

ARCTIC STORM:

# GIVING BACK TO THE SEA

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# GIVING BACK TO THE SEA

**Arctic Storm President Doug Christensen discusses how his company catches and processes fish**

**Written by Michaela McNamara & Produced by Jordan Fowler**

**S**eattle-based Arctic Storm not only oversees the fishing and processing of four fishing vessels operating off the coast of Alaska and the West Coast—it is a company that strongly believes and heavily invests in the conservation of the ocean and its resources.

Arctic Storm's vessels—the Arctic Storm, Arctic Fjord, Sea Storm and Neahkanie—are all trawlers that catch pollock and whiting in two fisheries that have been certified sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council.

The company harvests, processes, packages and freezes its catch before distributing its products around the world, specifically North America, Europe and Asia. Some of those food products include fillets, surimi and fish roe, while fish meal and fish oil is produced from inedible parts of the fish.

## **RATIONAL FISHERIES LEAD TO INNOVATION**

The vessels are members of fishery cooperatives that allocate catch shares among their members who are committed to the conservation and utilization of marine resources. A far cry from the wasteful Olympic-style fishery in which vessels race to outpace their competitors in the harvest of fish, a rational harvesting arrangement that allocates catch shares to fishing participants allows vessels to slow down production and maximize the amount of food produced per pound of fish harvested.

The rationalized fishery allows Arctic Storm and other participants an opportunity to improve the quality of the harvest and practice innovation. It allows them to increase utilization of the resources by increasing the recovery rate and producing more products for consumers. And in



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Pacific Blends Limited, established in January of 2002, is a custom dry-blending house serving the meat, poultry, dairy, seafood and snack industries.

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slowing harvest rates, participants can take the time to avoid the incidental catch of non-target species, known as bycatch.

Arctic Storm President Doug Christensen says, "There's a strong focus on continual innovation on what we do with our fish. We're constantly trying to figure out ways to make more products with the same amount of fish. By doing so, we've increased our fishmeal output, added fish oil output and added high recovery lines that increase our frozen human consumption food output."

## TURNING INNOVATION INTO CONSERVATION

This rationalized harvesting arrangement allows industry participants the time to create innovative techniques. "We're assessing new technology continuously. We do a lot of work with equipment

**"Harvesting in a certified sustainable manner will allow this fishery to last for many generations to come."**

Doug Christensen, President

that was employed in other industries that we're finding great applications for in fish production," Christensen says.

For instance, decanters are used for the recovery of fish meal and fish oil, which is then utilized onboard the vessels to fuel power generators, boilers and equipment. On the harvesting side, Arctic Storm has employed devices in nets that exclude species of fish that it is not targeting. This results in the catch of over 99 percent target fish, making for a very clean fishery.

With the price of fuel being high in recent couple years, the company has invested in conservation of diesel fuel. "Recently, we invested in power generation in our vessels. We're just doing things in a more fuel efficient manner," Christensen says.

The company has gone from producing fresh water each day through a heat-generated evaporation technique to a reverse osmosis process that requires pushing salt water through smaller filters until it is fresh. Propeller blades and engine arrangements have also been changed to conserve fuel.

## SUSTAINABILITY & STEWARDSHIP

In 2005 the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certified the North Pacific pollock fishery as sustainable and awarded its valued eco-label to products produced from that fishery. In 2010 the west coast whiting fishery was also awarded the MSC eco-label. The MSC was formed by the world's largest environmental organization, the World Wildlife Fund, as an independent

### PACIFIC BLENDS

Pacific Blends provides blended ingredients to Arctic Storm for its surimi processing activities. Key to the relationship is just in time ingredient supply and a superior logistics support system to the vessels.

The company operates a modern, HACCP recognized, Kosher certified production facility in Port Coquitlam, B.C. strategically located near the US border, container and rail terminals and a major sugar refinery. State of the art ribbon blenders and high speed packaging equipment ensure efficient production and rapid response to short lead time orders. Products are subjected to screen classification, magnetic inspection and final package metal detection. A positive hold system, full lot tracking and complete product analysis prior to shipping guarantee product safety.

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organization that identifies the best environmental choice in seafood for consumers. The MSC, a group highly valued by the industry and consumers like, has evaluated the fishery and techniques for harvesting, and certified it as sustainable. All Arctic Storm pollock and whiting products are MSC certified. Christensen says, "Harvesting in a certified sustainable manner will allow this fishery to last for many generations to come. That's the hallmark of our sustainability."

Arctic Storm also participates in the Sea Share program, which has donated more than 100 million seafood meals to local and national food assistance programs. "This is the seafood industry's answer to hunger in America. We participate by donating high quality frozen seafood into the Sea Share program which then is further processed and distributed through homeless shelters," Christensen says.

Arctic Storm is a founding member of the Marine Conservation Alliance, an organization

formed by fishing industry trade associations and communities in North Pacific to identify practical solutions for conservation issues.

"The benefit of the MCA is that we are very proactive in trying to find solutions that will allow us to both operate profitably in the fishery and allow sustainability, which is our long-term interest," Christensen says.

### **EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION**

The company strives to provide an innovative work platform so its employees feel challenged. "We really involve all of our employees in the management and operation process and make sure they are really invested in it. It's a collaborative effort into innovation and the use of state-of-the-art technology that we have on-board," Christensen says. He also holds a roundtable discussion each Tuesday morning over coffee with crewmembers in order to



garner participation and collaboration.

He adds, "Arctic Storm goes as far as it possibly can to make sure our platforms are in top condition. We've reinvested tens of millions of dollars into these vessels to make sure they are the safest on the sea. We have training programs for our crew. The company has a very safe workplace and a great safety record on all of its vessels."

### GOING FORWARD

"The business is healthy and growing. The fishery is healthy and growing, and the human population is growing. There is an ever increasing demand for seafood products. Protein from the ocean is very healthy and we're seeing an increased demand from the health-improved type of living around the globe" Christensen says. "We've been blessed with an extremely well-managed fishery, a healthy stock and a product that is in-demand." ■

## FACTS AT A GLANCE

ARCTIC  STORM

**COMPANY NAME:** Arctic Storm

**PRESIDENT:** Doug Christensen

**OPERATIONS:** Fish production

**ESTABLISHED:** 1986

**EMPLOYEES:** 400

**REVENUE:** \$90 million

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