



# NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND  
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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## **Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke Approves Fisheries Plan for Arctic**

U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke today approved a plan to prohibit the expansion of commercial fishing in federal Arctic waters until researchers gather sufficient information on fish and the Arctic marine environment to prevent adverse impacts of commercial harvesting activity on the ecosystem.

“As Arctic sea ice recedes due to climate change, there is increasing interest in commercial fishing in Arctic waters,” said Locke. “We are in a position to plan for sustainable fishing that does not damage the overall health of this fragile ecosystem. This plan takes a precautionary approach to any development of commercial fishing in an area where there has been none in the past.”

The Arctic Fishery Management Plan, approved today, will be implemented through regulations to be published in the Federal Register. Fisheries managers have identified Arctic cod, saffron cod, and snow crab as likely initial target species for commercial fishing in the region.

The plan governs any future commercial fishing for finfish and shellfish in federal waters, except Pacific salmon and Pacific halibut, which are managed under other authorities. It does not affect fisheries for salmon, whitefish and shellfish in Alaskan waters near the Arctic shore. The fishery management plan also does not affect subsistence fishing or hunting in the Arctic.

Under the plan, in any new Arctic fisheries that may be approved in the future:

fishermen will be required to keep records that will help determine catch, production, effort, price, and other information necessary for conservation and management

fishermen may be required to carry certified fisheries observers on board in order to verify catch quantity and composition, track at-sea discards, and collect biological information on marine resources

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council and NOAA's Fisheries Service will establish prescribed procedures before authorizing a future fishery, and will monitor and adjust the plan periodically. These adjustments might include annual total allowable catch levels and in-season adjustments through gear modifications, closures, fishing area restrictions, and quota restrictions.

In 2006, the 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. The council voted to prohibit commercial fisheries until researchers gather sufficient information on fish and the Arctic marine environment.

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On the Web:

Arctic Fishery Management Plan: <http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/arctic/>

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