
“GREEN SHEET”

Meeting dates: June 19, 2009, Commission conference call

Agenda item A: Commercial Hagfish Logbook Submission Schedule – Rule Action

Staff Contact: Lorna L Wargo, Coastal Marine Fish Biologist, Fish Program

Presenter(s): Lorna L Wargo, Coastal Marine Fish Biologist, Fish Program

Background:

In 2005 the commercial hagfish fishery was opened and designated a “trial” fishery under the Emerging Commercial Fishery Act in response to an industry request. As a trial fishery the number of participants is not capped.

Initial interest in the fishery was limited to just a few individuals. Establishing a market for hagfish is difficult, as are the challenges in handling and processing them for sale. However, the commercial hagfish fishery has experienced some growth. The number of permits issued has risen annually, going from two in 2005 to 19 in 2008. To date, 17 permits have been issued this year. However, only a few permits in any year have been actively fished. Annual catch has increased from 149,000 pounds in 2005 to 800,000 pounds in 2008.

Since the fishery’s inception, fishers have been required to submit logbooks on a quarterly basis. Logbooks allow managers to monitor a fishery and obtain data needed to support an assessment of the resource. In response to the increase in effort, and the need to more closely monitor the fishery, the Department is proposing to amend the logbook rule to require fishers to submit logbooks on a monthly basis. This action is also proposed as a precaution in the event speculative interest (unutilized permits) translates into active fishing.

Policy issue(s) you are bringing to the Commission for consideration:

The trial hagfish fishery is experiencing some growth and increasing interest; amending **WAC 220-88E-040, Hagfish pot trial fishery -- Logbook required**, to require logbooks on monthly rather than quarterly basis supports the need to more closely monitor the fishery.

Public involvement process used and what you learned:

This proposal and public hearing details were shared through a mailing to current permit holders, but to date we have not received comments. The Commission held a public hearing on the proposals during its June 5-6, 2009, meeting in Olympia; however, no one testified.

Action requested:

Commission to consider amendment adoption as recommended.

Draft motion language:

“I move to adopt amendments to WAC 220-88E-040 as presented.”

Justification for Commission action:

Monthly submission of harvest logbooks is necessary to more closely monitor effort in the trial hagfish pot fishery and ensure conservation of the resource.

Communications Plan:

Hagfish permit holders and alternate operators will be informed of the outcome of this proposal in writing.
