

1.4.5 Gear Restrictions

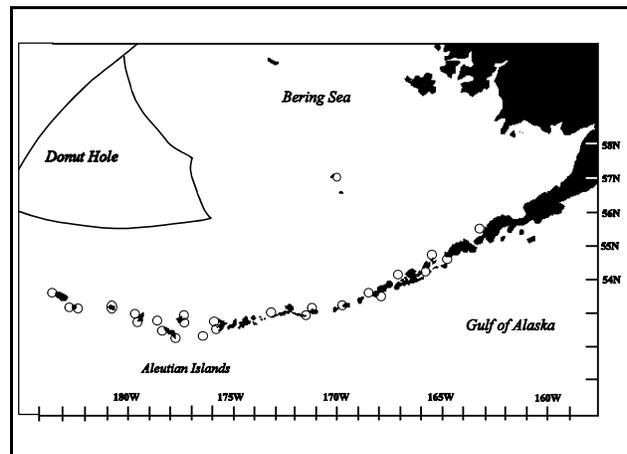
In the Alaska weathervane scallop fishery, dredge size is limited to a maximum width of 15 feet, and only 2 dredges may be used at any one time. In the Kamishak District of Cook Inlet, only 1 dredge with a 6' maximum width is allowed. Dredges are required to have rings with a 4" minimum inside diameter to reduce the catch of small, immature scallops.

In the BSAI king and Tanner crab pot fisheries, pot size is limited to a maximum of 10 foot by 10 foot. Pots used in the crab and groundfish fisheries are required to have biodegradable panels. Additionally, pots used in groundfish fisheries must have rigid tunnel opening that are not larger than 9 inches by 9 inches, to reduce bycatch of halibut. Pots used in Tanner crab fisheries are required to have smaller openings to exclude king crab. Escape rings or a large mesh panel are also required in crab pots.

There are no gear restrictions for trawl fisheries or longline fisheries at this time. However, the Council at its June 1998 meeting approved an amendment which will be submitted for Secretarial review to prohibit the use of nonpelagic trawls in the BSAI directed pollock fishery.

1.4.6 Measures to Reduce Interactions with Marine Mammals

To protect walrus, fishing vessels are prohibited in that part of the Bering Sea within twelve miles of Round Island, the Twins and Cape Pierce in northern Bristol Bay during the period April 1 through September 30. To protect Steller sea lions, no trawling is allowed year round in the BSAI within 10 nautical miles of 27 Steller sea lion rookeries. In addition, six of these rookeries will have 20 nautical mile trawl closures during the pollock "A" season. These closures revert back to 10 nautical miles when the "A" season is over, either on or before April 15. There are additional rookery closures in the GOA.



Location of the no trawl zones around Steller sea lion rookeries in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands area.

Several other management measures have been incorporated marine mammal concerns. The two million mt OY cap restricts the BSAI catch of groundfish to much less than could be taken based on acceptable biological rates for individual species. This leaves more fish for marine mammals and other predators, as well as decomposers and other components of the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands ecosystems. An ending date of November 1 for the pollock "B" season was instituted explicitly to prevent pollock fisheries from becoming temporally compressed in the winter months, to decrease the chance of localized depletion of prey for Steller sea lions. The TAC for Atka mackerel in the Aleutian Islands is allocated among subareas to spatially disperse fishing effort to decrease the chance of localized depletion of this prey species. Amendment 36/39 prohibits commercial exploitation of forage fish species such as capelin, sand lance, and smelt, which are eaten by various marine mammals and seabirds.