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Social and natural science integration in the Bering Sea Project: an economist's perspective

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Abstract

One of the largest interdisciplinary projects conducted to date that was focused on climate change and the marine environment was the Bering Sea Project, which combined the Bering Sea Ecosystem Study (BEST) and Bering Sea Integrated Ecosystem Research Program (BSIERP). The intent of the Bering Sea Project was to increase knowledge across a wide range of disciplines to enable us to collectively better understand and make predictions about the impacts of climate change on the Bering Sea ecosystem. The project included over 100 principal investigators and lasted approximately seven years from conception to the completion of retrospective studies. Social science and economics were included in several areas of the Bering Sea Project, from local traditional knowledge, to integrated ecosystem models, to econometric analyses of large commercial fisheries. We discuss the initial manner in which the economics elements of the Project were developed, challenges that arose, and how the economics components of the project evolved in light of changes and findings from other elements of the project. Finally, we discuss the lessons learned from this project in the including of economics in large interdisciplinary projects and how economics is being included in a new follow-up project being implemented in Alaska.

Keywords: Interdisciplinary research, Bering Sea, fisheries economics.

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