



Marine Conservation Alliance

promoting sustainable fisheries to feed the world

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Alaska Druggers Association
Alaska Groundfish Data Bank
Alaska Pacific Seafoods
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Bristol Bay Economic
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For Immediate Release: December 8, 2008

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MCA Urges Adoption of Scientists' Recommendation for Pollock Asks Council to Adopt SSC Decision to Reduce Pollock Catch during Cyclic Downturn

The Marine Conservation Alliance (MCA), a coalition of harvesters, processors and communities involved in the Alaska Groundfish and crab fisheries, urged the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to adopt the recommendation of its scientific advisors in setting the total allowable catch of Bering Sea pollock in 2009.

The Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) today recommended the catch level be set at 815,000 tons, an 18% reduction from this year's catch limit of 1 million tons. The reduction is seen as a precautionary measure to protect the stock during a predicted downward trend.

"MCA supports the Council's long tradition of following the recommendations of its scientists, which is why we have a 30-year record of conserving fish stocks," said MCA executive director David Benton. "It's unfortunate that some interest groups can't accept the role of science in fishery management but we're confident the Council will act responsibly."

The final decision on the total allowable catch level for 2009 will be made by the Council during its meeting this week in Anchorage. In its history, the Council has never exceeded catch limits recommended by its scientists. The SSC's recommendation was based on stock surveys that showed a decline in the available pollock biomass but also found indications that the stock may soon be rebuilding.

"We've known this downturn was coming because a large age class of fish that dominated the population was getting older but a large, younger age class was also reported that will recruit into the fishery in the next few years," Benton said. "With it, scientists are projecting that pollock biomass may increase by as much as 50 percent in 2010."

Bering Sea pollock is one of the world's largest fisheries and accounts for a third of all fish harvested in the U.S. Fluctuations in the allowable catch limit are not unusual. The pollock catch was held below 1 million tons from 1977 to 1983.

More recently, the catch limit dropped to 980,000 tons in 1999 after which the stocks rebounded and produced record catches of almost 1.5 million tons from 2002 to 2006.

“Bering Sea pollock is one of the world’s most abundant and dynamic fishery resources,” Benton said. “Despite the current trend, the pollock resource is still healthy and it will remain so as long as we continue to follow our scientists’ recommendations. That approach is why Alaska is respected around the globe as a model of fishery management.”

Based in Juneau, the Marine Conservation Alliance is a coalition of seafood processors, fishermen, coastal communities and support industries involved in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska groundfish and crab fisheries. The MCA promotes science-based conservation measures to ensure sustainable fisheries in Alaska. For more information, visit www.marineconservationalliance.org.

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Bering Sea Pollock Fact Sheet
in metric tons

Eastern Bering Sea pollock biomass (Age 3+) 2009 6,240,000
Calculated allowable harvest level for 2009 815,000 (15% exploitation)
Recommended Total Allowable Catch for 2009 pending
Total Allowable Catch in 2008 1,000,000
Actual Harvest in 2008 989,392
Total US Seafood landings in 2007* 4,187,532
Alaska pollock as a percentage of US landings in 2007 33%
* most recent year for which complete information is available.