalakleet, Wales, White Mountain
Pacific Seafood Processors Association
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U.S. Seafoods
Waterfront Associates
Western Alaska Fisheries, Inc.
Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association
Alakanuk, Emmonak, Grayling, Kotik, Mountain Village, Nunami Iqaa

Press Release
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MCA Applauds Council Action to protect Northern Bering Sea Habitat Additional 130,000 Square Miles Closed to Bottom Trawling

Action to close over 130,000 square miles of the Northern Bering Sea to bottom trawling is an important step for the health of Alaska's oceans and the seafood industry, MCA executive director David Benton said today. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council took the action during a meeting today in Sitka to protect waters that are important for fish stocks, crab, and other species like gray whales, walrus and eiders.

"The Council took a number of precautionary actions today that are supported by Alaska's seafood industry," Benton said. "They closed approximately 130,000 square miles to bottom trawling to protect important habitat and approved measures to implement gear modifications developed jointly by the industry and NOAA to reduce the impacts of bottom trawls throughout the Bering Sea.

"The Council also provided for a comprehensive research program to determine if fisheries in these northern waters would have unacceptable impacts if they are allowed sometime in the future," Benton added. "Overall, this is good for the ocean and our industry, and we fully support the action taken today by the Council."

The area closed includes the northern Bering Sea consisting of Kuskokwim Bay and waters west to the boundary with Russia and north to the Bering Strait and includes waters around Nunivak, St. Matthew and St. Lawrence Islands. The closure also includes waters in the western Bering Sea along the shelf break and beyond to the international boundary. The total area includes over 130,000 square miles.

"Combined with areas that were previously closed in the Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska, that brings the total to roughly 530,000 square miles of the North Pacific that have been closed to protect habitat," Benton said. "Once again the Council is leading the world in progressive and sustainable fisheries management."

In addition to supporting the closure of essential fish habitat areas, the MCA has taken other actions to support healthy oceans and sustainable fisheries:

- Successfully pushed to apply the “Alaska Model” of sustainable, science-based fishery management to the nation’s other fisheries during renewal of the Magnuson Stevens Act (MSA).
- Worked with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to develop measures to protect roughly 390,000 square miles of Essential Fish Habitat in the Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska. This, combined with today’s action brings the total to over 450,000 square miles.
- Promotes the use of ecosystem-based fishery management practices by building on existing management actions and science programs, and through applied scientific research to find practical solutions to conservation issues.
- Published popular wheelhouse guides to help fishermen and other mariners avoid conflicts with northern Right whales, Short Tailed Albatrosses, and other seabirds.
- Coordinates cooperative research efforts between fishermen and scientists such as the effort that developed a successful prototype halibut excluder that reduced halibut bycatch by cod trawlers by over 50 percent.
- Coordinates marine debris cleanup efforts throughout Alaska, including Prince William Sound, St. Paul and St. George Islands, Unalaska, Sitka, and Unalakleet.

“Alaska’s seafood industry depends on a clean ocean and sustainable management practices, and we recognize our responsibility to be stewards of the resource,” Benton said. “We’re willing to do our part and fully support the efforts of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to protect Alaska oceans.”

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