

**Northern Bering Sea Research Area (NBSRA) Research Plan
Science Workshop
Anchorage, Alaska
Monday, January 17, 2011**



Background

The Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC), at the request of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council), is developing a scientific research plan for the Northern Bering Sea Research Area (NBSRA) to investigate the effects of bottom trawling on bottom habitat, and provide information to help with developing future protection measures in the NBSRA for crab, marine mammals, endangered species, and the subsistence needs of western Alaska communities. The NBSRA was established by the Council, became effective in 2008, and is currently closed to commercial bottom trawl fishing.

Until recently, the northern Bering Sea (NBS) has received relatively little research effort, partly due to the difficulty of access and low economic stakes. There is now increasing concern about the ecological and socioeconomic impacts of climate change on the NBS ecosystem. One possible consequence may be the expansion of fish stocks northwards into the NBS. Research programs such as the Bering Ecosystem Study (BEST) and Bering Sea Integrated Ecosystem Research Program (BSIERP) have been in place since 2007, sponsoring research cruises in the NBS to understand ecosystem linkages. In 2010 the AFSC conducted a bottom trawl survey of the NBS as part of the AFSC's study of the potential effects of the loss of sea ice in the Bering Sea. Before that, the last large-scale research effort was a survey of marine resources in the Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort by NOAA in the late 1970s.

The AFSC intends by convening the NBSRA Science Workshop to gather the latest information and solicit expert opinions from the scientific community for research planning in the NBSRA. The AFSC would like to invite the participation of researchers who are currently studying or plan to study aspects of the NBS ecosystem, who could share historical perspectives, and who otherwise are concerned about resource management in the NBS region.

Agenda

- Introduction: NBSRA policy, research plan objectives, state of ecosystem knowledge
- Topics of discussion:
 - Species, habitats, and environments of particular concern
 - Socioeconomic impact of bottom trawling
 - Local and Traditional Knowledge for management
 - Research plan - bottom trawl survey, trawl impact study, etc.
- Synthesis of opinions and recommendations

Website http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/current_issues/ecosystem/NBSRA.htm

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