

INFORMATION PACKET FOR SOUTHEAST ALASKA SHRIMP BEAM TRAWL FISHERY
1989/90 FISHING SEASON



Presented By:

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-- NOTE: This information packet is intended to explain how shrimp beam trawl fishing will be conducted during the 1989/90 season. This season begins on May 1, 1989. In anticipation of questions concerning the new regulations, this information packet will also attempt to clarify how the regulations will apply to shrimp beam trawl management.

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Regulations

During the February, 1989 meeting, the Alaska Board of Fisheries adopted regulatory changes to the shrimp beam trawl fishery which occurs in Southeast Alaska. The new regulations are projected to become effective sometime in early July, 1989. In order to provide consistent management throughout the 1989/90 season, the department will implement the concept of the pending regulations. The new regulations represent a major step towards more realistic management of the shrimp beam trawl fishery. This step will also require more cooperation between the fleet, industry, and the department.

The new regulations provide for three fishing periods during each season in the traditional fishing areas of District 6 north of a line from Mitchell Point to Point St. John, District 7 in Eastern Channel west of 132°06'30" west longitude, District 8, and District 10 east of the longitude of the westernmost tip of Cape Fanshaw. The three fishing periods are:

May 1	through June 30,
July 1	through August 31,
September 1	through February 14.

Each of these fishing periods will have a separate guideline harvest range (GHR) for each fishing district. The GHRs are:

District 6:	80,000	to	400,000	pounds,
District 7:	15,000	to	50,000	pounds,
District 8:	25,000	to	175,000	pounds,
District 10:	5,000	to	75,000	pounds.

Fisherman should note that the District 6 GHR only applies to that portion of District 6 north of a line from Mitchell Point to Point St. John. Should it become necessary to close a fishing period in District 6 north of the described line, the remainder of District 6 would remain open to continued fishing.

Management

Within each fishing period the potential total harvest from all combined fishing districts with GHRs would be from 125,000 to 700,000 pounds. A harvest of 700,000 pounds would only occur during each fishing period if the fleet had distributed significant fishing effort to all areas, if the stock strength was consistently high, if CPUE held at consistently high levels, and if the shrimp populations exhibited major strength in all year-classes. Other pertinent factors identified in the existing regulations (5AAC 31.035) and the small shrimp policy would also be considered. Based on occurrences in the fishery during the past two years, it is very probable that the harvests from Districts 6 and 8 will predominate during any one fishing period and a maximum harvest of 700,000 pounds would not be reached. Additionally, if the fishery management program can not collect and collate all necessary information, it is possible that during the second two fishing periods a conservative approach to management may be appropriate.

The potential total season harvest from all combined fishing districts with GHRs could range from 375,000 to 2,100,000 pounds. It should be understood that a maximum harvest of 2,100,000 pounds would be appropriate under very good stock conditions. Conditions predicating such a harvest level are, once again, fleet distribution, consistently high stock strength, consistently high CPUE, major strength in all year-classes, and other pertinent factors. Since these factors are not expected to all occur in all fishing districts throughout the season, it is

anticipated that given conditions similar to those which have prevailed in the fishery during the past two years, a total harvest in the vicinity of 1,500,000 to 1,750,000 pounds is expected to be harvested during the 1989/90 season.

The new fishing period regulations were heavily supported by industry representatives speaking before the Alaska Board of Fisheries and are intended to spread the fishery in major fishing districts throughout the fishing season. This compares to the "pulse" type fishery experienced in Districts 6 and 8 during the past two seasons, which resulted in early season closures in these districts, and in requested extensions of the GHR or provisions for a winter fishery on higher quality shrimp. These new fishing periods also have a potential biological benefit, in that the total harvest will not occur during the growth and recruitment period that persists during the summer months. One of the risks associated with the new management system is the potential for an increased harvest on egg-bearing females during the late fall and winter months. It is possible to negatively impact stock reproduction utilizing such management.

New upper guideline harvest level regulations reflect the apparent good stock conditions that have prevailed during the past two seasons. It is important for industry representatives to understand that the new upper guideline harvest level will not be an appropriate target for each fishing season. This level will be acceptable only during periods when extremely good stock and fishery conditions exist. One risk associated with higher GHRs is the potential for overfishing the available stock, particularly the older year-classes. The end result of such overfishing is a reduction in stock reproduction, a reduction in available shrimp for a number of years, and very conservative management until stocks rebuild.

Fishermen and processors should continually remind themselves that this fishery has been in existence since 1916, and is presently the major trawl shrimp fishery in the State of Alaska. The reasons for the success of this fishery are not clearly understood. Significant problems have also occurred during the history of this fishery. The most important of these problems was the tremendous decline of shrimp availability in bays of District 10, which once was the mainstay of the fishery. From 1955 through 1969 the shrimp beam trawl fishery produced an average of 3,377,300 pounds. District 10 contributed approximately 50% of this total harvest. At the present time District 10 contributes less than 1% of the total harvest, with a high season harvest of 34,300 pounds during the past ten seasons. This reduction is predominantly due to a reduction in available shrimp, although a reduction in fishing effort has subsequently occurred in this district. Thus, fishermen and processors should expect a harvest in the vicinity of 1,500,000 to 1,750,000 pounds under existing conditions. Until the management program is sufficient to adequately gather and assess fishery information, to include pre-season population estimates, management will continue to generally reflect a conservative approach.

Since the department has not received sufficient funds to gather all the information necessary to manage this fishery in a scientific manner, the full cooperation of industry representatives and fishermen is essential to the successful implementation of the new management system. In order to gather some of the information necessary to make management decisions, fishermen are requested to cooperate with department representatives who will be gathering information on the dock at times of landing and during on-board observation trips. Industry representatives are requested to complete and submit fish tickets on a very timely basis. As critical decision points approach, it will be necessary to have completed fish tickets available to department personnel by the afternoon of the day following landing. Department representatives will also be gathering samples of shrimp from random landings from each district. These samples are utilized to determine relative year-class strength of the stocks.

Fishing regulated by GHR are identified by the stippled area on the attached subdistrict chart. Fishermen and processors are reminded that harvests must be reported by the five-digit statistical subdistricts (Example: 108-40) where the harvest occurred. Space has been provided on the fish tickets for entry of multiple subdistricts, with respective harvests and effort levels. Most effort is expressed in number of drags utilized to harvest the stated poundage.

OTHER ISSUES

Fishermen have expressed an interest in dividing the harvest that occurs around the Stikine Flats. This season District 8 has been divided into two areas, Sections 8-A and 8-B. Section 8-A is that portion of the Stikine River flats north of a line from Blaquiere Point to Kakwan Point. Section 8-B is that portion of the flats south of the same line. Fishermen can note next to the proper subdistrict (in most cases it will be 108-40) whether the harvest came from the north or south portion of the flats by entering 8-A or 8-B. The correct entry should be 108-40 (8-A) or (8-B). It is important that all fishermen enter this note to properly determine what proportion of the District 8 harvest occurs on the north versus the south side of the flats. Incomplete data will be difficult to evaluate.

Fleet members have expressed an interest to utilize a larger mesh size in order to reduce the harvest of small shrimp, thereby increasing the quality of the landed shrimp to the processor. Ultimately, higher quality shrimp may bring an increase in the price per pound of round shrimp. Fishermen experimenting with larger mesh are encouraged to contact department representatives, especially during dockside sampling and interviews, to allow for potential evaluation of the mesh changes and for developing more appropriate regulations in the future. Fishermen are also encouraged to determine the proportion of sidestripe shrimp in their landings to allow the determination of sidestripe contribution to the total harvest. It may become important to future fisheries to provide separate GHRs for pink and sidestripe shrimp, especially during the late fall and winter months.

Questions concerning shrimp beam trawl management should be directed to Tim Koeneman in Petersburg at 772-3801, Paul Larson, Cathy Botelho, or Ken Imamura in Douglas at 465-4250, or Randy Timothy in Wrangell at 874-3822.