

**ALASKA FISHING COMMUNITIES**  
**Mission Statement**  
**Approved May 18, 2020**

**The purpose of the Alaska Fishing Communities coalition is to protect and promote the interests of Alaska communities dependent on all aspects of harvesting and processing fishery resources from State and Federal waters off Alaska.**

**Alaska fishing communities seek to ensure:**

- 1. conservation of Alaska’s fishery resources and prevention of overfishing through science-based fisheries management and habitat protection;**
- 2. sustained community participation in and access to fishery resources;**
- 3. fair and equitable sharing of Alaska’s fishery resources;**
- 4. recognition of coastal communities’ 10,000-year cultural and economic dependence on fishery resources;**
- 5. reductions of bycatch and bycatch mortality to the extent practicable;**
- 6. balance in how the MSA National Standards are weighted in fisheries management;**
- 7. management policies responsive to the effects of climate change on fisheries, recognizing the unique vulnerability of coastal communities.**

Rationale

Alaska fishing communities and coastal boroughs are a critical part of the State of Alaska’s economy, and account for about a third of the State’s population. These communities support commercial and recreational fishing fleets, as well as seafood processing operations and subsistence activities. The commercial sector employs close to 60,000 workers directly as the State’s largest employer, and over 100,000 nationwide. Fishermen and processors in turn support large segments of the Alaskan service and transportation industries.

Alaska fishing community investments in port, healthcare, transportation, and educational and logistical infrastructure support an industry that produces 58% of the fish caught in the United States, constitutes Alaska’s largest international export by value as well as its largest manufacturing sector, and generates

approximately \$5.6 billion in revenues for the State and \$14 billion in economic output for the nation.<sup>1</sup>

The recreational fishing industry is an integral part of Alaska's economy, hosting thousands of visitors and bolstering the economies of coastal communities across the state. The industry also provides resident access to the state's fisheries, and hundreds of local job opportunities. Approximately 600 businesses operate from coastal ports statewide to provide marine-based fishing trips.

Alaska fishing communities also support a traditional way of life, subsistence and personal use of marine resources for Alaska Native and local populations. Alaska Native peoples have continued to live and thrive along the coast since their ancestors arrived over 10,000 years ago. Archaeological data demonstrates they have lived on marine resources for millennia, and these resources continue to sustain the people. With the advent of western culture, Native communities adapted to and are now fully dependent on the commercial utilization of these species. Sustaining and protecting Alaska's resources is vital because of these intersections of traditional and commercial uses; it is important to support both practices.

These diverse groups – commercial, recreational, and traditional – are key components of a healthy and sustainable ecosystem within Alaska. The diversity represented by Alaska fishing communities makes Alaska's economy, culture, and social fabric even stronger.

In recent years many Alaska fishing communities have been severely impacted by lack of access to fisheries, declines in fishery resources, increase in bycatch proportions, and profound climate change. In particular, bycatch of emblematic state species such as salmon, halibut, sablefish, and crab has risen, while directed fisheries for these species decline, and are closed or threatened with closure. Warming ocean temperatures are changing the distribution, productivity and abundance of marine species, increasing the risk to and vulnerability of Alaska fishing communities that are connected to place by tradition, culture and livelihood.

---

<sup>1</sup> : [https://uploads.alaskaseafood.org/2020/01/McDowell-Group\\_ASMI-Economic-Impacts-Report-JAN-2020.pdf](https://uploads.alaskaseafood.org/2020/01/McDowell-Group_ASMI-Economic-Impacts-Report-JAN-2020.pdf)).

These problems have already resulted in economic displacement, loss of population and traditional ways of life, school closures, and loss of essential services in Alaska fishing communities. This cannot continue. A negative outcome is inconsistent with management of the fisheries based on the Magnuson Stevens Act's National Standards. Furthermore, harmful impacts to the economies of fishery-dependent communities result in additional responsibilities for the State of Alaska, as well as loss of revenue.

Alaska fishing communities are widespread geographically and diverse both culturally and economically. Their capacity to change in the face of fluctuating management, climate impacts and fishery allocative measures are unique and often distinct. Harvester-perceived risks are a component of management, and the capacity of a community to adapt to change without unnecessary or disproportionate harm should be a component in the decision-making process. Monitoring and describing these adaptive capacities benefits those concerned with maintaining Alaska's fishing communities and users.

---