

Each full time fishing job in Alaska creates 13.5 jobs in lower 48

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One of the striking conclusions from the NOAA report 'Fisheries Economics of the US' for 2012 is just how valuable each full time equivalent fishing job actually is to the national economy. (See [NOAA Economic report shows Commercial Fishery Values dwarf that of recreational sector](#) - April 30th)

In Alaska, there are approximately 16,500 full time equivalent fish harvesting jobs, meaning captain and crew. The total number is higher - but not all fisheries are conducted year round; so this number is what the McDowell group estimated as the full time equivalent harvesting jobs in Alaska.

Alaska produces about 33% of the total value of all US fisheries (including imports). By volume, Alaska is larger, but because of high value of East and Gulf coast species like lobster, scallops and shrimp, by value Alaska's share is lower.

But in fisheries economics, it is value that counts.

The NOAA report highlighted national employment in the US seafood industry at 1.27 million people, which includes harvesting, processing, wholesale, import/export and retail seafood sales.

The report did not break out the national employment categories, except to highlight that retail direct sales of seafood accounted for the largest number of jobs, around 610,000. Add to these the wholesale and distribution jobs - another 57,000 jobs, but excluding importers, harvesters, processors, equipment suppliers and others, we can conservatively calculate that 667,000 people make their living in the US directly selling seafood to wholesale or retail consumers.

With Alaska representing about 1/3 of the total value of US edible seafood (including imports), it is a simple calculation to show that the 16,500 full time harvesting jobs in Alaska support 1/3 of this seafood sales force, or around 220,000 people. This means that each full time Alaskan harvesting job supports 13.3 full time jobs in the lower 48.

This is likely a conservative estimate, but the point of this comparison is to show just how much more valuable to the nation each Alaskan commercial fishing job is than the equivalent value of a recreational fishing job.

The basic difference is that a recreational fishing job provides an experience, while a commercial fishing job provides actual goods and services that are highly valued inputs into a national distribution chain.

As mentioned in one of our [letters](#) today, even the gross value of the recreational sector is highly inflated, as about 80% of the value comes from sales of boats and engines, of which only a portion are actually used for recreational fishing.

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