

# **NOAA's Role in the Science and Management of Arctic Fish and Marine Mammals**

Jon Kurland  
Acting Deputy Regional Administrator  
NOAA Fisheries, Alaska Region

Mike Sigler  
Program Leader, Habitat and Ecological Processes Research Program  
NOAA Fisheries, Alaska Fisheries Science Center

## Abstract

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service is actively involved in a variety of research and management activities related to the conservation of Arctic fish and marine mammal populations. NOAA Fisheries' Alaska Regional Office and Alaska Fisheries Science Center have been involved in Arctic projects for many years, but the scope and breadth of our work in the Arctic has expanded substantially in the past few years and will continue to grow with climate change. This presentation will provide an overview of NOAA Fisheries' current science and management activities in the Arctic as we begin addressing the consequences of climate change and the associated loss of sea ice, and as we prepare for the resource management challenges that lie ahead. The topics discussed will include:

- Development of a new Arctic Fishery Management Plan with precautionary fishery closures;
- Development of new habitat conservation measures for Bering Sea groundfish fisheries, including area closures and fishing gear modifications;
- Ice seal research and completion of status reviews for four species of ice seals to consider listing under the Endangered Species Act;
- Participation in the interagency North Slope Science Initiative to coordinate research and monitoring activities amongst federal, state, local, and private entities;
- Participation in the interagency Alaska Marine Ecosystem Forum to coordinate management activities amongst federal and state agencies that have jurisdiction over activities affecting the marine environment;
- Support for the U.S. delegation to the International Whaling Commission to ensure continued subsistence use of whales by Native Alaskan communities;
- Consultations on oil and gas development activities and related infrastructure to minimize adverse effects to fish, marine mammals, and their habitats;
- Completion of a Beaufort Sea offshore fish survey and planning for a similar survey in the Chukchi Sea;
- Continuation of nearshore fish habitat surveys near Point Barrow;
- Monitoring of fish, shellfish, and marine mammal species in the northern Bering Sea where northward expansion is expected; and
- Development of a research plan for the new Northern Bering Sea Research Area.

The presentation will also highlight the biggest needs for promoting the conservation and sustainable use of Arctic living marine resources as sea ice recedes and human activities continue to increase.