

## What's a pollock?

Alaska Pollock is a close relative of cod, of the gadid family. Pollock is known as a whitefish, and is the most commonly used fish in McDonald's filet o' fish sandwiches, fish sticks, fish fingers, and other breaded and fried fish products. Pollock are the most important prey species in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska, providing food for seals, endangered Steller sea lions, sea birds, and fish.

Averaging over a million tons per year, Alaska Pollock is the largest fishery in the US, and one of the largest in the world. Despite many clear warning signs, it has often been referred to as the "best managed fishery in the world," certified by the Marine Stewardship Council and green-listed by many environmental organizations.

## What happened?

Despite projections by the National Marine Fisheries Service that populations would increase enough to allow the 2010 pollock to grow back to over one million tons, the annual summer survey found so few fish that managers may be legally required to close the fishery completely next year. Whether or not any fishing is allowed to occur, this is among the worst fishery collapses in history. World class data, strong enforcement, adherence to scientific advice in setting catch limits, and buildings full of fisheries biologists are not sufficient to prevent disaster under the current fishery management regime.

## What were the warning signs?

Of the four Alaska pollock stocks, two (Bogoslof and Aleutian Islands) had already been closed, and one (Gulf of Alaska) had been fished down to about 10% of what it was twenty years ago. The only stock still capable of sustaining a large fishery, in the eastern Bering Sea, dropped 65% between 2003 and 2008. Juvenile pollock survival was below average for six of the last seven years, yet the fishery continued to deliberately target spawning aggregations. Warnings also came from the broader ecosystem, as species like Steller sea lions and northern fur seals that depend on pollock for food also were in steep decline.

## What is the solution?

We must learn from our mistakes. Managing fisheries one species at a time without consideration of the impacts on the broader ecosystem and without marine reserves in place to provide a buffer has led to one costly failure after another. Tens of thousands of jobs have been lost, food security of coastal communities has been impacted, and whole ecosystems have been degraded. A more precautionary, ecosystem-based approach, the cornerstone of which is a network of large-scale marine reserves, is urgently needed. This is more important than ever due to the increasing uncertainty associated with the growing impacts of global warming and ocean acidification.

Major seafood buyers like restaurants and supermarkets can help by making sure the seafood they sell is sustainable. For more info, visit [www.greenpeace.org/seafood](http://www.greenpeace.org/seafood)

Everyone can do their part by eating less seafood, and by urging policy makers to establish a network of marine reserves to protect our oceans and rebuild our fisheries.

## Marine Reserves: the cornerstone of a precautionary, ecosystem-based approach

- \* Increase abundance, average size, reproductive output and genetic diversity
- \* Enhance fishery yield in adjacent areas
- \* Provide simple and cost-effective management regime
- \* Guard against uncertainty and reduce probability of overfishing and fishery collapse
- \* Protect endangered species and marine mammals
- \* Provide basis for ecosystem-based management
- \* Increase habitat quality, species diversity and community stability
- \* Provide experimental control sites for monitoring and assessing relative impacts of fishing and climate change
- \* Improve public awareness, education and understanding



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