



National Marine Fisheries Service
Alaska Region

NEWS RELEASE

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NOAA Opens Public Comment on Potential Arctic Fishing Plan

NOAA's Fisheries Service announced today that they will open public comment on a proposed framework to manage fishing in the Arctic waters of the United States in the Chukchi and Beaufort seas.

"Historically, there have been no commercial fisheries in our Arctic seas," said Doug Mecum, acting administrator of the Alaska region of NOAA's Fisheries Service. "But with Arctic sea ice receding, more human activities may likely begin there, including increased interest in commercial fishing."

"The new management plan sets up a framework for possible development of Arctic fisheries in the next decades," he added. "It would ensure that we proceed carefully and do not allow commercial fishing to expand northward before we know what level of fishing the Arctic can sustain."

In 2006, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council began considering options for fishery management in the Arctic. The council talked extensively with communities on Alaska's North Slope and other stakeholders to consider management options. Ultimately, the council decided to take a precautionary approach, voting to prohibit commercial fisheries until researchers gather sufficient information on fish and the Arctic marine environment, before considering any commercial fishing.

If the plan is adopted, it will govern commercial fishing for all stocks of finfish and shellfish in federal waters, except Pacific salmon and Pacific halibut, which are managed under other authorities. It would not affect fisheries for salmon, whitefish and shellfish in Alaskan waters near the Arctic shore. The plan identifies Arctic cod, saffron cod, and snow crab as likely initial target species for fishermen.

The proposed plan would not affect Arctic subsistence fishing or hunting.

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council voted unanimously to adopt the Arctic Fishery Management Plan on February 5. The plan is now open for public review, and would become final if the Secretary of Commerce approves it after considering public comment.

Comments on the proposed Arctic Fisheries Management Plan, due July 27, can be sent to Sue Salveson, Assistant Regional Administrator, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region, NMFS, attention Ellen Sebastian. Comments should be identified with 0648-AX71 (NOA), and can be submitted electronically via the Federal eRulemaking Portal <http://www.regulations.gov> Comments can also be faxed to 907-586-7557; sent by mail to P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802; or hand delivered to the Federal Building at 709 West 9th Street, Room 420A, Juneau, AK.

The proposed plan can be found at: <http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/arctic/>

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