

FACT SHEET 4 EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

...cultivating an atmosphere of information sharing and education within the diverse communities.

Environment of learning

Since inception, BSFA has had the unique opportunity in western Alaska not only to pursue cooperative research and discovery, but to cultivate an atmosphere of information sharing and education within the diverse communities. Important efforts have been launched in Alaska which will go a long way if the information produced by those efforts is effectively disseminated and understood by everyone. Over the past 3 decades, BSFA has published nearly 60 widely-distributed newsletters. What began as the *Bering Sea Fisherman*, a newspaper with a circulation of 1,500, has expanded into a program dedicated to fishery awareness, information and responsibility.

What is FAIR?

Bering Sea Fishermen's Association endeavors to build greater awareness and support for the sustainable management of marine and freshwater fisheries and their environments. In doing so, BSFA launched "Fisheries Awareness, Information, and Responsibility" (FAIR) as a way to engage communications among scientists, policy-makers, non-governmental

organizations, fishermen, and rural Alaskan people. FAIR unites a coalition of individuals and groups with a stake in the sustainable management of Alaska's fisheries. The primary goals of FAIR are to:

- Share information across regional borders;
- Advocate for expanded sharing of research findings and their implications; and
- Promote the sustainable livelihood of local fishing communities.

Spreading the word

Starting with the first *FAIR Advocate* newsletter in March 2008, BSFA has been proactive in efforts to engage rural western Alaskans in discussions about their region's fishery resources through the dissemination of the *FAIR Advocate* newsletter to over 30,000 mailboxes within western Alaska. The topics covered by each newsletter are intended to



Giving subsistence and commercial fishermen a voice in the sustainability & development of Bering Sea and western Alaska fishery resources.

Bering Sea Fishermen's Association

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BSFA

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bring awareness to recent policy decisions, spark local discussions and garner feedback on those issues, and to empower rural residents to participate in the decisions that affect them.

A rural perspective

Much has been done to better understand the mechanisms behind the abundance within the Bering Sea habitat, while considering the stakeholders who rely upon its bounty, and managing the whole as a unified ecosystem. Much more can be learned from the residents whose combined local traditional knowledge spans thousands of years. In spite of complex community and management dynamics, BSFA believes it is possible to establish a united charge for addressing

the many threats to the Bering Sea ecosystem. BSFA does this by raising public awareness, ensuring a rural Alaskan perspective at every possible level of involvement, and monitoring the full range of fisheries activities.

For decades, BSFA has been bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders to work with existing agencies to focus on long-term understanding, and encourage discussions about the potential changes we may need to employ as a result of continued ecological distress. BSFA believes the approach to sharing knowledge through outreach and education will cultivate sustainability throughout the community: locally, nationally and perhaps globally.

Supporting sustainability

BSFA strives to bring greater attention to the importance of sustainable fisheries and the need to understand and manage the ecosystem as a unified whole. BSFA also continues to identify and encourage meritorious research projects that promote the protection of fisheries habitat as well as improve the livelihoods of local communities. The more we know, and the more we share, the better equipped our communities will be to nurture growth and adapt to change. 🌊



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Learn more about FAIR at <http://fair.bsfaak.org>

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