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Season Opens Today in the Largest Commercial Fishery in the US Seattle fishing fleets are a model for others around the world

Seattle, WA - January 20, 2006 – The largest commercial fishery in the US and largest food-fishery in the world opens its 2006 season today as it marks its one year anniversary of being awarded certification as sustainable and well-managed. The Puget Sound region is the homeport for many of the fishing vessels participating in the \$800 million Alaska pollock fishery off Alaska's coast. Half of the annual catch will be processed, packaged and frozen at sea by sophisticated vessels that produce a high-quality, affordable and sustainable whitefish product enjoyed around the world. Alaska pollock is commonly consumed as fish fillets, fish sticks, fish sandwiches or *surimi* products such as imitation crab.

Alaska pollock is an abundant resource and the fishery has long been viewed as one the best-managed fisheries in the world. The sustainability of the fishery was re-confirmed one year ago, when an extensive, independent scientific review resulted in the fishery becoming one of a dozen fisheries worldwide to be awarded certification under the international Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) program for sustainable fisheries. The MSC was co-founded by the World Wildlife Fund and Unilever in the mid-1990s.

"The Alaska pollock resource is at a historically high level of abundance," said Kevin C. Duffy, executive director of the At-sea Processors Association (APA). "This year, more than three billion pounds of pollock will be sustainably harvested and that will account by weight for about one-third of all fish landed in the U.S. this year."

The Alaska pollock fishery is big business for the Puget Sound region, particularly Seattle. Not only is much of the fishing fleet home-ported here, but there is a sizable network of support businesses. Local seafood companies supply their products to markets around the world from North America to Europe and Asia. The sustainability designation is increasing pollock visibility in markets such as Europe where there is a demonstrated market for eco-labeled fish products.

The Unilever Corporation, known for its Birdseye and Iglo brands of fish products, is one of the world's largest fish buyers and more than half of its supplies are Alaska pollock. The company reports German consumers were the first in Europe to be able to buy fish sticks made from sustainable Alaskan pollock under the Iglo brand and eco-labeled Alaska pollock is now available in other European countries as well.

"This certification is very good news for the protection of fish stocks in general, and good news for the ever-increasing number of discerning consumers who want to choose sustainable fish for their families," says Dierk Peters, the International Marketing Manager, Sustainability Initiatives, Unilever/Frozen Foods Europe.

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About the At-sea Processors Association (APA) - APA represents U.S. catcher/processor vessels that participate primarily in the sustainably managed Alaska pollock and west coast Pacific whiting fisheries. Both fisheries are among the largest food fisheries in the world; the Alaska pollock fishery alone accounts for 30 percent by weight of all fish landed in the U.S. annually. Processing our catch at sea allows us to produce the highest quality seafood products. Visit www.atsea.org for more information.

Note to editors: Unilever's Dierk Peters and Rupert Howes, the Chief Executive of the MSC will be in Seattle the week of January 30th. They are available to speak with the media. Please contact Karen Tarica at 206.369.0855 or email LN89@aol.com to reserve time with them in person or via telephone. Kevin Duffy and Jim Gilmore of APA, which is based at Fisherman's Terminal in Seattle, are also available.

For photos and APA & MSC logos, please contact Karen Tarica at 206.369.0855 or LN89@aol.com.