Certification Summary

Alaska Pollock Commercial Fishery Certification

Certification Recommendation

Date: 9th December 2011

A positive Certification determination has been awarded for the *fishery management of the U.S. Alaska pollock commercial fisheries,* against the FAO-based Responsible Fisheries Management (RFM) Conformance Criteria[1] . Certification determination was given by a Global Trust Certification Committee on December 6th 2011, after a nine months independent assessment of the Alaska pollock commercial fishery. The assessment was performed at the request of the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI).

The Certification covers the fishery management of the Alaska pollock (*Theragra chalcogramma*) commercial fishery, employing pelagic trawl gear within Alaska jurisdiction (200 nautical miles EEZ) under federal [National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)/North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC)] and state [Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) & Board of Fisheries (BOF)] management.

A Global Trust Certification Committee, composed of fishery, certification and accreditation experts, was tasked with a qualitative review of the formal processes, assessment reports and recommendations provided by the fishery Assessment Team and Peer Reviewers appointed to assess this fishery. The Certification Committee unanimously agreed with the Assessment Team's findings that the applicant Alaska pollock commercial fishery is responsibly managed by effective management organizations, using robust fishery management plans and practices based on objective science and information.

The resulting certification communication for the Alaska pollock commercial fishery is: *'Certified Responsible Fisheries Management'*.

This Certification delivers high confidence that reliable management systems are in place to properly assess and respond to any current and evolving issues and allow the fishery to continue on the path of responsible management. These management systems are certified as being in line with those recommended by the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (1995) and FAO Guidelines for

[1] GTC version 1.2 (Sept 2011), as derived by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (1995), the FAO Guidelines for the Eco-Labeling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries (2005) as amended/extended in 2009, and the FAO Fisheries Circular No. 917 by John. F. Caddy (1996).

the Eco-Labeling of Fish and Fishery Products from Marine Capture Fisheries (2005) and amended/extended in 2009.

This Certification demonstrates responsible management for the sustainable use of the fisheries and is a realistic and tangible communication for this standard and process. The Global Trust Certification lasts for five years and it involves annual surveillance assessments of the fishery. This Certification means that the Alaska pollock commercial fishery has met the criteria for certification of responsibly managed fisheries at the point in time of the assessment. The reason there are annual surveillance assessments and a full re-assessment every 5 years is to verify fishery management continues to perform responsibly.

The Alaska pollock commercial fishery achieved high conformity against all clauses of the FAO-Based RFM Conformance Criteria. The separate peer review evaluations also supported a positive decision for certification. A vast amount of information has been collated and recorded regarding the applicant fishery, all of which were considered in the assessment. The assessment findings have been documented in a 250 page Full Assessment and Certification Report.

The assessment process has layers of governance and transparency. The assessment was conducted by Global Trust Certification according to the International Standards Organization (ISO) Guide 65:1996 procedures for FAO-based Responsible Fisheries Management Certification. ISO Guide 65 is the international accreditation criteria for bodies offering product and process certification. The ISO Guide 65 assessment, certification and decision process is governed by the accreditation bodies of the International Accreditation Forum (IAF). Global Trust Certification is accredited by the Irish National Accreditation Board (INAB) who is a member of the IAF.

The Full Assessment and Certification Report will be made available for download on request at Global Trust and ASMI's websites before the 31st January 2012:

www.GTCERT.com and http://sustainability.alaskaseafood.org/pollock-certification

Summary of the Process

ASMI, on behalf of Alaska pollock commercial fishery, submitted an application to Global Trust Certification for a formal assessment of the Alaska pollock commercial fishery to the requirements of the FAO-Based Responsible Fisheries Management (RFM) Certification Program. The Application was received in April 2010 (Table 1).

After an initial Validation Assessment (Table 2) was completed by Global Trust in April 2011, an expert Assessment Team was formed to undertake the full assessment. The Assessment Team was composed of independent assessors (Table 3) with expert competency in fishery science, the Alaska pollock fishery, the Alaska management system, the FAO-based RFM Conformance Criteria and the Certification process.

The Assessment Team's report was peer-reviewed by two additional independent experts (Table 4) before being submitted to a formal Global Trust Certification Committee (Table 5) for an independent certification decision.

Key factors and issues evaluated, documented and judged by the Assessment Team included:

A. The Fisheries Management System

The primary layer of governance for the federal Alaska pollock fisheries is dictated by the Magnuson Stevens Act (MSA). The main federal agencies involved in pollock management within Alaska's EEZ (NMFS, NPFMC), and all of their activities and decisions, are subject to the MSA. The MSA sets out ten national standards for fishery conservation and management (16 U.S.C. § 1851), with which all Fishery Management Plan (FMP) must be consistent. The Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Groundfish FMP and the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) Groundfish FMP govern the management of the federal pollock fisheries. The Council submit their recommendations and plans to the NMFS for review, approval, and implementation. In addition, NMFS Alaska Regional Office conducts biological studies, stock survey and stock assessment reports. The USCG is responsible for enforcing these FMPs at sea, in conjunction with NMFS enforcement ashore. In state waters (0-3 nm), the Prince William Sound (PWS) pollock fishery is managed by ADFG and the BOF. Biomass is estimated by ADFG bottom trawl surveys in summer and hydroacoustic surveys in winter. In 1999 the BOF directed the ADFG to establish a PWS pollock trawl fishery management plan to reduce potential impacts on the endangered population of Steller sea lions (SSL) by geographically apportioning the catch. Parallel fisheries for pollock take place in state waters around Kodiak Island, in the Chignik Area and along the South Alaska Peninsula. The effort in the patrol and enforcement of state waters regulations is entrusted to the Marine Enforcement Section (MES) of the Alaska Wildlife Troopers (AWT).

In 1998, Congress enacted the American Fisheries Act (AFA) to rationalize the BSAI pollock fishery by limiting participation and allocating specific percentages of the Bering Sea directed pollock fishery TAC among the competing sectors of the fishery. After first deducting 10 percent of the TAC for the Community Development Quota (CDQ) Program and an incidental catch allowance, the AFA allocates 50 percent of the remaining TAC to the inshore catcher vessels sector; 40 percent to the catcher processor sector; and 10 percent to the mothership sector. In the GOA, in 1996, a moratorium on entry of new vessels into the groundfish fishery was implemented. In June 1995, the Council adopted a license limitation program (LLP) to supersede the vessel moratorium. As of January 1, 2000 a Federal LLP license is required for vessels participating in directed fishing for LLP groundfish species in the GOA or BSAI, or fishing in any BSAI LLP crab fisheries.

In the U.S. portion of the Bering Sea three stocks of pollock are identified for management purposes and are managed within the framework of the BSAI Groundfish FMP. These are: pollock occurring on the Eastern Bering Sea shelf; the Aleutian Islands Region and the Central Bering Sea Bogoslof Island pollock. Pollock in the Gulf of Alaska, specifically, the spawning aggregations in PWS, the Shelikof Strait and the Shumagin Islands are managed within the framework of the GOA Groundfish FMP. The United States and Russian Federation maintain the bilateral Intergovernmental Consultative Committee (ICC) fisheries forum pursuant to the U.S.-Soviet Comprehensive Fisheries Agreement, signed on May 31, 1988. These meetings have resulted in US vessels doing acoustical surveys with Russian Federation scientists in the Federation's zone of the Bering Sea, where a small portion of U.S. pollock moves into. The Convention on the Conservation and Management of Pollock Resources in the Central Bering Sea (Donut Hole) is responsible for the conservation, management, and optimum utilization of pollock resources in the high seas area of the Bering Sea. Member states (China, Japan, Korea, Poland, Russia, and the United States) have maintained a moratorium on commercial pollock fishing in the Convention Area since 1993 in an effort to allow the stock to rebuild. All fishery removals and mortality of the target stock(s) are considered by management. For both the BSAI and the GOA pollock stocks (see EBS and GOA pollock Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) reports), the management organizations collect the necessary information on removals and mortality (including natural mortality) of the target stock, as well as data on bycatch and discards. Strictly enforced landing reports, at sea and shore-based fishery enforcement, fishery observers and an extensive mandatory and voluntary logbook program verify and ground-truth total mortality estimates.

The NMFS and the NPFMC participates in coastal area management-related institutional frameworks through the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) processes. These include decision-making processes and activities relevant to fishery resources and users in support of sustainable and integrated use of living marine resources and avoidance of conflict among users. Each NPFMC fisheries package (amendments and developments) must go through the NEPA process. The NPFMC and BOF meetings provide forums for resolution of potential fisheries conflicts. In addition, stakeholders may review and submit written comments to the NMFS on proposed rules published in the Federal Register. NPFMC's management arrangements and decision making processes for the fishery are organized in a very transparent manner. The Council (and NMFS) as well as the BOF (and ADFG) provide a great deal of information on their websites, including agenda of meetings, discussion papers, and records of decisions. The Council and the BOF actively encourages stakeholder participation, and all Council and BOF deliberations are conducted in open, public sessions. The primary job of the NPFMC and the BOF is allocation of resources to different users. To do so, they use biological and socio-economic information collected and analyzed by the NMFS and the ADFG. The NPFMC, NMFS and ADFG all have staff economists that participate in the economic, social and cultural evaluation and review process of fishery management proposals. On a higher level, the NEPA process has similar requirements - the biological and socio-economic aspects of the fishery must be taken into account before any decision can occur. The coastal zone is monitored as part of the coastal management process using physical, chemical, biological, economic and social parameters. Involvement includes a wide variety of federal and state agencies and programs.

B. Science and Stock Assessment Activities

The NMFS and the ADFG collect fishery data and conduct fishery independent surveys to assess the pollock fishery and ecosystems in GOA and BSAI areas. GOA and BSAI SAFE documents provide complete descriptions of data types and years collected. EBS pollock landings have been recorded by a combination of ADFG fish tickets and more recently the electronic eLandings system. Landings are verified by shorebased observers. Estimates of discards are compiled from fishing logbooks and at-

sea observer data. The age composition of the catches has been estimated annually from 1979 to 2009. These estimates are derived from a combination of at-sea sampling by fishery observers and shore sampling by NMFS technical staff. The estimates are stratified by area and season to account for differences in growth and size at age among regions. In the EBS two fishery-independent research surveys have been used to estimate trends in the population abundance, size and age composition. A bottom trawl survey has been conducted in the EBS annually since 1979. This survey gives an estimate of the near-bottom component of the population defined by the fraction of the population within the depth range sampled by the bottom trawl. An acoustic-Trawl (AT) survey has also been conducted to estimate the off-bottom component of the population. The frequency of the survey has increased over the period 1979-2010 from initially every 3 years to annually in recent years.

GOA catch is currently estimated by the NMFS regional office from landings records and observer estimates of discards. Catch estimates include the state managed fishery in PWS. The age composition of the GOA catches has been estimated annually from 1976 to 2009. These estimates are derived from a combination of at-sea sampling by fishery observers and shore sampling by NMFS technical staff. The estimates are stratified by area and season to account for differences in growth and size at age among regions. Three fishery-independent research surveys are conducted to estimate population abundance and age composition. A bottom trawl survey have been conducted by the AFSC every three years (beginning in 1984) to assess the abundance of groundfish in the Gulf of Alaska. Starting in 2001, the survey frequency was increased to every two years. Echo integration trawl (EIT) surveys have been conducted annually since 1981 (except 1982 and 1999) to assess the biomass and age composition of pollock in the Shelikof Strait area. ADFG has conducted bottom trawl surveys of nearshore areas of the Gulf of Alaska since 1987. In addition, estimates of spawning biomass in Shelikof Strait based on egg production methods were available for 1981, 1985-1992. Results from a number of historical trawl surveys conducted during 1961-1982 were also available. The Prince William Sound pollock stock is estimated by ADFG bottom trawl surveys in summer and hydroacoustic surveys in winter. The *Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation* (SAFE) report is compiled annually by the BSAI and GOA Groundfish Plan teams, which are appointed by the Council. The sections are authored by AFSC and State of Alaska scientists. The SAFE reports also include a volume assessing the *Economic Status of the Groundfish Fisheries off Alaska* as well as a volume on *Ecosystem Considerations*. The SAFE report provides information on the historical catch trend, estimates of the maximum sustainable yield of the groundfish complex as well as its component species groups, assessments on the stock condition of individual species groups; assessments of the impacts on the ecosystem of harvesting the groundfish complex at the current levels given the assessed condition of stocks, including consideration of rebuilding depressed stocks; and alternative harvest strategies and related effects on the component species groups. Between 2004 and 2007, 87% of the BS pollock directed catch was taken by vessels with observers onboard and the remaining catch was examined by observers on vessels that received unsorted catch. Between 2004 and 2007, 31% of the GOA pollock directed catch was taken by vessels with observers onboard. Unsorted catches from small vessels are then examined when landed at shoreside plants. The NPFMC and NMFS are undertaking a review of the observer program to address a number of operational concerns. Five restructuring options are being considered and each one includes an increase in coverage for vessels < 60 feet in length.

Guided by MSA standards, and other legal requirements, the NMFS has a well-established institutional framework for research developed within the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC). The AFSC operates the following laboratories and Divisions. The Auke Bay Laboratories conducts scientific research on fish stocks, fish habitats, and the chemistry of marine environments. The National Marine Mammal Laboratory conducts research on marine mammals, with particular attention to issues related to marine mammals off the coasts of Oregon, Washington and Alaska.

The Fisheries Monitoring and Analysis Division (FMA) monitors groundfish fishing activities in the US EEZ off Alaska and conducts research associated with sampling commercial fishery catches, estimation of catch and bycatch mortality, and analysis of fishery-dependent data. The Resource Assessment and Engineering Division (RACE) conducts fishery surveys to measure the distribution and abundance of approximately 40 commercially important fish and crab stocks. The Resource Ecology and Fisheries Management Division (REFM) collects data to support management of Northeast Pacific and eastern Bering Sea fish and crab resources. Stock assessments are done annually and used to set catch quotas. Division scientists also evaluate how fish stocks and user groups might be affected by fishery management actions.

C. The Precautionary Approach

National Standard 1 of the MSA, passed in 1976, required that conservation and fisheries management measures prevent overfishing while achieving optimal yield for each fishery on a continuing basis. The status of US fish stocks is determined by 2 metrics. The first is the relationship between the actual exploitation level and the overfishing level (OFL). If the exploitation level (or fishing mortality) exceeds the F_{OFL}, the stock is considered to be subject to overfishing. The second is the relationship between the stock size and the minimum stock size threshold (MSST). If the stock size is below the MSST it is considered to be overfished. The GOA and BSAI management plans have pre-defined harvest control rules that include limit and target reference points and are used to determine annual catch limits to control exploitation within sustainable bounds and to promote optimal utilisation around MSY. The harvest control rules include a variable harvest rate that is reduced if the stock falls below a target level of B_{MSY}, or its proxy of $B_{40\%}$, in order to promote stock rebuilding. The harvest rate is controlled to be below a limit reference point of F_{OFL}. F_{OFL} is maintained at a constant level of F_{MSY}, or its proxy $F_{35\%}$ when the stock size is above the target. It is reduced if the stock size falls below the target, and is set to 0 if stock size falls below a critical level. The critical level may be adjusted upward if other considerations suggest a more conservative approach is warranted. This critical level has never been approached for EBS and GOA pollock over the history of management under the MSA. This single species approach is applied to all groundfish stocks in Alaska.

The advisory process for Alaskan pollock fisheries has measures built in to further enhance conservation. Stocks are assigned to 1 of 6 “tiers” that represent descending levels of knowledge about their ecology and fishing history. Management reference points differ among the tiers and become more conservative when knowledge is lacking. EBS Pollock is a tier 1 stock and therefore the reference points are based on MSY. The advice from the previous assessment is compared to that from the most recent assessment. It was noted that the 2010 estimate of stock size was considerably higher than that made in 2009 because of higher than expected AT survey estimates in 2010 and the appearance of a strong 2008 year-class. The estimated total biomass in 2011 made in the 2009 assessment was 6,223,300 t while it was 9,620,000 t in 2010. There was a corresponding increase in the OFL for 2011 from 1,220,000 t to 2.447,000 t. Nonetheless, the SAFE report authors recommended an alternative F_{ABC} that would result in a more gradual increase in fishing mortality than the prescribed ABC, and based on the recent average fishing mortality. The difference in forecast fishing mortality is $maxF_{ABC}$ = 0.564 and recommended F_{ABC} = 0.332. EBS pollock is well above target reference point, and it is neither overfished nor approaching overfished conditions.

GOA pollock is a tier 3 stock and therefore the reference points are based on spawner per recruit reference points (e.g. $B_{X\%}$ and $F_{X\%}$). The assessment results indicated that the current stock size was in the range between the limit and target level (moderately increasing), and that the fishing mortality used in the catch forecast should be reduced. The estimated 2011 OFL was 118,030 t, the

estimated Allowable Biological Catch (ABC), following the prescribed tier 3 rule, was 102,940 t. The SAFE report author recommended a slightly more conservative ABC rule that had a higher target biomass and this resulted in a recommended ABC of 88,620 t. GOA pollock is considered neither overfished nor approaching overfished conditions.

Another limit reference point used in managing groundfish in the BSAI and GOA is the optimum yield (OY). The sum of the TACs of all groundfish species (except Pacific halibut) is required to fall within a given range. The range for BSAI is 1.4 to 2.0 million mt; the range for GOA is 116 to 800 thousand mt. In practice, only the upper OY limit in the BSAI has been a factor in altering harvests. In addition, for groundfish species identified as key prey of Steller sea lions (i.e., walleye pollock, Pacific cod, and Atka mackerel), directed fishing is prohibited in the event that the spawning biomass of such a species is projected in the stock assessment to fall below B20% in the coming year. However, this does not change the specification of ABC or OFL. The B20% also applies to the state PWS fishery.

D. Management Measures

The MSA is the managing federal legislation that defines how fisheries off the United States EEZ are to be managed. From this legislation and Council objectives the management system for the NPFMC groundfish fisheries has developed into a complex suite of measures comprised of harvest controls—e.g., OY (including the BSAI's two million metric tons groundfish complex exploitation cap), TAC, ABC, OFL—effort controls (ITQs, licenses, cooperatives), time and/or area closures (also known as habitat protection, marine reserves), by-catch controls (PSC limits, Maximum Retainable Allowances (MRA), gear modifications, retention and utilization requirements), monitoring and enforcement (observer program, U.S. Coast Guard), social and economic protections, and rules responding to other constraints (e.g., regulations to protect Steller sea lions (SSL) and to avoid seabirds). The NPFMC harvest control system is complex and multi-faceted in order to address issues related to sustainability, legislative mandates, and quality of information. Federal regulations only provide one method of directed fishing for pollock, the pelagic trawl. There are no destructive fishing gear or methods that are allowed under federal regulations off Alaska. For the PWS state fishery, the only allowed gear for direct targeting of pollock is also pelagic trawl. State-wide regulations 5 AAC 28.086 and 5 AAC 28.087 give the ADFG authority to manage parallel fisheries (those Council groundfish fisheries within state waters) and parallel fisheries with SSL restrictions, respectively, incorporating federal/Council regulations within state waters. For the pollock fishery, the Council has had to balance the needs of the large, offshore catcher processors and catcher boats that deliver to motherships, both of which catch and process at sea, and the shorebased catcher vessels that deliver shoreside.

The Council also established a policy of full utilization such that the pollock harvest is to be used for human consumption to the maximum extent possible. For the BSAI, it also divided the pollock TAC into two seasonal allowances: roe-bearing ("A" season) and non roe-bearing ("B" season). In the GOA the TAC was separated into four equal quarterly allowances. The percentage of the TAC allocated to each allowance is determined annually during the TAC specifications process. The multiple Council analysis were NEPA compliant, meaning that they evaluated the full array of impacts, seeking out affected parties and providing 10's of hours at most Council meetings to take written and oral testimony from individuals and organizations representing the various stakeholders. The fishery dependence of coastal and western Alaska communities was also addressed through the creation of the pollock, sablefish, and halibut CDQ programs for the BSAI in the early to mid-1990s and the expansion of those programs into the multispecies CDQ Program with the addition of all other groundfish species by 1999.

For several years, the Bering Sea pollock industry has been working on developing a Chinook salmon excluder device for trawl gear, which allows salmon to escape from the trawl net underwater, while retaining pollock. The success of such devices relies on the different swimming behaviors of pollock and Chinook salmon. Through experimental fishery permits authorized by the Council and NOAA Fisheries, various iterations have been tested, and their voluntary use by pollock skippers is increasing. Recently, the GOA pollock industry has begun to consider how the Bering Sea Chinook salmon excluder might be adapted for the smaller GOA pollock fleet.

The Restricted Access Management Program (RAM) is responsible for managing Alaska Region permit programs, including those that limit access to the Federally-managed fisheries of the North Pacific. RAM responsibilities include: providing program information to the public, determining eligibility and issuing permits, processing transfers, collecting landing fees and related activities. The Alaska Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC), issues state waters permits and vessel licenses to qualified individuals in both limited and unlimited fisheries, and provides due process hearings and appeals as and when needed. The RAM division as well as the CFEC maintain on their websites, all the fishermen records for which fishing permits are issued.

The North Pacific Fishing Vessel Owners association (NPFVO) provides a large and diverse training program that many of the professional pollock crew members must pass. Also, the State of Alaska, Department of Labor & Workforce Development (ADLWD) includes AVTEC (formerly called Alaska Vocational Training & Education Center, now called Alaska's Institute of Technology). One of AVTEC's main divisions is the Alaska Maritime Training Center. The goal of the Alaska Maritime Training Center is to promote safe marine operations by effectively preparing captains and crew members for employment in the Alaskan maritime industry. The Alaska Maritime Training Center is a United States Coast Guard (USCG) approved training facility located in Seward, Alaska, and offers USCG/STCW-compliant maritime training. The University of Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory Program (MAP) also provides education and training in several sectors, including fisheries management, in the forms of seminars and workshops. MAP also conducts sessions of their Alaska Young Fishermen's Summit.

E. Implementation, Monitoring and Control

The Alaska pollock fishery fleet uses enforcement measures including an observer program, vessel monitoring systems on board vessels and USCG boardings and inspection activities. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) and NMFS Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) enforce fisheries laws and regulations, especially 50CFR679. OLE Special Agents and Enforcement Officers conduct complex criminal and civil investigations, board vessels fishing at sea, inspect fish processing plants, review sales of wildlife products on the internet and conduct patrols on land, in the air and at sea.

In Alaska waters, enforcement policy section 50CFR600.740 states – (a) The MSA provides four basic enforcement remedies for violations, in ascending order of severity, as follows: (1) Issuance of a citation (a type of warning), usually at the scene of the offense (see 15 CFR part 904, subpart E). (2) Assessment by the Administrator of a civil money penalty. (3) For certain violations, judicial forfeiture action against the vessel and its catch. (4) Criminal prosecution of the owner or operator for some offenses. It shall be the policy of NMFS to enforce vigorously and equitably the provisions of the MSA by utilizing that form or combination of authorized remedies best suited in a particular case to this end. (b) Processing a case under one remedial form usually means that other remedies are inappropriate in that case. However, further investigation or later review may indicate the case to be either more or less serious than initially considered, or may otherwise reveal that the penalty

first pursued is inadequate to serve the purposes of the MSA. Under such circumstances, the Agency may pursue other remedies either in lieu of or in addition to the action originally taken. Forfeiture of the illegal catch does not fall within this general rule and is considered in most cases as only the initial step in remedying a violation by removing the ill-gotten gains of the offense. (c) If a fishing vessel for which a permit has been issued under the MSA is used in the commission of an offense prohibited by section 307 of the MSA, NOAA may impose permit sanctions, whether or not civil or criminal action has been undertaken against the vessel or its owner or operator. In some cases, the MSA requires permit sanctions following the assessment of a civil penalty or the imposition of a criminal fine. In sum, the MSA treats sanctions against the fishing vessel permit to be the carrying out of a purpose separate from that accomplished by civil and criminal penalties against the vessel or its owner or operator.

The "Policy for the Assessment of Civil Administrative Penalties and Permit Sanctions" issued by NOAA Office of the General Counsel – Enforcement and Litigation on March 16, 2011, provides guidance for the assessment of civil administrative penalties and permit sanctions under the statutes and regulations enforced by NOAA. The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that: (1) civil administrative penalties and permit sanctions are assessed in accordance with the laws that NOAA enforces in a fair and consistent manner; (2) penalties and permit sanctions are appropriate for the gravity of the violation; (3) penalties and permit sanctions are sufficient to deter both individual violators and the regulated community as a whole from committing violations; (4) economic incentives for noncompliance are eliminated; and (5) compliance is expeditiously achieved and maintained to protect natural resources. Under this Policy, NOAA expects to improve consistency at a national level, provide greater predictability for the regulated community and the public, improve transparency in enforcement, and more effectively protect natural resources. For significant violations, the NOAA attorney may recommend charges under NOAA's civil administrative process (*see* 15 C.F.R. Part 904), through issuance of a Notice of Violation and Assessment of a penalty (NOVA), Notice of Permit Sanction (NOPS), Notice of Intent to Deny Permit (NIDP), or some combination thereof. Alternatively, the NOAA attorney may recommend that there is a violation of a criminal provision that is sufficiently significant to warrant referral to a U.S. Attorney's office for criminal prosecution. The Marine Division of AWT and the State of Alaska Department of Law pursue a very aggressive enforcement policy. They routinely attend the BOF meetings and are integral into the process for regulation formulation and legislation, analogous to the USCG attendance and input in the Council process.

The Central Bering Sea Fisheries Enforcement Act prohibits vessels and nationals of the United States from conducting fishing operations in the Central Bering Sea, except where such fishing operations are conducted in accordance with an international fishery agreement to which the United States and the Russian Federation are parties. Any violation shall be subject to civil penalties and permit sanctions under section 308 of the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act. The USCG monitors vessels transiting and operating in the Donut Hole, and takes appropriate action as needed. The USCG also enforces other high seas fishing regulation. For example, in October 16th 2011, NMFS Office of Law Enforcement reported U.S. actions against illegal high seas fishing from the Bangun Perkasa, seized by the Coast Guard about a month before for high-seas drift net fishing more than 2,600 miles south west of Kodiak, Alaska.

F. Serious Impacts of the fishery on the Ecosystem

The NPFMC, NOAA/NMFS, and other institutions interested in the North Pacific conduct assessments and research on environmental factors on pollock and associated species and their habitats. Findings and conclusions are published in SAFE document, annual Ecosystem Considerations documents, and other research reports. The SAFE documents for BSAI and GOA pollock summarize ecosystem considerations for the stocks. They include sections for 1) Ecosystem effects on the stock; and 2) Effects of the pollock fishery on the ecosystem. SAFE reports also describe results of first-order trophic interactions for pollock from the ECOPATH model, an ecosystem modeling software package. Since 2003, SAFE documents for BSAI and GOA have also included an annual summary Ecosystem Assessment in the appendix prepared by the Resource Ecology and Ecosystem Management group at the AFSC. The primary intent of the assessment is to summarize historical climate and fishing effects of the shelf and slope regions of the eastern BSAI, and GOA, and to provide an assessment of the possible future effects of climate and fishing on ecosystem structure and function from an ecosystem perspective. It also looks at the effects of environmental change on fish stocks. Since 1999, the section has included information on indicators of ecosystem status and trends, and more ecosystem-based management performance measures. In addition, the Final Programmatic Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement is an extensive review of the Alaska Groundfish Fisheries (PSEIS) (NMFS 2004). It provides information about affects of the fishery on the ecosystem and effects of the ecosystem on the groundfish fishery.

NOAA also supports the Fisheries And The Environment (FATE) program which aim is on the development, evaluation, and distribution of leading ecological and performance indicators. In addition, the North Pacific ecosystem status report is a contribution by the North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES) to identify, describe, and integrate observations of change in the North Pacific Ocean that are occurring now, and have occurred during the past several years. Also, for the Bering Sea, a large multiyear ecosystem project is winding towards completion. It consists of two large projects that will be integrated. One funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF's BEST program is the Bering Ecosystem STudy, a multi-year study (2007-2010)). The other funded by NPRB (BSIERP, is the Bering Sea Integrated Ecosystem Research Program (2008-2012)). The overlapping goals of the these projects led to a partnership that brings together some $52 million worth of ecosystem research over six years, including important contributions by NOAA and the US Fish & Wildlife Service. For the Gulf of Alaska Integrated Ecosystem Research Program, more than 40 scientists from 11 institutions are taking part in the $17.6 million Gulf of Alaska ecosystem study that looks at the physical and biological mechanisms that determine the survival of juvenile groundfish in the eastern and western Gulf of Alaska**.**

The most obvious fishing effects (overharvest, uncontrolled bycatch or ecosystem effects on apex predators such as Steller sea lions) are closely accounted for in the Councils FMP, and the Ecosystem Chapters and the index analysis provide a mean to evaluate ecosystem fishing effects. An index that has been suggested as a measure of overall top-down control of the ecosystem due to fishing is the trophic level of the fishery. The trophic level of the catch and the Fishery in Balance (FIB) indices have been monitored in the BS, AI, and GOA ecosystems to determine if fisheries have been “fishing-down" the food web by removing top-level predators and subsequently targeting lower trophic level prey. The FIB index was developed by Pauly et al. (2000) to ascertain whether trophic level catch trends are a reaction of deliberate choice or of a fishing-down the food web effect. This index declines only when catches do not increase as expected when moving down the food web (i.e., lower trophic levels are more biologically productive), relative to an initial baseline year. As in any single metrics of trophic level or FIB indices, however, this is best available science, yet it may hide details about fishing events that scientists can’t discern. Actual area by area results are: The AI pollock Total catch, the Trophic Level of the Catch, and the FIB (Fisheries in Balance) indices for the

AI have been stable and close to their long-term means since 1999. The GOA Total catch, the Trophic Level of the Catch, and the FIB (Fisheries in Balance) indices for the GOA have been stable and close to their long-term means since 1999. The BS Trophic Level of the Catch and the FIB (Fisheries in Balance) indices for the EBS have been stable and close to their long-term means since the 1970s.

Current concerns regarding salmon bycatch in pollock fisheries in the BS and GOA have prompted the Council to take fairly immediate action to place new salmon bycatch controls on the pollock fishery. In the Bering Sea, the Council met with industry and Western Alaskan in-river fishermen concerned with the perceived impacts from salmon bycatch in the pollock fisheries. The Council took action in 2009 to recommend a new approach to managing Chinook salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock fishery under Amendment 91. This new approach combines a limit on the amount of Chinook salmon that may be caught incidentally with incentive plan agreements and performance standards to reduce bycatch. This program was implemented by NMFS for the 2011 fishery. Also, work is ongoing to create a viable salmon excluder device for the pollock fishery. In 2011, the Council approved Chinook salmon prohibited species catch (PSC) limits for the GOA pollock fisheries in the central and western regulatory areas.

Since the NMFS informed the Council about the precipitous decline in the Western discreet population of Steller sea lions (SSL) in 1990, the NPFMC has acted in a precautionary manner to place protections around rookeries and haulouts and close areas where fishing may impact SSL prey. To date, nearly $200,000,000 was appropriated and provided in this research effort. No direct links between fishing and decline or delayed recovery of SSL were evident in this research. The MSA also mandated identification, conservation and enhancement of essential fish habitat (EFH) for managed species. The MSA requires cooperation among NOAA Fisheries Service, fishery management councils, fishing participants, federal and state agencies, and others in achieving EFH protection, conservation and enhancement. The Council implemented the EFH amendments into its GOA and BSAI FMPs, and most recently defined EFH for pollock and all managed species in 2010. Effects of fishing on the seafloor near pollock habitat off Alaska have been largely described as less than minimum and less than temporary.

Further Information

Global Trust Certification Ltd
Head Office: 3rd floor, Block 3, Quayside Business Park
Dundalk, Co. Louth, Ireland.

Head Office Tel: +353 42 932 0912

Seattle Office Tel: +1 206 273 7795

Canada Office Tel: +1 709 765 1000

UK Office Tel: + 44 1829 730892

Email: info@GTCERT.com

Web: www.GTCERT.COM

ASMI website: **http://sustainability.alaskaseafood.org/pollock-certification**

Key Email Contacts

Alaska Pollock Client: rrice@alaskaseafood.org

Assessment Team / Findings Details: davegarforth@GTCERT.com

Assessment Report Requests: vitoromito@GTCERT.com

Certification Decision Details: petermarshall@GTCERT.com

Accreditation Details: billpaterson@GTCERT.com

Chain of Custody Details: mikerose@GTCERT.com

General Comments: info@GTCERT.com

Table 1: Fishery Application Summary

Applicant Contact Information			
Organization/ Company Name:	Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute on behalf of the Alaska pollock commercial fishery	Date:	April 2010
Correspondence Address:	**International Marketing Office and Administration** **Suite 200**		
Street :	**311 N. Franklin Street**		
City :	**Juneau**		
State:	Alaska AK 99801-1147		
Country:	***USA***		
Phone:	**(907) 465-5560**	**E-mail Address:**	*info@alaskaseafood.org*
Key Management Contact Information			
Full Name:	***(Last)*** Rice	***(First)*** Randy	
Position:	***Seafood Technical Program Director***		
Correspondence Address:	*U.S. Marketing Office* *Suite 310*		
Street :	**150 Nickerson Street**		
City :	***Seattle***		
State:	***Washington 98109-1634***		
Country:	***USA***		
Phone:	**(206) 352-8920**	**E-mail Address:**	***marketing@alaskaseafood.org***
Nominated Deputy:	***As Above***		
Deputy Phone:	As Above	**Deputy** **E-mail Address:**	**rrice@alaskaseafood.org**

Table 2: Schedule of Key Assessment Activities

Assessment Activities	Date (s)
Application Date	April 2010
Initial Site Visit Consultation Meetings	June –July 2010
Initial Validation Assessment Report	April 2011
Appointment of Full Assessment Team	July 2011
On-site Witnessed Assessment and Consultation Meetings	August 2011
Draft Assessment Report	August - November 2011
External Peer Review	November 2011
Final Assessment Report	December 2011
Certification Review/Decision	6th December 2011

Table 3: Global Trust Assessment Team Members

Assessor	Role	Assessor	Role
Dave Garforth, Global Trust Certification Ltd. Quayside Business Park Dundalk, Co. Louth Ireland	Lead Assessor	**Vito Ciccia Romito,** Global Trust Certification Ltd. Quayside Business Park Dundalk, Co. Louth Ireland	Assessor
Earl Krygier Anchorage, Alaska 99515, USA.	Assessor	**Alan Sinclair** Parksville, British Columbia, Canada.	Assessor
Stephen Grabacki, Anchorage, Alaska 100506, USA	Assessor		

Table 4: Peer Reviewers

Herman Savikko	Dankert Sakgen
Mr. Savikko worked for the ADFG in fishery management and research positions for 30 years. For the last 9 years of his career, he was the State/Federal Marine Fisheries Coordinator, responsible for coordinating the bio-technical information between the department, the public, the NMFS, the NPFMC and the Alaska BOF. Mr. Savikko was the lead Fishery Biologist on the State's advance team providing the Commissioner of ADFG, a voting NPFMC member, with detailed data on issues and assisted in department policy-making decisions over FMP fisheries. In that role, the team developed policy approaches to improve management and resource sustainability through the implementation of various catch share programs, establishing critical habitat, better data collection and reporting methods, and enhanced enforcement. Scope of projects involving the pollock fisheries off Alaska included the refining of Community Development Quotas Program; resolving issues and actions associated with the listing of Stellar Sea Lions under the federal Endangered Species Act and resulting conflicts with affected commercial fisheries; contribution with the development of the BSAI Chinook Salmon Bycatch EIS, capping the number of Chinook salmon caught incidentally in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands pollock fisheries with incentive plan agreements and performance standards; establishment of protected waters under a provision to describe and identify essential fish habitat for FMP fisheries; changes to the fishery observer programs; and State regulatory procedure for 0-3 mile pollock fisheries, handled through active participation in the Alaska Board of Fisheries process.	Dankert Skagen has recently retired from the Institute of Marine Research (IMR), Bergen, where he worked for 22 years. His responsibilities included stock assessment, multispecies work, in particular in the North Sea, work connected to the introduction of the precautionary approach in fisheries and recently, on development of harvest control rules and management strategies. He was leader of the IMR research program for population dynamics and multispecies investigations in 1996-97 and for the development of new assessment tools for North-East arctic cod in 1998-99 and the assessment package TASACS in 2007-08. In addition, he has developed several programs for simulating harvest control rules that are commonly used in fisheries management today. Within ICES, he has participated in a wide range of working groups and been chairman of several of them, including the Study Group of Management Strategies. He was chairman of the Resource Management Committee for 3 years and member of ACFM for 7 years.

Table 5: Certification Committee Members

Peter Marshall, Chairperson **Certification and** **Accreditation Expert** CEO, Global Trust Certification Ltd.	**Bill Paterson,** **Legal / Technical /Certification and** **Accreditation Expert** Global Trust Certification Ltd.
Ciaran Kelly **Fishery Management Expert** Marine Institute. Ireland	**Clare Murray** **Fishery Scientist** Global Trust Certification Ltd.
Also in Attendance	
Vito Ciccia Romito: Fishery Scientist Global Trust Certification Ltd. (Fishery Presentation to Certification Committee only)	
Dave Garforth: Fisheries and Certification Expert Global Trust Certification Ltd. (Fishery Presentation to Certification Committee only)	