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## Planning for a Salmon Fishery during the Coronavirus Pandemic

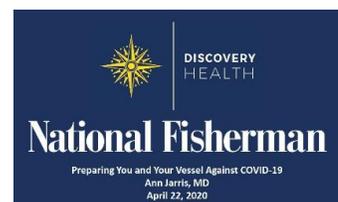
By AEB Staff

### **Mandate 17**

On April 23<sup>rd</sup>, Governor Dunleavy issued **Health Mandate 17: Protective Measures for Independent Commercial Fishing Vessels**, to go into effect today, April 24<sup>th</sup>. This mandate applies to all catcher and tender vessels not under another company plan and relieves independent commercial fishing vessels from submitting a Community/Workforce Protective Plan under Mandates 10 and 12. All [17 of the COVID-19 Health Mandates](#) were issued under authority of the Public Health Disaster Emergency Declaration signed March 11 by Alaska Governor Dunleavy. The core of Mandate 17 is laid out in Appendix 1 [the Alaska Protective Plan for Commercial Fishing Vessels](#). The captain of each vessel must sign the [Acknowledgement Form](#) indicating that the vessel will comply with the very stringent protective measures and procedures related to the vessel and crew. While the independent vessel captain and crew won't have to file a plan under Mandate 10: *International and Interstate Travel – Order for Self-Quarantine*, or Mandate 12: *Intrastate Travel*, fishermen still need to adhere to these mandates. Fishermen will also need to abide by additional rules that may be instituted locally by communities and processors.

### **Webinars**

National Fisherman sponsored a webinar entitled [Developing Vessel Procedures and Performing Symptomatic Crew Assessment in the Midst of COVID-19](#) on April 22nd, foreshadowing the expected SOA COVID-19 Health Mandate 17, which was issued the following day. Ann Jarris, MD, co-founder of Discovery Health, presented the instructional talk. The AEB Natural Resources Department highly recommends all Area M fishermen watch the recording of this webinar, found at the link above.



UFA is hosting a webinar next Wednesday, April 29th, at 10 a.m. titled *Understanding Health Mandate 017: Protective Measures for Independent Commercial Fishing Vessels*. This webinar to help clarify Health Mandate



17 is free, but requires [registration](#). The webinar will be moderated by Frances Leach, Executive Director for United Fishermen of Alaska. Panelists will include:

- John Moller, Commercial Fisheries Policy Advisor to Governor Dunleavy
- Tom Koloski, Alaska Unified Command, Critical Infrastructure Branch
- Charles Pelton, Alaska Unified Command, Medical Services Branch
- Jason Wiard, Division of Environmental Conservation, Food Safety & Sanitation

### **AEB Town Hall**

The Aleutians East Borough held an April 15<sup>th</sup> Town Hall for fishery stakeholders, including fishermen, processors, community leaders and local medical providers dubbed *Planning a Summer Salmon Season Fishery in the AEB Amid COVID-19 Concerns*. The teleconference town hall was broadcast on KSDP. Radio, listeners and stakeholders submitted questions before and during the event.

The format of the Town Hall was straightforward. Each invited agency or organization had an opportunity to talk about their plans in the works for the upcoming salmon fishery, under the current threat to communities and individuals from the highly contagious COVID-19 virus. Fishermen and other stakeholders had opportunities to submit questions prior to the meeting and during the event.

These organizations gave short presentations or answered questions during the Town Hall: Eastern Aleutians Tribes, Alaska Department of Fish & Game, Pacific Seafood Processors Association, Trident Seafoods, Peter Pan Seafoods, Silver Bay Seafoods, City of Sand Point, City of King Cove, City of False Pass, City of Akutan, City of Cold Bay, Nelson Lagoon Village, Concerned Area M Fishermen, Area M Seiners Association and the Aleutians East Borough.

Paul Mueller, CEO of Eastern Aleutian Tribes, discussed the organization's ability for COVID-19 testing and testing machines already deployed to several communities, emphasizing that the best protection against the spread of the virus will be the mandated 14-day quarantine protocol for travelers, including fishermen and processing workers. Mueller said practicing social distancing is also very important.

Forrest Bowers, Nick Sagalkin and area salmon managers Lisa Fox and Bob Murphy all spoke to ADFG plans for the season. The department is planning for a salmon season with minimal disruption. Staff coming into communities will comply with the health mandates including quarantines, social distancing and will conduct very limited in-person interaction in communities.

Nicole Kimball, Vice-President of Pacific Seafood Processors Association, gave an overall view of processor plans – each processor has developed plans and submitted them to the state for review. Processor plans are continuously being updated and being shared with communities. The processors: Trident, Silver Bay and Peter Pan – each noted their plans to have medical personnel and additional security on staff at each plant for the

season. Enforcement for employees that violate protocols include termination of employment.

Mayors Glen Gardner of Sand Point, Henry Mack of King Cove and Nikki Hoblet of False Pass, all had similar plans for incoming vessels to register with the harbor and to follow 14-day quarantine for all travelers to the communities. Each community is working closely with the local processors and there are some plans for call-in vessel deliveries by local stores. All communities are participating in weekly teleconferences hosted by the AEB. Nelson Lagoon will be coordinating boat launches from the community so that incoming fishermen can go directly to vessel quarantine. All Nelson Lagoon residents have been virus tested (negative) by EAT. Akutan Mayor Joe Bereskin stated they are also following the Mandates and the community is working with EAT to find potential quarantine spaces. Cold Bay is coordinating with processors and airlines, noting that all Cold Bay lodging is currently closed to travelers.

Representatives from Concerned Area M Fishermen (CAMF) and Area M Seiners Association were on the call to learn about the other organizations' plans and to gain information. Both groups response to a question was that if a crewman quits or gets fired, member vessels would be obligated to send them all the way home. The understanding of both groups is that returning terminated employees to the place of origin is a part of maritime law. Processor representatives stated they would have a similar policy.

Aleutians East Borough Mayor Alvin Osterback said the Borough has been holding teleconferences with the communities, Eastern Aleutian Tribes and processors. The Borough is in frequent discussions with several airlines that may help fill the void left by regional air carrier Ravn, who hit pause in a Chapter 11 filing. The Borough will support all the individual community plans and continue working to facilitate communication, noting that the Town Hall worked well to get the word out to all stakeholders at the same time. The Mayor thanked all the participants for their efforts during a challenging time. The full AEB fishery Town Hall has been archived by KSDP and is available for listening at: <http://apradio.org/mp3-aeb-fisheries-meeting-from-april-15th-2020>

The AEB Natural Resources Department is planning to host an Area M *salmon pre-season meeting* with ADFG for fishermen and processors, around the 20<sup>th</sup> of May. A full announcement and agenda for the pre-season meeting will be published soon in AEB Fish News.

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