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March 5, 2010

Dear Shrimp Trawl License Holder:

This letter is to inform you of rule changes the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) is implementing for the 2010 Washington ocean pink shrimp trawl fishery.

Please recall that in March 2009 the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) proposed to list eulachon (*Thaleichthys pacificus*), commonly called Columbia River smelt, as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Bycatch of eulachon in commercial fisheries, including the ocean shrimp (*Pandalus jordani*) trawl fishery was identified as a moderate threat to the eulachon population.

Lacking bycatch data specific to the Washington shrimp trawl fishery, the Department proposed including Washington licensed vessels in the federal observer program conducted by the National Marine Fisheries Service and also sought funding to conduct a state observer/research project. The purpose of these efforts is to ensure that the conservation needs for eulachon and other species are met while reducing the potential for lost fishing opportunity.

Pink Shrimp Trawl Permit

In February 2010, the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission adopted rule changes (WAC 220-52-050, enclosed) that create a Washington pink shrimp trawl fishery permit. Shrimp trawl license holders/operators will be required to comply with permit conditions to participate in the pink shrimp trawl fishery. Included in the conditions, is the requirement that vessels carry a federal observer upon request and follow federal observer program regulations. The permit is a separate document from the shrimp trawl license and will be issued at no cost.

Enclosed is a draft permit for your information. The permit is currently under review; pending final approval copies will be mailed to license holders that have already obtained a 2010 Washington shrimp trawl license. Otherwise, permits will be included with the license at the time of purchase.

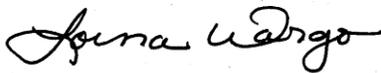
The Department will provide information about the federal observer program at an industry sponsored meeting tentatively scheduled for Thursday, March 11 at Washington Crab Producers at Westport, Washington. To confirm the date and time, please contact Lorna Wargo or Bill Weidman with Washington Crab Producers at (360) 268-0816. If this meeting is not one you'd typically attend, or you are unable to attend, please contact Lorna Wargo and separate meeting arrangements can be made as needed.

Shrimp Trawl Research Proposal

The Department submitted research proposals in September 2009 seeking funds to develop a state vessel observer program. The Department has recently been notified that at least one of the proposals has been recommended for funding. As proposed, the state observer project would begin in summer 2010 (when the funds would be available) and run through 2012. The first season would be the "pilot" phase of the project, and then followed by two complete seasons of fishery observation. This project involves partnering with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to evaluate finfish excluder device improvements. More information will be provided as it becomes available.

For questions or more information, please call or email me at: (360) 249-1221;
Lorna.Wargo@dfw.wa.gov

Sincerely,



Lorna Wargo
Marine Fisheries Biologist

cc: Michele Culver, WDFW, Regional Director
Craig Burley, WDFW, Fish Program, Division Manager

Enclosures (3)
WAC 22-052-050
Draft 2010 Pink Shrimp Trawl Permit
Shrimp Trawl Fishery Catch Statistics

For more information:

Eulachon http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/fish/pacific_eulachon.htm
or <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/Other-Marine-Species/Eulachon.cfm>

West Coast Groundfish Observer Program
<http://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/research/divisions/fram/observer/>