

Social and Economic Baselines

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BASELINES ARE NECESSARY FOR REGULATORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND SOCIAL IMPACTS STUDIES OF PROPOSED CHANGES IN FISHERIES REGULATIONS.

Social and economic baselines are very important to management entities such as the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. In partnership with the Council, the Board has funded two major baseline studies.

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Socio-Economic Baseline for the Pribilof Islands

Project 528

IN THE PRIBILOF ISLANDS, THE BOARD FUNDED A STUDY to produce baseline information against which future change could be measured. Project 528 responded to information gaps identified by the Pribilof Islands Collaborative (PIC), a working group that had been working to address a series of Bering Sea fishery and marine resource management issues in a proactive and collaborative setting.

The PIC identified knowledge gaps, such as the value of halibut and other Bering Sea fisheries to the region and the Pribilofs, impacts of changes in fisheries on the communities, history of local marine stewardship, and economic importance of substance harvest of halibut, fur seals, and other resources. Researchers gathered key information from local and governmental organizations and combined it with data from on-island surveys to create a comprehensive socioeconomic baseline for the Pribilofs.

The study showed that while both St. George and St. Paul are fishing communities, fisheries have played a lesser role in recent years. Fishery-related revenues and employment are declining but halibut fisheries remain very important. Subsistence harvests are an important source of community sustenance and culture, and contribute to the communities' sense of health and well-being. The economy of St. Paul has suffered substantially in the last few years but appears to be stabilizing, while the future of St. George appears to be more uncertain. A variety of capital investments and

infrastructure projects have helped create jobs and income, but employment by the City of St. George has dropped sharply and it is unlikely that capital projects will continue indefinitely. Fish processing and ecotourism offer some promise of sustainable economic activity, but other sources of employment and income are likely to be needed as well. One conclusion from both the data and anecdotal evidence was the importance of economic diversification to the long-term health of both communities. Finally, the research showed that while similarities exist between the two communities, they are certainly not identical and changes or perceived changes may impact them differently.



Community meeting at St. Paul.

Astrid Scholz



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Community Dependence on Fisheries

Projects 318, 640

PROJECTS 318 AND 640 BOTH FOCUSED ON SOCIAL and economic information that demonstrates the engagement and dependence on fisheries resources of Unalaska, Akutan, King Cove, Kodiak, Adak, Sand Point, and St. Paul and St. George on the Pribilof Islands. The studies described the harvesting and processing sectors in each community as well as support services. Data included numbers and size of fishing vessels, numbers of permit holders by fishery, catch and earnings data, crewmember information, quantitative assessment of processing activities, and estimates of the importance of fishery-related revenue to the municipal revenue for each community. For example, fishery-related revenues accounted for 41-47% of total revenues for Unalaska, and 52% for Kodiak, suggesting that managers must heavily weigh impacts of changes in fishing regulations on these communities.



Community fishing at St. Paul Island

Mike Downs



St. Paul in the Pribilof Islands in the Bering Sea.

Mike Downs