

Lloyd Warns Fisheries May Take Brunt of Coral Conservation

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

In the decades to come, a potentially endangered species may have a significant impact on Alaska's fisheries. Denby Lloyd is a Kodiak fishery advisor and a former member of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. He spoke during a joint Kodiak Island Borough Assembly and Kodiak City Council work session last night about statewide fisheries and explained upcoming agenda items for the fishery management council's October meeting, one of which will be a push to protect cold water corals.

-- (Endangered Coral 1 :20 "There will also be a new item on the agenda, and this has great potential in the future to affect a lot of fisheries in the gulf and in the Bering Sea and in the Aleutian Islands. And that is a petition by the Center for Biological Diversity to have the federal government list cold water deep sea corals as either threatened or endangered under the endangered species act.")

Lloyd said global warming is considered a major cause for the decline.

-- (Endangered Coral 2 : 21 "While there's no fishery for coral per say, the brunt of the petition argues that climate change, global warming, ocean acidification and the impacts of fishing activities all threaten the corals themselves and their ability to maintain their habitat, which they actually are habitat for other fisheries as well.")

Lloyd said the issue isn't urgent just yet, but much like Alaska has seen with other species in the past, it has the potential to become a significant problem.

-- (Endangered Coral 3 : 49 "I and a number of industry observers see this as having the same potential in out years as stellar sea lions initially had in the early nineties where it was speculative, and a side issue that soon became an extremely major issue and had dramatic impacts on the fishery. The fact

that these corals, they're in the Bering Sea canyons, they're in the Aleutian Islands, they're in the Gulf Sea mounts, they're in a variety of areas that as yet have not had much restriction of fishing activities other than some essential fish habitat declared out in the Aleutians. There is great potential here that if the agencies are persuaded, that in the next, I think people are projecting 50 years, the acid environment the temperature environment is going to impact corals to the point of making them threatened or endangered. ”)

Global warming, climate change and ocean acidification are not easy culprits apprehend, which Lloyd says could mean the federal government may go after fisheries as the only tangible cause.

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(Endangered Coral 4 : 31 “The only thing other than climate change that the federal government could control would be fishing activity. And it's very similar to the results of the Fish and Wildlife service having declared polar bears as threatened. The cause of that was labeled as climate change, but the only thing that could be controlled was immediate human activity and therefore hunting and import of trophies and things like that for polar bears were the way the federal government exerted control. In this case it's probably going to be fishing activity that is going to be the outlet for control if corals are declared threatened or endangered. ”)

While there are still a lot of unknowns, and it isn't even clear if corals will in fact be listed as endangered, Lloyd said the management council will take a hard look the issue during their October meeting in Anchorage. The full agenda for that meeting was released yesterday. ###

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