



**NOAA
FISHERIES**

ALASKA FISHERIES SCIENCE CENTER

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NOAA releases draft climate science action plan for southeastern Bering Sea

As part of its efforts to increase the production, delivery, and use of climate-related information, today, NOAA Fisheries released a [draft climate science action plan](#) for the southeastern Bering Sea. It includes a plan to assess the vulnerability of 18 commercially important fish species to climate change.

Scientists can use the results to prioritize and identify research gaps; while managers can use the results to identify potential impacts and identify management approaches to reduce impacts and increase resilience of fish stocks, fisheries, and fishing-dependent communities.

The plan details ongoing steps to monitor climate change impacts on these species. Each of NOAA Fisheries regional science centers were required to develop regional climate action plans in response to the release of the national [NOAA Fisheries Science Climate Strategy](#).

“Climate-related changes in ocean ecosystems are affecting the nation's marine species and the people, businesses and communities that depend on them,” said Douglas DeMaster, director of NOAA's Alaska Fisheries Science Center. “We hope this assessment will provide fishery managers with the information they need to make informed decisions and ensure the sustainability of commercially important U.S. fish stocks.”

NOAA's Alaska Fisheries Science Center is responsible for five large marine ecosystems--the southeastern Bering Sea, the Gulf of Alaska, the Aleutian Islands, the northern Bering and Chukchi seas and the Beaufort Sea. The plan will look first at the southeastern Bering Sea because it supports large marine mammal and bird populations and some of the most profitable and sustainable commercial fisheries in the United States.

“This plan and vulnerability assessment builds on the work that we have already been doing in the region to address climate change,” said Mike Sigler, program leader, habitat and ecological processes research, Alaska Fisheries Science Center. “For instance, we've been gathering ecosystem information and monitoring climate indicators for more than 20 years and providing that information to managers at the North Pacific Fishery Management Council to support development of a Bering Sea Fisheries Ecosystem Plan.”

The center has completed a number of studies to focus on the potential effects of climate change on three fish species with ample long-term data--Alaska pollock, the largest commercial fishery in the U.S. by volume; red king crab; and northern rock sole.

“We expect climate change to lead to smaller populations of walleye pollock and red king crab, but have little effect on northern rock sole,” Sigler said. “This vulnerability assessment will enable our scientists to fill in the gaps and project potential impacts on 18 other species for which scientific data are limited.”

NMFS National Climate Science Strategy:

<http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/ecosystems/climate/national-climate-strategy>

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