

The Wheel Watch

a newsletter of the

Fishing Vessel Owners' Association
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Dear Longliner and Sustaining Sponsors:

This newsletter will bring you up-to-date on actions at the recent North Pacific Management Council meeting, November Pacific Council meeting, IPHC, and Washington, D.C. activities.

****IPHC****

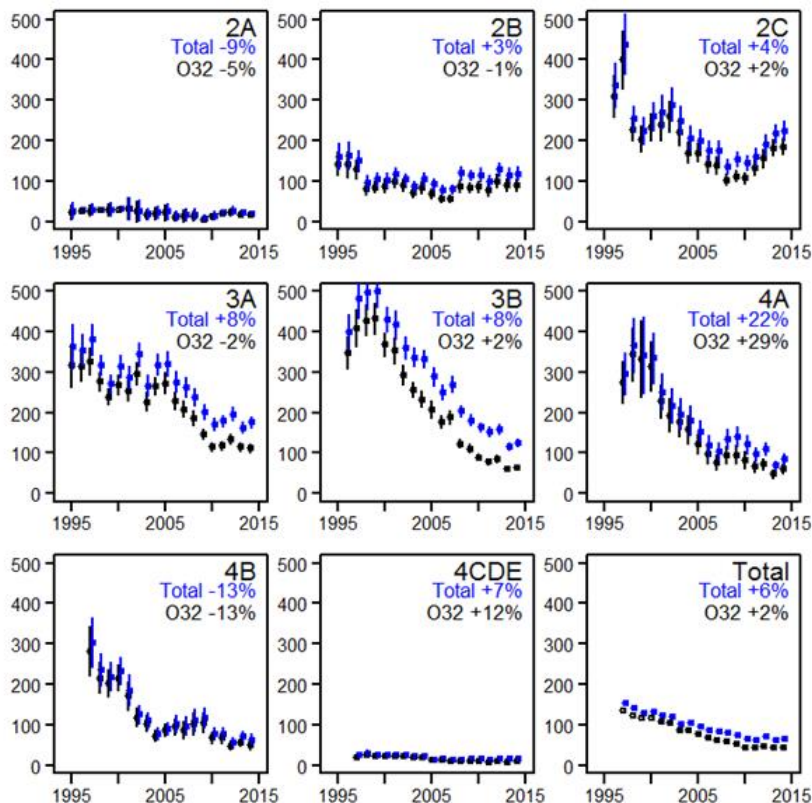
Below are 2015 blue line recommended harvest amounts. Areas 2A, 2C, 3A, and 4A all show signs of improvement over 2014.

FCEY Comparison

| | 2A | 2B | 2C | 3A | 3B | 4A | 4B | 4CDE | Total |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| 2014 Blue Line | 0.72 | 4.98 | 4.16 | 9.43 | 2.84 | 0.85 | 0.82 | 0.64 | 24.45 |
| 2014 Adopted | 0.96 | 6.85 | 4.16 | 9.43 | 2.84 | 0.85 | 1.14 | 1.29 | 27.52 |
| 2015 Blue Line | 0.75 | 4.96 | 4.30 | 10.12 | 2.46 | 1.35 | 0.72 | 0.37 | 25.02 |

As you are well aware, last year we had a 33% reduction in both 3A and 3B and a 42% reduction in 4A. 4B was down 22% and 4CDE was down 35%. Perhaps these results indicate we have hit bottom and can start working our way back up.

Survey Numbers-Per-Unit-Effort

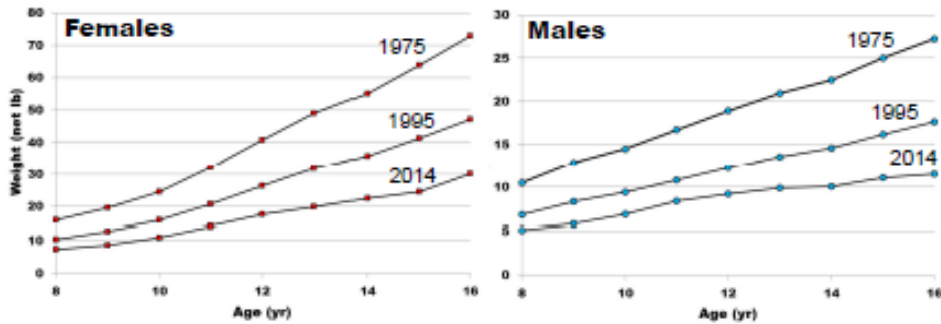


Summary of Survey & Log Books

| | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| | 2A | 2B | 2C | 3A | 3B | 4A | 4B | 4CDE | Total |
| WPUE 2014 Survey Results Total | -9% | +3% | +4% | +8% | +8% | +22% | -13% | +7% | +6% |
| WPUE over 32" | -5% | -1% | +2% | -2% | +2% | +29% | -13% | +12% | +2% |
| Number/unit of effort total | -14% | +10% | +6% | +16% | +11% | +20% | -13% | +2% | +9% |
| Number/unit of effort over 32" | -8% | +0% | +2% | -3% | +5% | +37% | -10% | +15% | +3% |
| Commercial Log books | +5% | +28% | +17% | -3% | -11% | -16% | +32% | +6% | +7% |

One of the important features of the resource is weight at age. As you can see, the weight at age of females and males is over half of what a fish weighed back in 1975. This has reduced the spawning biomass size from which your harvest amounts are generated. However, one positive note is that spawning biomass, even with the reduced weight at age, increases from 2013 to 2014 from 197 Milbs to 209 Milbs.

Coastwide mean weight-at-age



Recent removals (M lb)

| Year | Landings | Wastage | Sport | Pers./ Sub. | Bycatch | Total |
|------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|---------|-------|
| 2010 | 49.72 | 3.21 | 7.85 | 1.24 | 10.30 | 72.36 |
| 2011 | 39.51 | 2.46 | 7.10 | 1.14 | 9.42 | 59.64 |
| 2012 | 31.99 | 1.67 | 6.77 | 1.14 | 10.10 | 51.67 |
| 2013 | 29.04 | 1.43 | 7.59 | 1.14 | 8.84 | 48.04 |
| 2014 | 23.69 | 1.29 | 7.08 | 1.14 | 9.32 | 42.51 |

5-yr change: -52% -60% -10% -8% -10% -41%

****North Pacific Council****

There was plenty of action during the December Council Meeting in Anchorage. I want to thank John Crowley, who sits on the Advisory Panel, and Paul Clampitt for their participation at this difficult meeting.

Pots for Sablefish. The following was included in the Council's motion on how to structure the use of pots for sablefish.

Alternate 2. Allow the use of pot longline gear in the GOA sablefish IFQ fishery (the Council can select any or all GOA areas: WGOA, CGOA, WY, or SEO).

*Element 1. Limit of 60 to 400 pots (different pot limits can be selected for each area).
Option 1: Require identification tags for each pot.

*Element 2. Gear retrieval

Option 1. Require the location of pots set, left or lost on the grounds to be submitted to an electronic database when in the water.

Option 2. Gear cannot be left more than seven days without being moved.

*Element 3. Gear specifications

Require both ends of the sablefish pot longline set to be marked with buoys and/or flagpoles and transponders that work with AIS or an equivalent system.

*Element 4. Retention of incidentally caught halibut.

Allow the retention of halibut caught incidentally in sablefish pots, provided the sablefish IFQ holder also holds sufficient halibut IFQ/MRA – not MRA.

This proposal to have no "minimum retainable amount (MRA) would allow pots to be used for halibut. This will need to be addressed by the IPHC for any minimum retainable amount.

The Council originally had this issue scheduled for February as a final action. This will be moved to a final vote in April.

Changing the Vessel Cap. The Council received a Scoping Report to change vessel use caps for halibut and A class sablefish. This proposal was augmented with a separate proposal to create a floor in the vessel IFQ Cap for halibut IFQ. After a lengthy discussion on the appropriate scope and potential distribution of benefits of action, the Council chose to take **no action** on this issue.

Charter Halibut. The first year of the catch sharing program between Charter and Commercial fishing resulted in Area 2C charter exceeding their allocation by a little over 100,000 lbs., and Area 3A charter exceeding their harvest by 300,000 lbs.

| | Sector | No. of Fish | Average Weight | Yield in Millions lbs. |
|---------|-------------|-------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Area 2C | Charter | 67,942 | 12.14 | .825 |
| | Non charter | 64,143 | 17.37 | 1.114 |
| | | 132,085 | 14.68 | 1.940 |
| Area 3A | Charter | 181,947 | 11.76 | 2.139 |
| | Non charter | 122,663 | 11.84 | 1.452 |
| | | 304,610 | 11.79 | 3.591 |

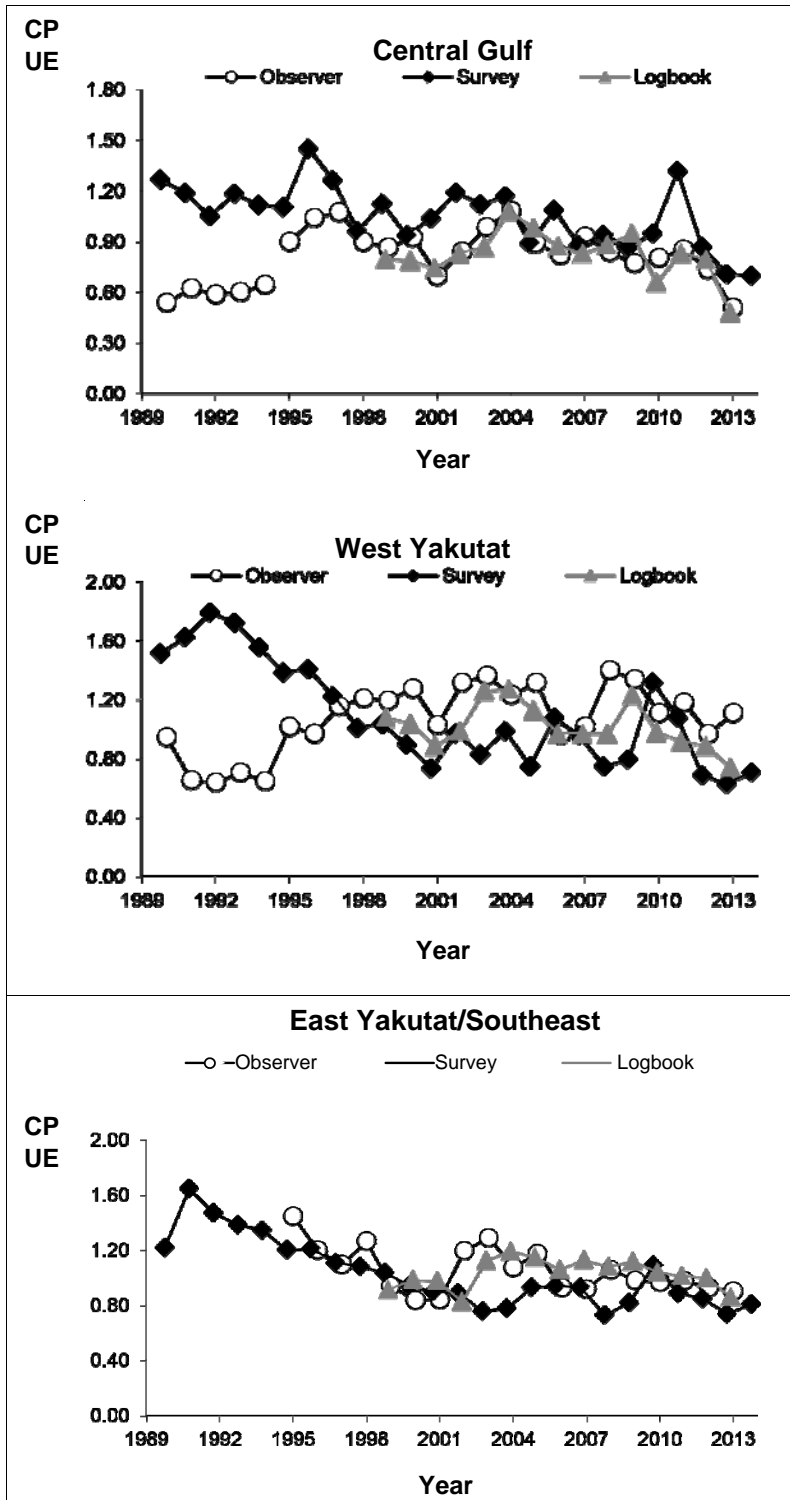
The Council, in order to slow up the charter harvest, imposed in Area 2C a one-fish bag limit and a reverse slot limit. In 3A, the charters will have a 2 fish limit, one trip per day, a prohibition of fishing on Thursday, June 15 – August 31, and a second fish slot size limit.

Sablefish. The Council adopted the following sablefish harvest limits and apportionments. The scientists recommended a .5% reduction across all areas. At the end of 2013, the projection for the 2015 season was a 13% reduction. The positive CPUE results from the 2014 survey averted a 13% reduction.

| Area | 2014 ABC | Standard Apportionment For 2015 ABC | Recommended fixed apportionment for 2015 ABC* | Difference from 2014 |
|---------------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| Total | 13,722 | 13,657 | 13,657 | -0.5% |
| Bering Sea | 1,339 | 2,210 | 1,333 | -0.5% |
| Aleutians | 1,811 | 1,840 | 1,802 | -0.5% |
| Gulf of Alaska (subtotal) | 10,572 | 9,607 | 10,522 | -0.5% |
| Western | 1,480 | 1,445 | 1,473 | -0.5% |
| Central | 4,681 | 3,975 | 4,658 | -0.5% |
| W. Yakutat** | 1,574 | 1,428 | 1,567 | -0.5% |
| E. Yak./ Southeast** | 2,837 | 2,759 | 2,823 | -0.5% |

*Fixed at the 2012 assessment apportionment proportions (Hanselman et al. 2012). **Before 95:5 hook and line: trawl split shown below.

The longline survey abundance index increased 15% from 2013 to 2014 following a 25% decrease from 2011 to 2013. The scientists expect spawning biomass to decrease from 2015 to 2018 then stabilize and increase. The 2008 year class showed potential to be above average. The industry CPUE numbers that are used in the model were down in 2013, but expected to be better for 2014, which will have a positive effect for 2016. The 2014 industry CPUE numbers are a year delayed in their usage. As you can see, the survey numbers were up in 4 areas and flat in 2 areas and relative abundance levels were up in the Western Gulf and Eastern GOA. It has been reported that there has been a good sign of the 2014 year class in S.E. Alaskan waters reported by the salmon fleets. This usually portends a strong year class. If that is the case, you should see it by 2017-2018.



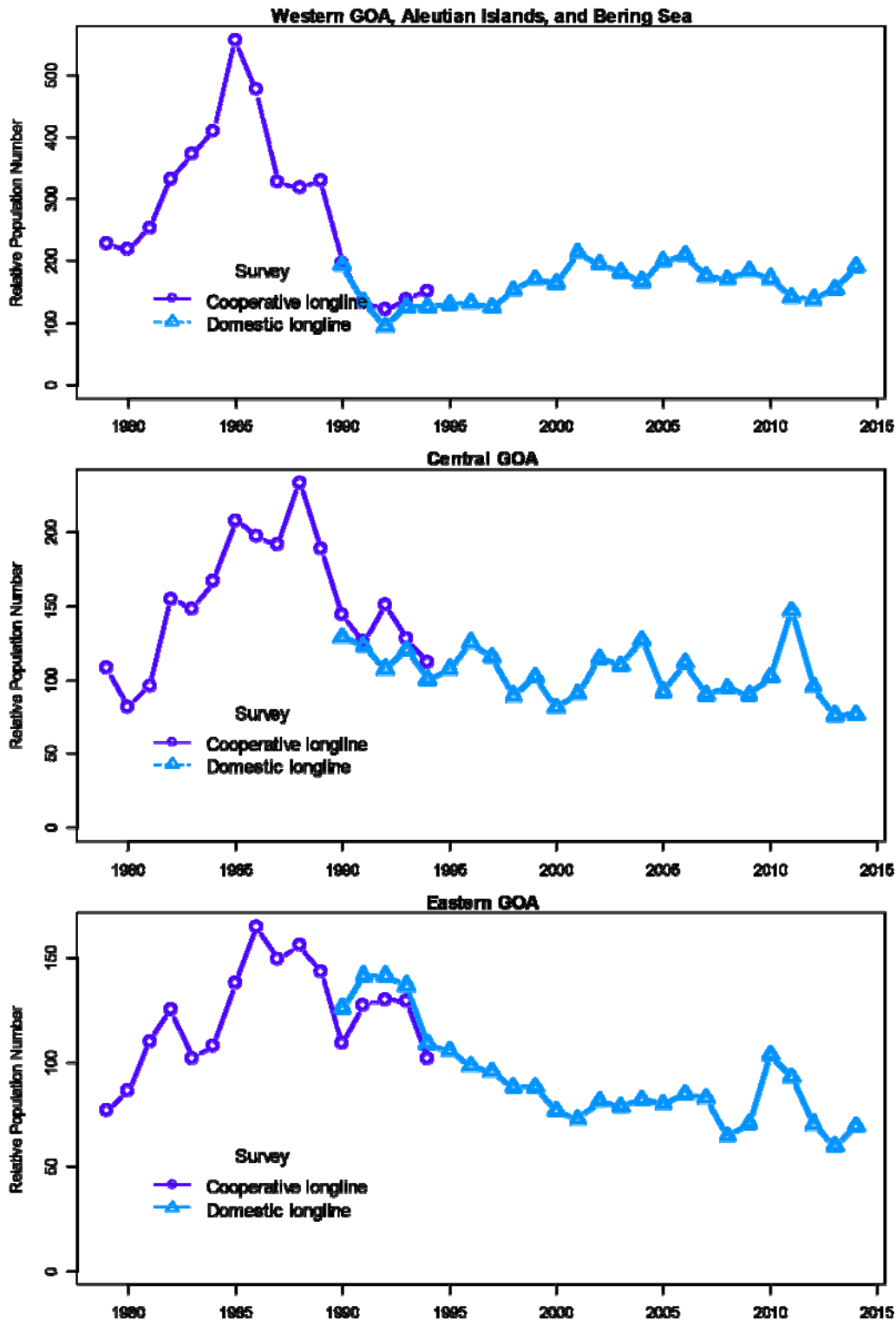


Figure 3.7. Relative abundance (numbers) by region and survey. The regions Bering Sea, Aleutians Islands, and western Gulf of Alaska are combined in the first plot. The two surveys are the Japan-U.S. cooperative longline survey and the domestic (U.S.) longline survey. In this plot, the values for the U.S. survey were adjusted to account for the higher efficiency of the U.S. survey gear.

Halibut Bycatch. The Council debated an emergency action to reduce the Bering Sea bycatch by 33%. This debate is the result of the Halibut Commission's projection that the harvest in 4CDE needs to be reduced by 70% due to increased halibut bycatch during the 2014 season. The Council action failed on a tie vote of 5 to 5. Those voting against the action were the three votes from Washington State, the one vote from Oregon and the NMFS. The five voting in favor were all Alaskans.

Sam Cotten, the new Acting Director of Fishing in Alaska, has sent a letter to NOAA asking that the Emergency Action be implemented. It was signed by all six Alaskans. Ed Dersham was not present at the Council meeting due to illness.

The Council currently has a long-term action set for 2015 to reduce Bering Sea bycatch. That action, when passed, might become effective in the 2017 fishing seas.

****Pacific Council (PFMC) ****

Preliminary Preferred 2015 & 2016 Annual Catch Limits (ACL). These harvest levels were confirmed at the November meeting in Los Angeles.

| | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|------------------------|------|-----------|----------|
| Sablefish North of 36° | 4349 | 4793 ↑10% | 5241 ↑9% |
| Sablefish South of 36° | 1560 | 1719 ↑10% | 1880 ↑9% |

| Projected Sablefish Tier Harvest Limits | Tier 1 | Tier 2 | Tier 3 |
|---|--------|--------|--------|
| 2015 | 41,175 | 18,716 | 10,695 |
| 2016 | 45,053 | 20,479 | 11,702 |

*17% of the sablefish caught are anticipated to be discarded and 20% are expected to die. Quotas have been reduced based on this.

****Calendar of Events****

| | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| January 26-30, 2015 | IPHC Annual Meeting | Vancouver, B.C. |
| February 2-10, 2015 | NPFMC Meeting | Seattle, WA |
| February 17, 2015 | MSR Annual Meeting | Palisade Restaurant, Seattle |
| March 6-11, 2015 | PFMC Meeting | Vancouver, WA |
| April 6-14, 2015 | NPFMC Meeting | Anchorage, AK |
| April 10-15, 2015 | PFMC Meeting | Sonoma, CA |
| June 1-9, 2015 | NPFMC Meeting | Sitka, AK |
| June 11-17, 2015 | PFMC Meeting | Spokane, WA |

****Eat on the Wild Side****



Robert Groff, Partner/CEO of Latitude 98, LLC talking to Bob Duncan in the ice water

New Life-Saving Technology On Ice at Seattle's Fishermen's Festival

Patent-holder and inventor Bob Duncan, CTO of Latitude 98, LLC, was a sight to see as he lay in 33°F ice water all day at the recent Fisherman's Festival in Seattle. He reported that he was feeling "toasty" when he emerged more than nine hours later. He was demonstrating the life-saving technology that is now available in the new U.S. Coast Guard certified Stearns Thermashield 24+™ Immersion Suit.

This revolutionary technology contains a patented, air-circulating warming system. By simply breathing into the suit's mouthpiece, the 88°F heat normally lost through exhaling is captured in an air bladder and distributed throughout the suit and hand-warming cuff. Other technologies, such as integrated molded boots and gasket-sealed gloves, also help retain body heat.

For the past 50 years, immersion suits have varied little in their forecasted survivability window. When a crewman goes overboard, the standard suit will only stave off death for 3-6 hours. As a result, many victims succumb to hypothermia long before rescuers arrive. The introduction of this new technology significantly extends the crucial rescue window.

Simon Fraser University completed an independent test in 2013, using U.S. Coast Guard standards, on the Thermashield 24+™ Immersion suit. These standards require that the water temperature is 32°F, with the outside air temperature no higher than 37°F. Astonishingly, after more than 24 hours, the test subjects wearing the Thermashield 24+™ suit and "feeling warm" had only a small drop in their average core temperature.

Given these remarkable results, the rescue window of a few hours may now, for the first time, be extended to days.

"Saving lives is our passion, and that's the whole reason we developed and patented this new technology," Bob Duncan, CTO said.

The Thermashield 24+™ Immersion Suit can be purchased at www.Latitude98.com a Coleman-Stearns distributor.

****Washington, D.C.****

Federal Water Pollution Control Act. The Congress and President gave the industry a three-year extended exemption. Yeah!! Senator's Cantwell (D) and Murkowski (R) helped get this limitation. Senator Boxer (D), who has been a problem for five years finally relented.

Bristol Bay – The President put oil and gas exploration off limits in Bristol Bay. This is good news.

Coast Guard.

Mandatory Dockside Safety Examinations: Both State-registered and Federally-documented vessels that meet the following criteria, receive a safety examination no later than October 15, 2015, the date this requirement is schedule to take effect. The criteria includes: operating beyond 3 nautical miles of the baseline of the U.S. territorial sea or the coastline of the Great Lakes, operating anywhere with more than 16 individuals on board (either inside 3 miles of the baseline or beyond 3 miles of the baseline), and fish tender vessels engaged in the Aleutian trade. These vessels will need to complete this dockside safety examination at least once every 5 years, however, some vessels, depending on their operation or areas of service, may be subject to a more frequent examination schedule.

If you have had your vessel examined recently, but the safety decal that was issued expires before the new requirement takes effect, you should have your vessel re-examined prior to October 15, 2015 if the above criteria applies. If you do not have a valid safety decal after October 15, 2015, you could be subject to operational controls that may be directed by a Captain of the Port Order. To help alleviate last minute exam scheduling backlogs, do not wait until the last minute to request an examination as there will likely be a rush on examination requests closer to the schedule October 2015 deadline.

Federal legislation was passed reducing the Pacific Council Groundfish buyback tax from 5% to 3%.



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Happy New Year!