

Walmart Commits to Alaska Salmon

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Mike Mason/KDLG

Walmart announced Friday that they will continue to stock salmon products from most of the large seafood processors that operate in Alaska.

Previously Walmart had announced that they would only accept salmon products that carry the Marine Stewardship Council label of sustainability.

Since most of the large seafood processors that operate in Alaska withdrew their support for MSC that left most of the salmon from Alaska out of the loop to be sold by Walmart.

The processors withdrew their support for MSC in favor of a competing sustainability label sponsored by the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute, which is the seafood marketing arm of the state of Alaska.

David Baskin is Walmart's Vice President of Meat and Seafood.

In a blog post Friday he outlined the steps taken to make sure that the ASMI sponsored Responsible Fisheries Management program meets Walmart's sustainability guidelines.

He then noted that Walmart has proudly sourced seafood from the state of Alaska for many years, and under the newly revised sustainable sourcing policy, Walmart will continue to do so.

That's good news for U.S. Senator Mark Begich who has been working on the issue for months and event held a Senate hearing last year that featured Walmart executives and representatives of the Alaska seafood industry.

In the short statement issued on Friday, Walmart's David Baskin added that Walmart is excited that ASMI is working with Walmart to show how the Responsible Fisheries Management program meets the principles for credible fishery management put together by the Sustainability Consortium.

Walmart tasked the Consortium with examining the company's sustainable seafood purchasing policies.

ASMIS's communication Manager Tyson Fick says the organization is pleased the products made with salmon from Alaska will be available from the largest supplier of groceries in the United States.

Alaska's other U.S. Senator, Lisa Murkowski, is also pleased with Friday's decision by Walmart.

The Senator issued a statement noting that the announcement by Walmart is clear vindications of Alaska's superior sustainable management

practices.

She said that it's a significant step in confirming wild Alaska seafood as the benchmark for sustainability. Senator Begich believes that other retailers and wholesalers that have been reliant on the MSC label will now take Walmart's lead and recognize the ASMI sponsored RFM program.

Alaska Governor Sean Parnell has been working on this issue for months and he issued a statement Friday labeling Walmart's decision as great news. He further remarked that maintaining choice in seafood sustainability certifications is important to the State of Alaska and the fishing industry, and Walmart's decision is a major step in the right direction.