

# The Wheel Watch

*a newsletter of the*

Fishing Vessel Owners' Association  
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Dear Members:

This newsletter will bring you up-to-date on activities at the North Pacific Council and the Pacific Council, which both had June meetings. Prices on Halibut and Sablefish remain good and there is some action in Washington, D.C. regarding the EPA discharge legislation exemption.

## **\*\*North Pacific Council\*\***

### **Abundance-Based Halibut Bycatch Management also referred to as ABM.**

The NPFMC is attempting to address the limit of Bering Sea bycatch of halibut, based on halibut abundance in the BSAI area. Two years ago, the Council partially addressed this issue by reducing the overall Bering Sea halibut CAP by 25%. FVOA had requested a 42% reduction. Since the Council action two years ago, the reduced halibut cap was implemented in 2016. Here are the results through 2016 relative to the Amendment 80 factory trawl fleet.

The Amendment 80 fleet halibut CAP in 2015, before Sitka	2327 Mt
The NPFMC reduction of 25% for the 2016 season	1745 Mt
Amendment 80 fleet halibut actual usage with 12 vessels using deck sorting out of about 18 vessels	1412 Mt

The Amendment 80 fleet performed very well and achieved a 39% reduction in 2016 with about half their fleet using deck sorting. The Council has been attempting to identify abundance indexes from which to apply an ABM concept. The most important parts of the ABM process will be identifying a new starting point or CAP level from which to activate an ABM mechanism with increases and decreases in halibut abundance. In theory when a new starting point is identified, the halibut CAP will rise and fall with abundance, but the rise will be limited to some number as will any reduction be limited. These are referred to as ceilings and floors.

At this Council meeting, the Council began to focus on meaningful numbers, though for a new starting point, they directed the working group to consider starting points within a range of 50% above and below the 2016 PSC limit, which was 3515 Mt. Most of the data points being reviewed with this proposal are well above the current 2016 actual usage of halibut bycatch. The range does examine a low of about 25% below the current usage. We have to consider this as a good first step. The FVOA trustees and officers remain skeptical as any new starting point could be compromised by other control rules yet to be examined or approved. The Council will examine the analysis of the work group at their October meeting when "real" alternatives could be developed.

The ABM project is expected to be a two to three year work load for the NPFMC before either a vote at the Council or actual implementation.

**Area 4 Halibut IFQ Leasing by CDQ Groups.** The Council will take final action on this in



October. The preferred action of the Council could allow Area 4B and 4 CDE, CDQ groups to lease from first and second generation quota shareholders when the harvest limit in 4B drops below a million pounds or when the harvest limit in 4 CDE drops below 1.5 million pounds. The 2017 harvest limit in 4B is 1,140,000 lbs. and the 4CDE harvest limit is 1,700,000 lbs. Based on recent surveys, 4B and 4CDE could easily be reduced, such that harvest limits would activate leasing. The Council's preferred action would restrict the harvest of this leased fish to vessels less than 51 feet in length and additionally, the Council stated that it "intends for IFQ's to be leased from non-residents for use only by residents of a CDQ community".

***Observer Program for 2018 and Issues.*** The December before the new observer program was implemented in 2014, the NMFS second guessed the NPFMC on the definition of a fishing trip, specific to a vessel delivering to a "tender". The amended language allowed a vessel to continue to deliver to a tender and not log in for an observer until the vessel delivered to a "shorebased processor with a groundfish permit." Even if the tender was under lease to the shorebased processor, this exemption was applied. The following critical comments of this exemption appears in the May 2017 "North Pacific Observer Program 2016 Annual Report" ....May 2017.

"Page 9 Observed trips in the trawl stratum that delivered to a tender were 87.9% shorter in duration, landed 15.9% fewer species and landed catch that weighed 69.5% less than unobserved trips also delivered to a tender." The report indicates a trawl tender trip to be 5 to 6 days in length without an observer, so with an observer, the trip is down to 1.5 to 2 days in length.

NMFS reports in December 2016 showed 41% of the Pacific Cod in the Western Gulf was delivered to tenders. Hence, when coverage rates are expressed, those coverage rates are only of the 59% delivered shoreside. When factoring in this as part of the whole, the actual coverage rates drop to single digits (9% to 12%) by poundage. The trawl coverage rate in 2016 was 28% of trips but covered 9 to 12% of the catch.

Page 105 for Pollock deliveries, "the AKD Law enforcement and the Observer Program received several statements from observers and fishery participants indicating that vessel operators in the partial coverage trawl Pollock fleet frequently asked observers (after sampling at sea) whether or not they had salmon in their sample. After fishing was completed, if there were no salmon encountered at sea, the vessel would deliver to a tender vessel, thereby ensuring that the delivery could not be monitored by the observer and zero bycatch rate would be applied in bycatch estimation. In many cases the 'tender' vessel was at the dock or anchored close to the shoreside processor". Is it appropriate to ask if similar manipulations are taking place with halibut deliveries?

The processor involved apparently only got a warning for this manipulation of data. It's suspected that there was only a warning because the plant was getting instructions from NMFS in Juneau (page 105 of the report). You come to your own conclusion.

Page 49 "The results of dockside monitoring from 2016 represent the third year in which the observer program failed to obtain a random sample of partial coverage trawl deliveries due to tendering activity."



Clearly in the Western Gulf, there has been a system failure of the observer program due to the tendering activity. So who is paying for this program? The table below shows that over 60% is paid for by hook & line, another 10% by pot, and 30% by trawl.

Table 2-2. -- Observer fees<sup>18</sup> in 2016 by gear, vessel size category, and species or species group for *all areas combined*.

Vessel length category	Halibut	Sablefish	Pacific cod	Pollock	All other groundfish	Total all species
<b>HOOK AND LINE</b>						
<40	\$244,051	\$24,575	\$5,430	\$29	\$1,164	\$275,248
40 - 57.5	\$524,708	\$268,235	\$17,310	\$123	\$8,252	\$818,629
>57.5	\$625,899	\$513,130	\$4,570	\$1	\$8,908	\$1,152,509
Gear Subtotal	\$1,394,658	\$805,941	\$27,309	\$154	\$18,324	\$2,246,385
<b>JIG</b>						
<40	\$464		\$396	\$29	\$109	\$999
40 - 57.5	\$885	\$33	\$1,073	\$47	\$396	\$2,434
>57.5			\$6	\$3		\$9
Gear Subtotal	\$1,350	\$33	\$1,475	\$79	\$506	\$3,442
<b>POT</b>						
<40			\$399		\$39	\$438
40 - 57.5			\$32,959	\$3	\$140	\$33,102
>57.5		\$21,670	\$302,168	\$70	\$2,008	\$325,916
Gear Subtotal		\$21,670	\$335,526	\$73	\$2,187	\$359,455
<b>TRAWL</b>						
40 - 57.5			\$117	\$11,069	\$2	\$11,188
>57.5		\$14,186	\$375,620	\$704,427	\$55,055	\$1,149,287
Gear Subtotal		\$14,186	\$375,736	\$715,496	\$55,057	\$1,160,475
<b>TOTAL ALL GEAR</b>						
	\$1,396,008	\$841,829	\$740,047	\$715,801	\$76,073	\$3,769,758
<b>PERCENT BY SPECIES</b>						
	37%	22%	20%	19%	2%	100%

Rounding sometimes results in slight differences in row and column totals.

The Council's advisory committees, no less than two times each, the SSC, the Advisory Panel, and the Observer Committee have told the Council that the tendering issue needs fixing or was creating a data quality problem. The Council passed the following action.

"The Council tasks staff to develop a discussion paper identifying specific data concerns with respect to vessels engaged in tendering, and to work with industry groups to develop both short-term and long-term solutions, including potential regulatory changes."

This will be a two-year fixit project on the tendering exemption if corrective action is actually taken. The Council also asked NMFS to evaluate separating out pelagic and non-pelagic trawl trips for observer effects for 2018. They did not "decide to" but asked to evaluate. Pretty tame action. It is clear that by lumping Pollock with bottom trawl, the data is being masked.

The 2018 coverage rates for pot, hook and line and trawl are tentatively set for 15% each. In 2016, the rates were Pot - 15%, HAL - 15%, and trawl 28%. The observer program was receiving \$1.2 million from NOAA. This money has been reprogrammed so the program currently is a stakeholder paid only program. The Council may request in 2018 that coverage be focused more on those fisheries that are PSC limited, which would be for Chinook salmon and halibut PSC. The Council also will have its Observer Committee look at ways to scope out potential solutions for low coverage rates.



FVOA has testified to the concerns now expressed openly in the Annual Observer Report, particularly on tendering for the last three years. Hopefully, positive changes will be made sooner than later, but I find the Council's motion rather ho hum considering the complete collapse of the program in the Western Gulf.

### **\*\* Pacific Council \*\***

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) met in Spokane and our primary interest was the 5-year review of the trawl IFQ program. That program provided for gear-switching. Several fixed gear members of FVOA bought or leased trawl QS IFQs and fished it off Washington, Oregon and California. The trawl sector and those processors that target Dover sole have asked the Council to limit the amount of sablefish that can be used by fixed gear. Some of the trawl interests would like more sablefish in order to deliver Dover sole. Dover sole pays to the fisherman \$0.50 a pound and the processors have the trawlers on Dover market trip limits. There is no guarantee that trawlers will deliver more Dover if they restrict fixed gear. One of the complaints is that fixed gear gets a higher price for Sablefish and can pay a higher lease fee thereby denying trawlers sablefish. It would appear this issue is significantly an attempt to guarantee the trawl sector more sablefish and for certain processors, more control of the coastal sablefish market.

The Council recommended looking at different ways to accommodate the trawl request to limit gear switching. Their solutions included, (1) The Council will look at eliminating the trawl southern designation of sablefish below 36°. This should provide additional sablefish, about 1 million pounds, to accommodate the trawl concern. This fish is currently stranded or uncaught sablefish. (2) The Council will look at setting aside a percentage of QS sablefish designated as trawl only; (3) 10 percent of the trawl quota is currently set up as "adaptive management" and can be used in different allocation schemes. The processors want it allocated to them. The fishermen want status quo as it is currently being passed through directly to the quota shareholders account. The Council may look at designating the sablefish adaptive management quota which is 10%, as trawl only to accommodate the processor's requests. This would have the effect of reducing the value and usage of a trawl quota shareholders sablefish by 10% if used by fixed gear.

The Council is early in the review process of the trawl program. Final actions to change the program are about 7 months out. The Council will adjust the presumed mortality of sablefish in the trawl QS program to 50%. Mortality is currently assumed to be 100%. This will happen at the September meeting.

**Halibut.** There was a push to eliminate the halibut catch in the sablefish tiered fishery north of Point Chehalis. This request came from a very powerful sports group, CCA, Coastal Conservation Association out of Port Angeles. The Council did not take their request up.

I want to thank Paul Clampitt for his testimony on halibut and the sablefish issues at the Spokane meeting and time he has spent on the IFQ Review Board. He has been out numbered but not necessarily out gunned.



## \*\*Markets\*\*

**Halibut.** Mid-June halibut prices in Seward were \$6.95 for 40 plus; \$6.80 for 20-40's; and \$6.50 for 10-20's.

The market remains stable with about half the quota in. I happened to visit Costco and Hagen's in Woodinville. Halibut was selling at \$18 for a large fletch, which looked absolutely great at Costco. Hagen's was slightly more expensive and the quality was excellent.

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800-304-4846

### Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Allocations and Landings

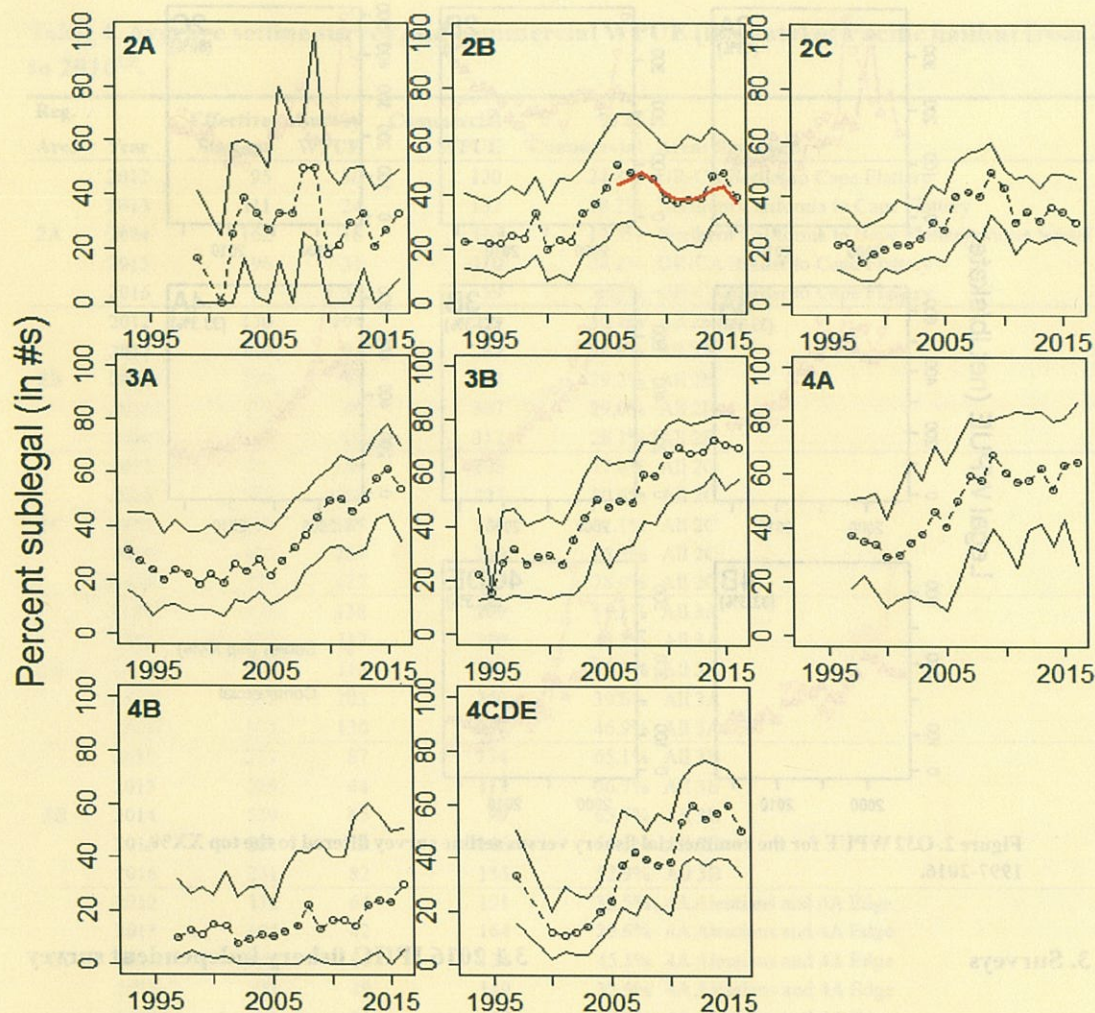
Area	Species	Vessel Landings	Total Catch Pounds	TAC		Percent Landed
				Allocation Pounds	Remaining Pounds	
2C	halibut	634	2,611,986	4,212,000.00	1,600,014	62
3A	halibut	740	4,168,775	7,739,000.00	3,570,225	54
3B	halibut	141	1,023,699	3,140,000.00	2,116,301	33
4A	halibut	29	266,753	1,390,000.00	1,123,247	19
4B	halibut	26	343,102	912,000.00	568,898	38
4C/4D	halibut	***	***	902,400.00	***	***
<b>Total</b>		***	***	<b>18,295,400.00</b>	***	***

**Sablefish.** Prices have strengthened since last year. Hagen's in Woodinville had great quality Blackcod for \$24/lb. The yen vs. the dollar is currently at 112; last year it was 106 yen per dollar. June prices in Seward were: 7 and ups \$9.70; 5-7 lbs. - \$8.65; 4-5's - \$7.60; 3-4's - \$6.60; 3 and under - \$5.30.

Area	Species	Vessel Landings	Total Catch Pounds	Allocation Pounds	Remaining Pounds	Percent Landed
AI	sablefish	23	343,483	2,294,989.00	1,951,506	15
BS	sablefish	29	349,225	1,124,346.00	775,121	31
CG	sablefish	293	3,603,478	7,960,811.00	4,357,333	45
SE	sablefish	338	3,318,459	5,745,188.00	2,426,729	58
WG	sablefish	48	608,675	2,378,763.00	1,770,088	26
WY	sablefish	143	2,462,361	3,073,212.00	610,851	80
<b>Total</b>		<b>874</b>	<b>10,685,681</b>	<b>22,577,309.00</b>	<b>NULL</b>	<b>57</b>

**Pacific Cod.** The International Council for the Exploration of the Seas recommended a 20% reduction in the Barents Sea Cod quota. The new harvest limit will be 712,000 metric tons. This is an 183,000 Mt reduction. So, we should see an increase in the Pacific Cod prices shortly, right?



**\*\*IPHC\*\***

**Figure 1. Setline survey percentage U32 by number, 1996-2016. Circles represent the median station observed each year in the setline survey and the lines indicate the 25<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> percentiles. The thick solid line in Area 2B since 2006 represents the percent U32 reported in the logbooks.**

The charts above show the under 32" fish caught during the surveys. The WPUE charts on the next page show a stabilizing halibut resources with some ups in 2B and 2C. Some hope for another up in 3A and 3B. Table 11 on the next page shows area 4A and 4C&D having high index of fish with hooking injuries.



Chapter 2. Fishery Removals

2.2 Incidental mortality of Pacific halibut

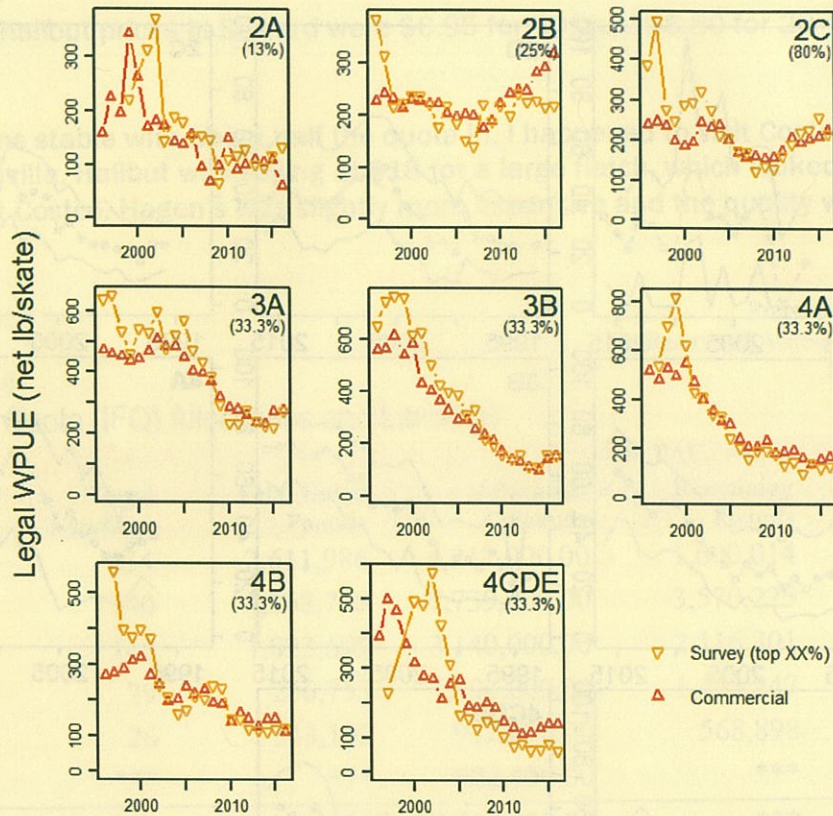


Figure 2. O32 WPUE for the commercial fishery versus setline survey filtered to the top XX%, 1997-2016.

Chapter 3. Surveys

3.1 2016 IPHC fishery independent survey

Table 11. Summary of prior hooking injury (PHI) data collected during the 2016 IPHC fishery-independent setline survey. This table does not include Pacific halibut where the PHI was coded as 'unknown'.

Reg. Area	No. of sets	No. std. skates	All halibut					U32 halibut (<82cm)			
			No. examined	No. with injury	% with injury 2016	No. inj. per std. Skate	% with injury 2015	No. with injury	% with injury 2016	No. inj. per std. skate	% with injury 2015
2A	95	573.9	1,392	74	5.3%	0.13	5.6%	32	6.3%	0.06	6.4%
2B	169	1,017.7	7,897	471	6.0%	0.46	7.5%	168	4.6%	0.17	5.3%
2C	123	734.8	8,158	488	6.0%	0.66	4.2%	95	3.2%	0.13	2.1%
3A	373	2,230.5	31,303	2,036	6.5%	0.91	3.7%	813	4.6%	0.36	2.0%
3B	231	1,382.5	20,661	790	3.8%	0.57	3.4%	443	3.0%	0.32	2.4%
4A-Aleu.	64	383.6	795	123	15.5%	0.32	4.5%	41	15.0%	0.11	2.9%
4A-Bsea	47	281.7	2,771	180	6.5%	0.64	2.6%	80	4.9%	0.28	2.2%
4B	88	529.1	2,403	116	4.8%	0.22	4.5%	39	3.6%	0.07	6.5%
4C	20	120.5	638	82	12.9%	0.68	15.7%	34	11.8%	0.28	12.9%
4D	141	848.1	1,395	217	15.6%	0.26	18.3%	84	12.3%	0.10	11.7%
Total	1,351	8,102.3	77,413	4,577	5.9%	0.56	4.5%	1,829	4.2%	0.23	2.8%



## Chapter 3. Surveys

## 3.1 2016 IPHC fishery independent survey

**Table 4. Average setline survey and commercial WPUE (lb/skate) of Pacific halibut from 2012 to 2016<sup>1,2</sup>.**

Reg. Area	Year	Effective Stations	Survey WPUE	Commercial WPUE	% of Commercial	Areas Surveyed
2A	2012	95	30	120	24.8%	OR-CA Border to Cape Flattery
	2013	111	24	132	18.2%	Northern California to Cape Flattery
	2014	162	18	116	15.5%	Northern California to Cape Flattery, Puget Sound
	2015	96	31	110	28.2%	OR-CA Border to Cape Flattery
	2016	95	30	59	50.8%	OR-CA Border to Cape Flattery
2B	2012	170	104	259	40.1%	All 2B
	2013	170	94	269	34.8%	All 2B
	2014	170	92	315	29.2%	All 2B
	2015	170	89	307	29.0%	All 2B
	2016	169	89	317	28.1%	All 2B
2C	2012	122	160	208	77.0%	All 2C
	2013	122	183	227	80.6%	All 2C
	2014	123	185	228	81.1%	All 2C
	2015	122	207	240	86.3%	All 2C
	2016	123	177	227	78.0%	All 2C
3A	2012	373	138	269	51.2%	All 3A
	2013	372	117	240	48.7%	All 3A
	2014	374	115	232	49.6%	All 3A
	2015	372	103	260	39.6%	All 3A
	2016	373	130	277	46.9%	All 3A
3B	2012	231	87	134	65.1%	All 3B
	2013	229	64	113	56.7%	All 3B
	2014	229	65	99	65.7%	All 3B
	2015	231	79	146	54.1%	All 3B
	2016	231	82	155	52.9%	All 3B
4A	2012	112	64	191	33.5%	4A Aleutians and 4A Edge
	2013	105	42	164	25.6%	4A Aleutians and 4A Edge
	2014	185	61	134	45.5%	4A Aleutians and 4A Edge
	2015	111	49	149	32.9%	4A Aleutians and 4A Edge
	2016	111	51	169	30.2%	4A Aleutians and 4A Edge
4B	2012	89	48	154	31.5%	4B Aleutians
	2013	89	57	122	47.0%	4B Aleutians
	2014	89	50	167	29.9%	4B Aleutians
	2015	89	56	155	36.1%	4B Aleutians
	2016	88	56	113	49.6%	4B Aleutians
4C	2012	20	37	60	61.8%	St. George and St. Paul Islands
	2013	20	35	55	64.3%	St. George and St. Paul Islands
	2014	20	44	60	73.3%	St. George and St. Paul Islands
	2015	20	44	98	44.9%	St. George and St. Paul Islands
	2016	20	60	72	83.3%	St. George and St. Paul Islands
4D	2012	58	31	162	19.0%	4D Edge and St. Matthew Island
	2013	58	25	151	16.4%	4D Edge and St. Matthew Island
	2014	58	23	167	13.8%	4D Edge and St. Matthew Island
	2015	58	30	157	19.1%	4D Edge and St. Matthew Island
	2016	141	19	177	10.7%	4D Edge and St. Matthew Island

<sup>1</sup> Commercial WPUE data for the current year are preliminary.

<sup>2</sup> Does not include ineffective, RI, or EBS expansion stations surveyed in 2015. This may differ from that used in the stock assessment.



## **\*\*Second Watch\*\***

Please welcome as a new Sustaining Sponsor, **Alaskan Observers, Inc.** I had classified them as an Associate Member in our last newsletter. Thank you for your support.

**Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries.** Chris Oliver has been selected as the AA for NOAA fisheries by Secretary of Commerce, Wilbur Ross, with the concurrence from the White House. Chris has been at the North Pacific Council for 27 years and has served as the Executive Director of the Council for 16 years. It will be good to have a West Coast perspective at this leadership position. Congratulations to Chris Oliver!

**Alaska Senate.** On May 13<sup>th</sup>, the Alaska Senate rejected the Alaska House's Income Tax proposal. This would likely affect all catcher vessel and crews that deliver into Alaska ports. The State of Alaska is facing a \$2.5 billion deficit and the legislature is in a standoff.

**Antiquities Act.** President Trump has ordered a review of President Obama's designation of certain areas as National Monuments. The Antiquities Act has been used most recently by the younger President Bush and President Obama to declare large no fishing zones. The Trump directive does not get rid of these areas but is a review of whether using this act in this fashion is appropriate and the review asks for input from affected parties.

**International Seafood's of Alaska (ISA).** John Sevier is now working at ISA in Kodiak. For Sablefish & Halibut prices call him at (360) 259-9565 or Mitch Kilborn at (907) 942-5892.

**Secretary of State, Kim Wyman, State of Washington.** FVOA was formed in 1914. We received a congratulations from our Washington State Secretary of State, Kim Wyman. There were 4500 incorporations filed in 1914 and only 29 exist today and, of course, FVOA is one of them.

## **\*\*Calendar of Events\*\***

<b>Sept. 11—18,2017</b> Advisory Bodies may begin Sept. 11	PFMC	The Riverside Hotel Boise, ID
<b>September 23, 2017</b>	Fishermen's Fall Festival	Fishermen's Terminal Seattle, WA
<b>October 2-10, 2017</b>	NPFMC	Anchorage, AK
<b>November 13-20, 2017</b> Advisory Bodies may begin Nov. 13	PFMC	Hilton Orange County Costa Mesa, CA
<b>December 4-12, 2017</b>	NPFMC	Anchorage, AK





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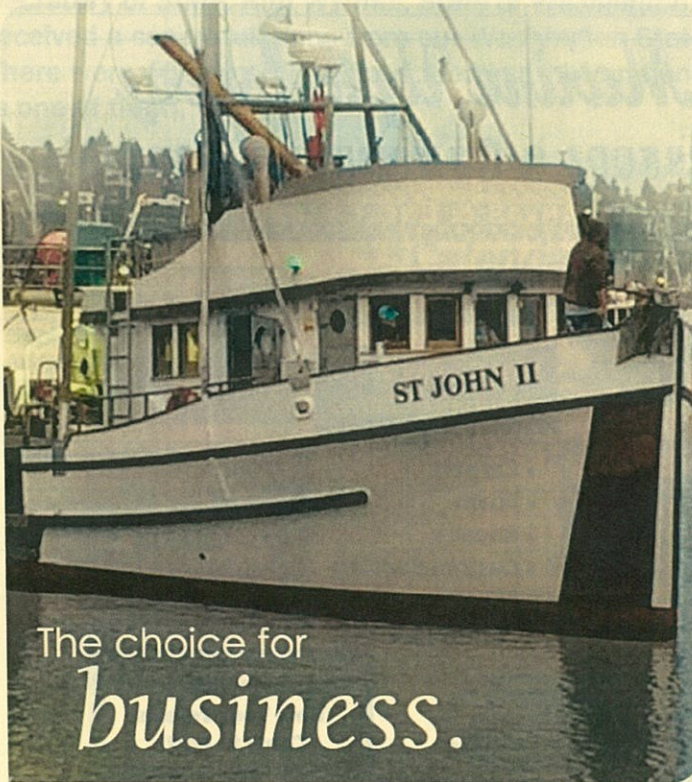
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