

Examining the Role of Advocacy Coalitions in Bering Sea Fisheries Management

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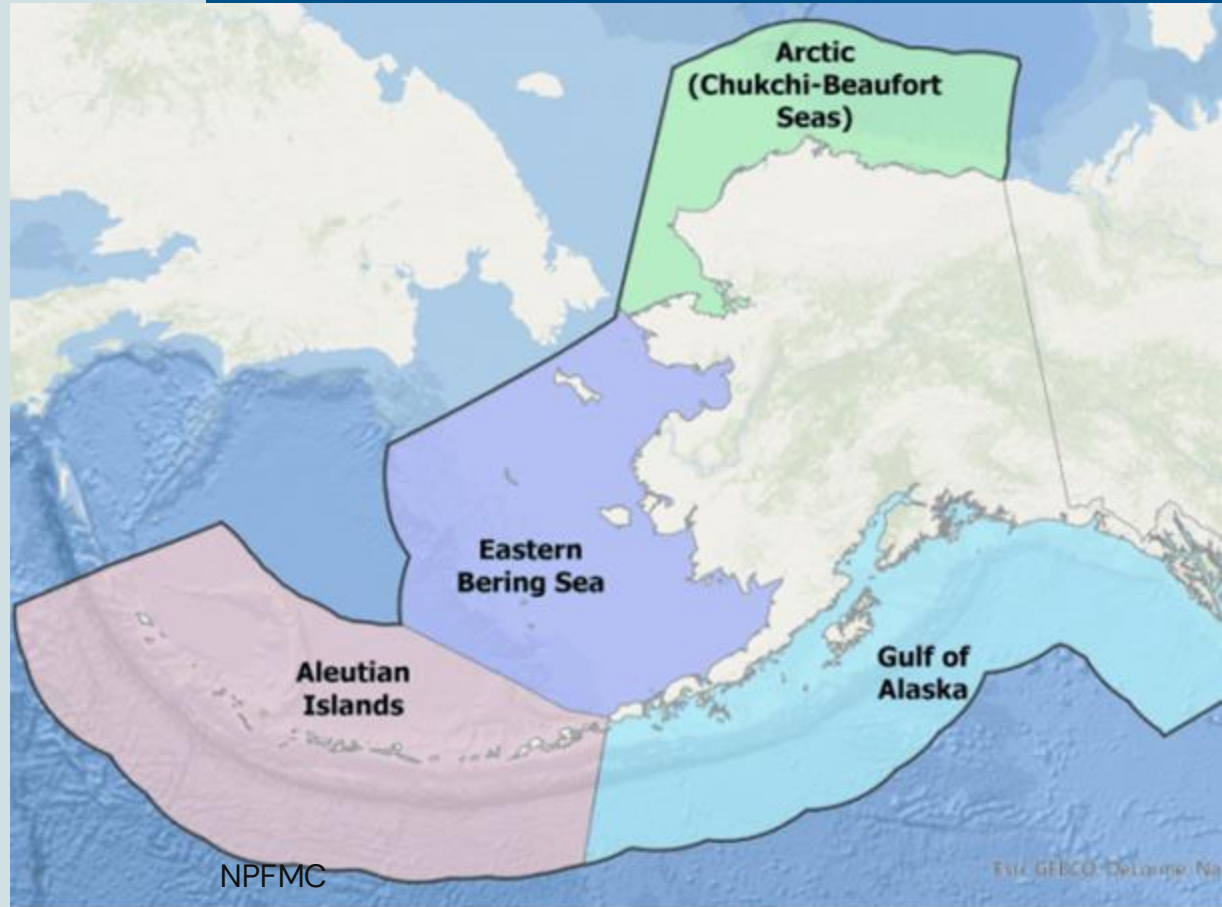
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Federal fishery management in Alaska

- U.S. federal fisheries managed under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976
- Established 8 regional councils to manage fisheries in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (3-200 nmi)
- Our research focuses on Eastern Bering Sea

North Pacific Fishery Management Council Jurisdiction



Climate change impacts in the Bering Sea region

- Displacement of communities
- Damaged coastlines and infrastructure
- Shifts in distribution, abundance, and timing of harvested species
- Greater uncertainty and reduced confidence in management
- Disrupted sharing networks/social networks & increased food insecurity



Federal management and food sovereignty: current challenges

- Food sovereignty: sufficient, nutritious, and culturally-relevant food
- Subsistence and commercial fisheries in Western Alaska closed due to low salmon abundance
- Concerns about salmon bycatch in large commercial pollock trawl fishery

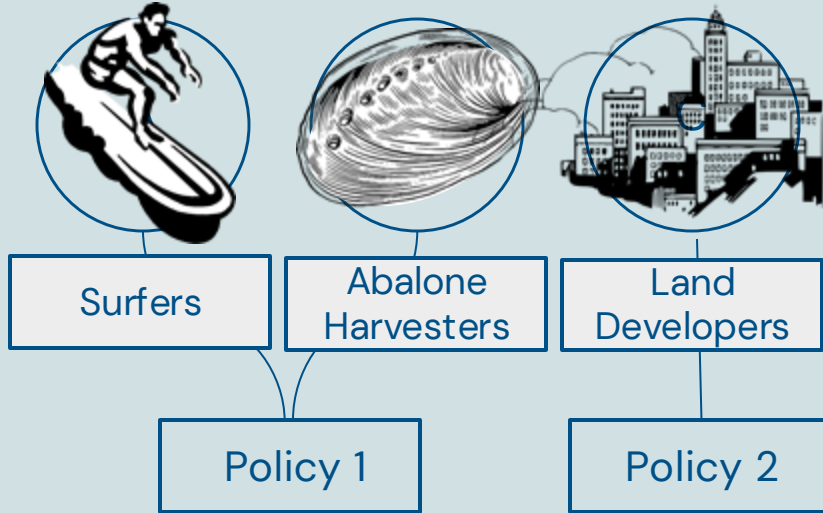


"Every lost salmon is a meal missed by an elder, hung, dried, smoked, canned, saved, served, and shared. Whole family experiences and ways of life go missing, not just the fish."

- Member of the Public, North Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting, Dec 2022

Advocacy Coalition Framework

Policymaking framework
developed to understand *intense public policy problems*



(Weible and Sabatier 2006)

Research Questions

1. What advocacy coalitions exist within the context of federal management of the Bering Sea pollock fishery?
1. How are values and beliefs held by these coalitions about pollock fishery management reflected in the public discourse?
1. How are these values and beliefs reflected (or not) in policy preferences and management outcomes?

Methods



Nathaniel Herz / Northern Journal

Data

- Public comment records
 - 10 NPFMC meetings
 - Apr 2021 to Feb 2025
 - 913 comments (written only)
- Commenters included: subsistence harvesters, small-scale commercial fishers, trawl industry, NGOs, non-profits, businesses, governments (municipal, state, federal, tribal)
- Multiple regions
 - Bering Sea / Y-K Delta 17%
 - Gulf of Alaska 11%
 - Alaska (other) 19%
 - Outside of Alaska 7%
 - Unknown 47%

Methods

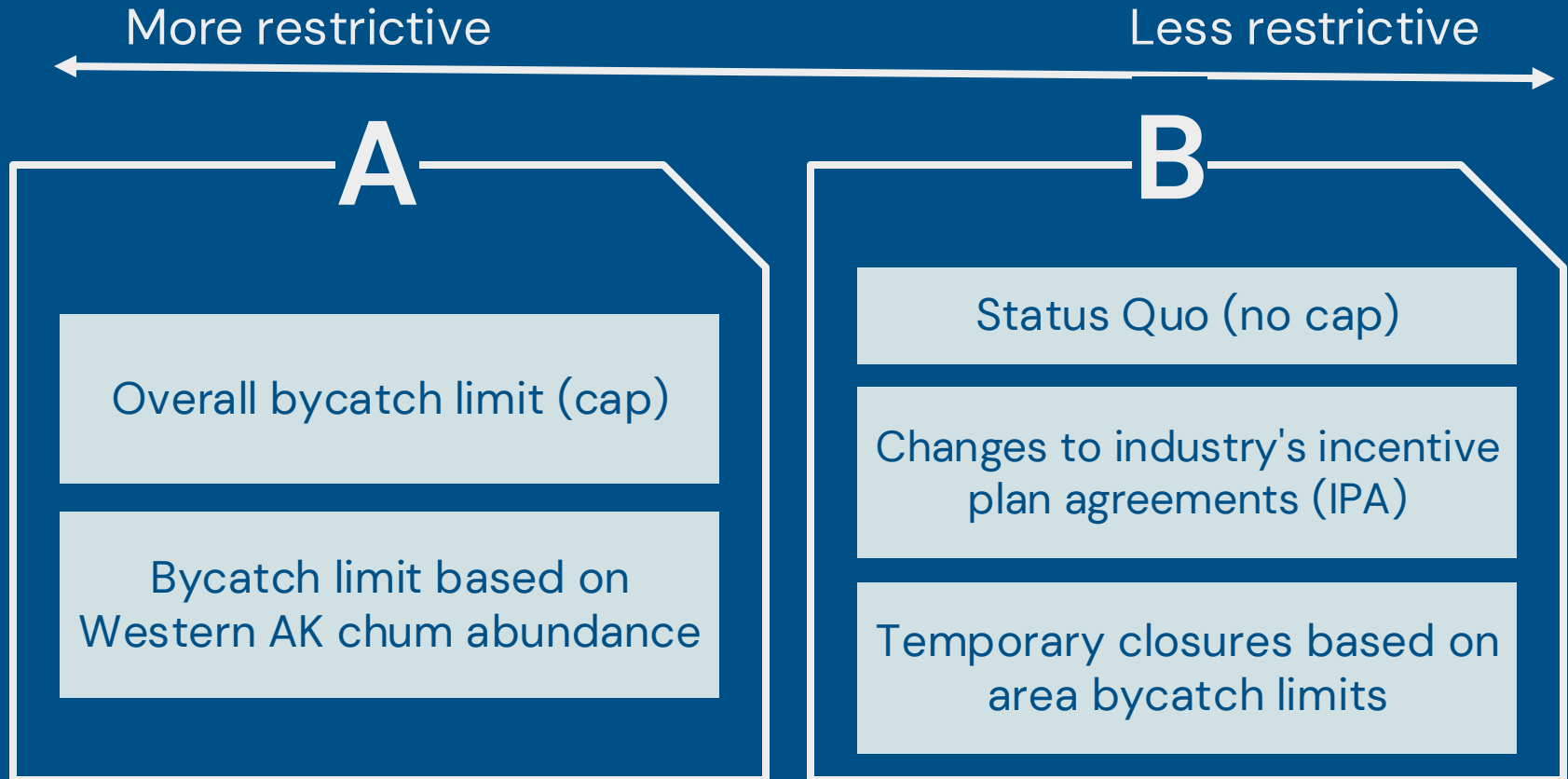


NOAA Fisheries

Analysis

- Catalogued meeting metadata, commenter location & affiliation, comment summary, action(s) supported or opposed
- Reviewed comments and developed a codebook of themes reflecting values, beliefs, and perspectives
- Assigned codes to each comment
- Checked data records and assessed for inter-coder agreement (in progress)

Policy preferences and advocacy coalitions



Results – Key Themes

1

Institutional constraints and role of management

2

Economic, food security, and food sovereignty considerations

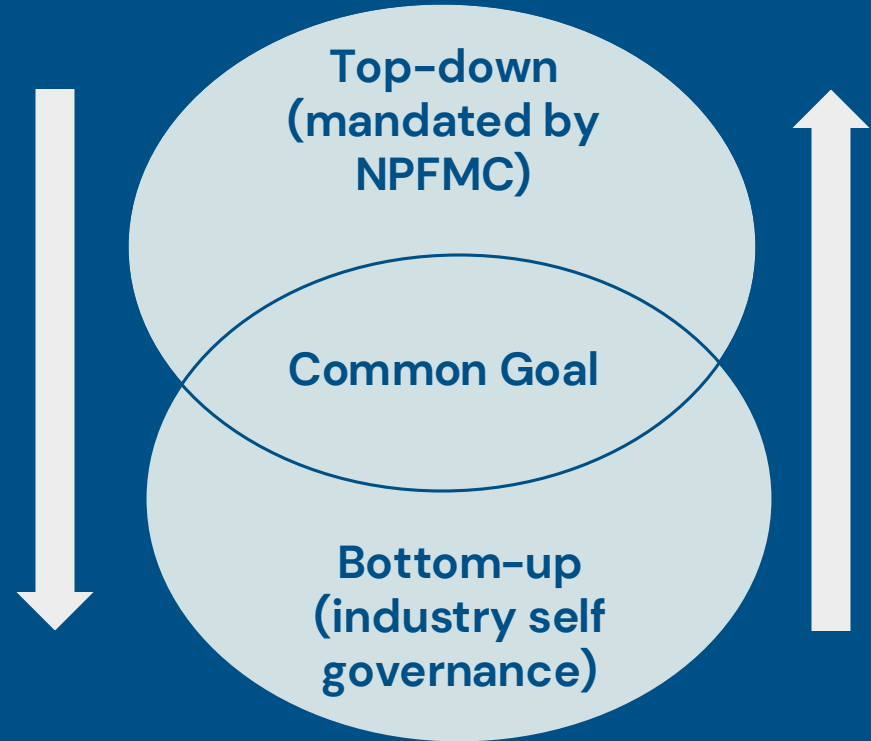
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Many others (not included in this presentation)

Theme 1: Institutional constraints and role of management

"I note that many of the proposed modifications to requirements of Incentive Plan Agreements (IPAs) have already been adopted by the participants in the IPAs, demonstrating that industry not only cares about reducing its salmon bycatch, but also proactively takes steps to do so despite such measures not being currently mandated by regulation."

Trawl Industry CEO, February 2025



Theme 2: Economic, food security, and food sovereignty considerations

Pollock fishery threatens food security and sovereignty for Alaska Native communities:

"Tribes and tribal members of in-river communities hold the burden of conservation through restrictions on salmon harvests and face the prospect that salmon populations will not recover ... and that our way of life and culture that surrounds salmon fishing will vanish."

– NGO-Tribe, Feb 2025

Pollock fishery contributes to local/regional economy and national food security:

"Draconian changes to the current management of chum bycatch reduction efforts will only take a tragic environmental crisis in the western rivers of Alaska and add an economic crisis to the pollock participants... with little impact on the return of chum salmon."

– Business – Fishing, Feb 2025

Discussion



David Csepp/National Marine Fisheries Service

- Issue with significant public engagement; Reflecting competing value systems
- Coalitions played a crucial role in:
 - Keeping the public engaged
 - Broadening participation
 - Raising awareness of bycatch
- Limitations of management tools under:
 - Climate change
 - Environmental and scientific uncertainty
 - Jurisdictional mismatches

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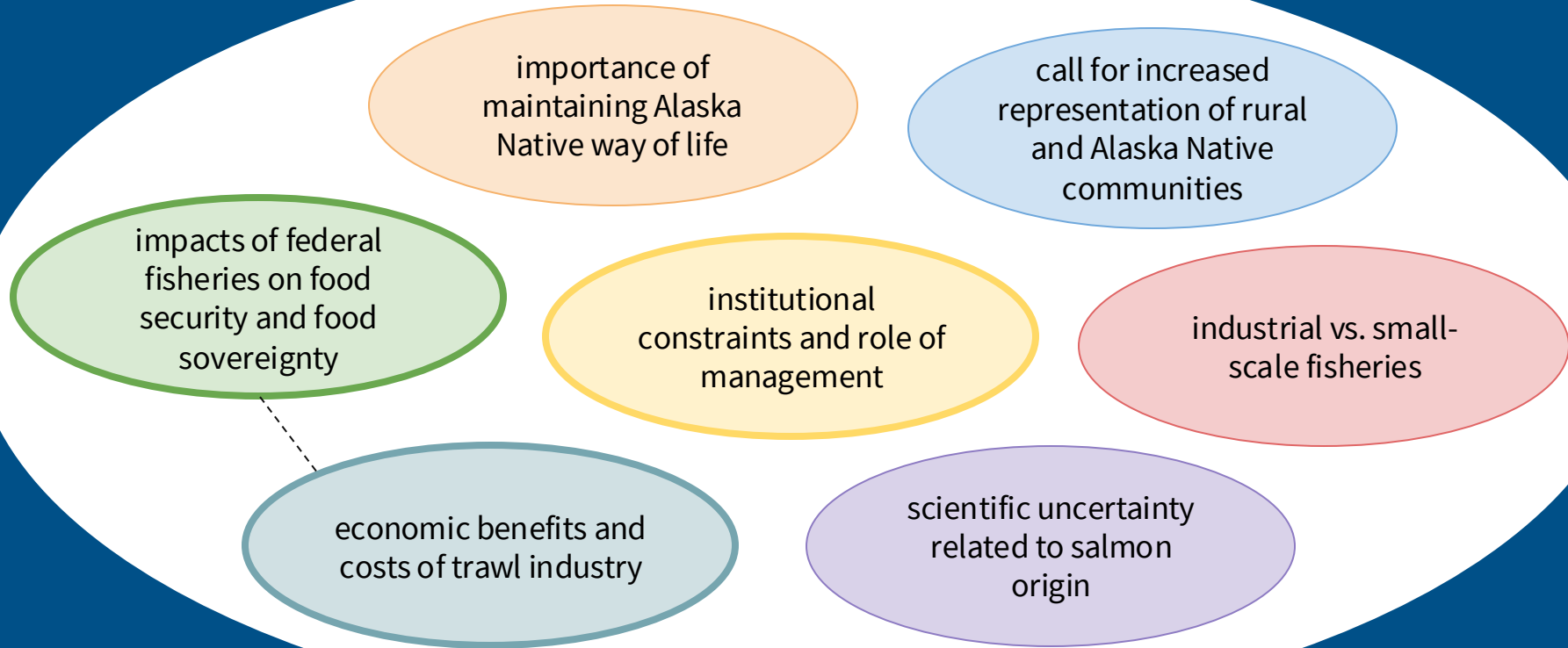
Management Timeline (in brief)



*Adapted from figure by Teresa Vincente,
Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission*

Results

Prominent themes
(not comprehensive)



Food Security and Sovereignty in the Alaska Context

Food security is “the state of having reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food”

Food sovereignty is “the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food...and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems”

(Gordillo and Mendez-Jeronimo 2013)

