



Agency Representatives Provide Information on Enforcement, Observer Program, Fish Tickets during Recent AEB Winter Fisheries Teleconference

The Aleutians East Borough's Natural Resources Department hosted a Winter Fisheries Teleconference on December 21st, which included the latest regulation changes and other important information for Area M fishermen from agency representatives, including ADF&G, NMFS, the Alaska Fisheries Science Center in Seattle, the North Pacific Observer Program and AIS providers. In case you missed it, here are some of the highlights:

Clarification on When Tender Trips End:

Brent Pristas from NOAA Fisheries Enforcement, based in Kodiak, kicked off the discussion explaining the rule about when a trip ends for commercial fishermen. He said last year, there was some confusion on that point.

“If you’re delivering Pacific cod to a tender, for example, as soon as you return to a port, whether it’s to get fuel or to go home to take a shower and spend the night, that trip ends as soon as you return to port,” Pristas said. “You need to log a new trip for ODDS (Observer Declare and Deploy System) purposes. I wanted to emphasize the tender delivery rule because it did cause problems last year, and we would like to get it resolved.”

Stat Areas:

Pristas said he also wanted to focus on making sure the stat (statistical) areas are correct on fish tickets.

“We have seen problems with incorrect stat areas, particularly if it crosses management areas or state versus federal,” he said. “We presume that the fish tickets are correct, and those are the starting points. So if you put down an incorrect fish ticket, it can lead to

some unpleasantness in the course of getting that resolved. Getting the correct information down the first time can save a lot of problems.”

Pristas clarified that a stat area is where the fish are harvested. He acknowledged that with trawling, it can be difficult to tell where the fish were harvested if a fisherman is crossing over multiple stat areas. Pristas said in that case, it’s important for fishermen to use their best judgement.

He said NOAA Fisheries Enforcement experienced problems several years ago in Kodiak when trawlers were crawling across a management line and retrieving gear, then reporting it in the second management area.

“What we were seeing in the past was crossing into another stat area by a tenth of a mile and 100 percent of the catch was being reported from the second stat area. It was very obvious that it was being done intentionally to take advantage of the quotas in the second area,” he said.

However, NOAA has confirmed with ADF&G that fish ticket stat areas are *where* the fish are harvested.

“We’re concerned about the guys fishing in federal waters that don’t have the proper permits or fishing in state waters without the state permits,” he said. “Those are the kinds of problems that we are seeing. I think it’s due to inattention or unintentional mistakes. However, we are looking at that area, and we’re presuming that the fish tickets are correct.”

VMS:

Pristas also emphasized the importance of fishermen getting their VMS (vessel monitoring system) units checked with NOAA Fisheries Enforcement. He said if anyone has any questions or concerns, fishermen are welcome to call his office to make sure they’re actually getting the correct position.

“We can help to trouble-shoot that and get it resolved, rather than having difficulties later during the season,” he said.

New Rule for Longline Pot Gear:

Krista Milani, NMFS Resource Management Specialist, based in Dutch Harbor, mentioned during the teleconference that she wanted to make sure everyone is aware that the rule allowing longline pot gear during the sablefish fishery in the Gulf of Alaska will go into effect in 2017.

“I encourage people who are interested in using the longline pot gear to make sure they understand all the new regulations that will surround that new rule,” she said.

Milani said she also wanted to remind fishermen that there will be a pot limit which will require pot tags.

“Once the rule is published, we will have forms online so people can complete them in order to get the pot tags,” she said.

GHLs for Pot Gear and Gig:

ADF&G Fishery Biologist III Nathaniel Nichols provided the GHLs (Guideline Harvest Level) for two gear types: 20.4 million pounds for pot gear and 3.6 million pounds for gig. Nichols said ADF&G will have tags and registration available for processors in Sand Point and in King Cove, as in past years.

Nichols added that ADF&G has had some successful and smooth seasons in past years, and he anticipates the same for 2017.

“We really appreciate all of the effort that goes into daily reporting throughout the fishery,” he said. “That’s our main goal for tracking harvests in-season. If you’re unable to make a report, we appreciate any effort you can make to relay it through another vessel in your area or through a processor or tender. Whichever method you use to get that to us, we appreciate.”

Parallel Registration:

Nichols reminded fishermen that ADF&G did away with parallel registrations last year.

“So if you’re planning on fishing inside the 3-mile line during the federal fishery, you don’t need to register with us (ADF&G),” he said.

In-Season Adjustment for Pollock and Pacific Cod:

Obren Davis, with NOAA’s Inseason Management for the Gulf of Alaska said most people are aware that the numbers are down for both Pacific cod and pollock in 2017. He said the new catch limits will be out soon, and as we move into the groundfish fisheries, NOAA will adjust pollock and Pacific cod TACS (total allowable catch) to the actual TACS recommended by the North Pacific Council earlier this month. Davis said the adjusted numbers for the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea Aleutian Islands will be coming out in bulletins during the next week or so.

Observer Program:

Glenn Campbell of the North Pacific Observer Program emphasized the importance of correctly declaring gear type and whether or not a fisherman is delivering to a tender or not.

Campbell said those two fields will determine which rate and outcome fishermen will get. He said there's a specific rate for trawl and tender delivery; trawl no tender; pot tender; pot no tender; longline tender and longline no tender.

“So it's really important before you begin your trip to have your ducks in a row and know where you're going,” Campbell said. “Let's say that you declare you're going to go pot fishing, and you are delivering to a tender, but that changes, and you know that before you leave. You need to cancel this trip and re-log it and put, ‘I'm not delivering to a tender.’ That will be really important in 2017 to have those two main fields: what gear type and whether you're delivering to a tender or not. That will determine the outcome of a selected trip.”

Finalized 2017 Annual Deployment Plan

NOAA Federal Director of the North Pacific Observer Program Chris Rilling said the 2017 annual deployment plan was presented to the North Pacific Federal Management Council earlier this month. Recently, it was finalized and is now available on the [Council web page](#).

“There have been some changes to the rates, so each year, we publish new deployment rates for partial coverage. The partial coverage category is based largely on how much funding is available to deploy observers to that fleet as well as the level of fishing effort. Observer deployment rates for hook and line will be 11 percent; 25 percent for tender hook and line; 4 percent for pot; 4 percent for tender delivering of pot; 18 percent for trawl and 14 percent for trawl delivering to tenders.

Rilling also mentioned that the Observer Program is working with the small hook and line suite on an electronic monitoring (EM) cooperative research project.

“We have 90 vessels that are participating in the EM selection pool this coming year, and they will be selected at a 30 percent rate in 2017. So they're going to have full EM systems installed on board and recording for the trip duration. They'll be logging trips with ODDS as well.

Rilling also stressed the importance of continuing to write trip numbers down when logging a trip.

“When you offload, either at a tender or at a shoreside plant, provide that ODDS trip number to the tender or to the processing facility so they can include it on the fish ticket,” he said.

Reminder for Captains to Log Trips:

AIS (the company that contracts with NMFS for the Observer Program) is reminding captains to log their trips when they’re ready to go.

Contact numbers for the call center:

855-747-6377

206-673-3338 (alternate number)

Otherwise, call coordinator Justine Duke at (907) 538-8082.

Campbell said it’s important for fishermen to know that 2016 trips cannot be carried over into 2017. He suggested doing some housekeeping of their ODDS trips in 2016 and make sure those trips are all properly closed out, cancelled or whatever applies for a particular situation. He suggested calling AIS or logging on to make sure fishermen are organized as we enter the new year.

Acoustic Surveys for stock assessment:

Chris Wilson of Midwater Assessment and Conservation Engineering - NOAA Alaska Fisheries Science Center in Seattle said he and research fisheries biologist Alex De Robertis have been involved with acoustic surveys in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and in the Gulf of Alaska for stock assessment purposes. Surveys have been conducted in the Shelikof areas since 1981 and in the Shumagins since 1994.

Wilson said they’ve been very successful at being in the Shumagins at the right time to do the Shumagin surveys. But the real quandary for them was that the Sanak fish seem to spawn quite a bit earlier than they do in the Shumagins. He said they figured this out after examining the stage and maturity of the ovaries in the adult female fish.

“We were getting a lot of fish further along in development than we were comfortable with, in terms of spawning,” he said.

Wilson said he and De Robertis believe the best solution would be to use innovative upward-looking echosounders that they developed in 2015. They plan to mount them on the seafloor. Wilson said they deployed them for the first time in Shelikoff in 2015. The

following year, they deployed these upward-looking trawl-resistant echosounders in Resurrection Bay.

“So we thought, why don’t we take these out and deploy them out in Sanak before the spawning season, leave them there and then recover them afterward?” Wilson said.

They deployed two of these echosounders in Sanak last November. They plan to recover them in April.

“So we’ll be able to get a time-series of basically the amount of pollock that move into the area. That will allow us to look at when that time series actually reaches a peak,” he said. “We’ll know when the fish are aggregated in the Sanak area, for the most part. We’ll be able to see when exactly we should be there with the ship to do the vessel survey of the Sanak area based on that information.”

Wilson said in past years, the research vessel, the Oscar Dyson, has been committed to several other projects in addition to the acoustic survey work, so they weren’t able to get it there earlier. Additionally, the ship typically gets repairs done during December and January. However, these echosounders could provide useful information as to whether that timeframe should be changed.

“We should be able to get a good idea as to when we should be doing that vessel survey,” Wilson said.

The NOAA Alaska Fisheries Science Center has distributed a [flyer](#) to the canneries and fishermen in Sand Point so people will have a thumbnail description of where two mooring locations are situated for the research. Wilson said the two locations are: North N 54° 42.606’ W 162° 37.872’. South N 56° 37.151’ W 162° 35.695’. Wilson said the trawl-resistant moorings have a footprint of about six feet long by 4 feet wide and extend off the bottom by about three feet.

“They look like a pyramid with the top cut off,” he said. “They’re designed so a trawl will go over the top of them as opposed to pulling them up, but that’s not guaranteed. So we’d really appreciate it if people fishing in the area bear this in mind and try to avoid hitting the bottom of these areas.”

AEB would like to thank [KSDP](#) for broadcasting this meeting live. If you’d like to listen to the archived version, you can find it at the following link:

<http://apradio.org/audio-national-marine-fisheries-informational-meeting-with-aeb-dec-21-2016/>

You are reading FISH NEWS, published quarterly by the Aleutians East Borough to help keep the lines of communication open among Alaska's commercial fishing interests. If you would like to have FISH NEWS delivered to you via e-mail subscription, send an e-mail message to ltanis@aeboro.org . For more information about our fisheries, our people, and our communities, please visit us at www.aleutianseast.org, www.aebfish.org and find us on Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/AleutiansEastBorough>

