



State of Washington  
**DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE**

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**2015**  
**TRIAL HAGFISH FISHERY INFORMATION**

*This notice provides important information for fishers and dealers participating in the trial fishery for hagfish.*

TO: Washington Hagfish Trial Fishery License Holders and Alternate Operators and Dealers

FROM: Lorna Wargo, Hagfish Fishery Manager  
360.591.5872

The commercial hagfish fishery in Washington is conducted under the Emerging Commercial Fishery Act (ECFA). It is important to understand fisheries operating under the ECFA are not permanent. The purpose of the ECFA is to allow the development of a new fishery while simultaneously allowing collection of catch and biological information to support an evaluation of the fishery. Fisheries established under the ECFA can be closed if deemed necessary to protect and preserve the target species, in particular, or more broadly marine ecosystem habitat or health.

**Trial Fishery Permit**

License holders in any fishery operating under the ECFA are issued permits in conjunction with the fishery license. The conditions in the permit are intended to support the collection of data for fishery management. Failure to comply with permit conditions can result in fines, permit revocation or denial of future permit applications. It is the responsibility of the trial license holder or alternate operator to ensure compliance with permit requirements.

***Logbooks***

- Logbooks can be obtained by contacting the hagfish fishery manager at the WDFW Region 6 office at 249-4628, one of the port samplers listed below or WDFW Commercial Licensing.
  - Maintaining the logbook and ensuring that it is submitted is the responsibility of the trial license holder.
  - Timely submission of logbooks will protect against loss.

***Advance Notification***

- To provide advance notification of landing, contact the WDFW port sampler assigned to you. Assignment is based on port of landing, see list below. Advance notification can be done by calling or texting at least 24 hours before arriving at port. If your call is not answered, leave a message that includes the skipper name, the name of the vessel, the

port of landing, and an estimated day and time of landing. Once this information is provided, no further action is required.

Port sampler contacts:

- Ilwaco or Westport: Donna Downs, (360) 589-6668
- Neah Bay, La Push, Port Townsend, Port Angeles: Brian Walker, (360) 580-6286
- Anacortes, Bellingham, Seattle, Tacoma: Vicky Okimura, (360) 319-8412
- Other locations contact Donna Downs

### **Biological Sampling**

Port samplers will continue to collect species composition and biological data from hagfish in 2015. WDFW groundfish port samplers already cover coastal ports and will coordinate with fishers and buyers. A typical sample size is 50-60 hagfish and these can be live or frozen. The objective is to collect about 1000 hagfish annually to support statistical analyses. For each hagfish, length, weight, sex, and maturity will be determined, and when present, egg length will be measured. In addition, catch may need to be sampled to determine the species mix, i.e. percent Pacific hagfish versus black hagfish. Species composition sampling does not require retaining any specimens, but does involve handling hagfish.

### **Fish Tickets**

Dealers and fishers, when filling out fish tickets, please note the following requirements:

- The number of pounds reported on fish ticket should include all catch at the time of offload from the vessel. Dead loss pounds can be reported at zero value.
- If fishing occurs in more than one catch area, estimate the number of pounds by area and report each area's catch separately on the fish ticket.

### **Sorting hagfish**

Hagfish are very susceptible to overfishing. This has been demonstrated by significant declines or collapses in fisheries in Japan, Korea and the east coast of the US. One way fishers can improve the sustainability of the fishery is to avoid retaining and landing small, unmarketable hagfish. Sorting should be accomplished at sea, not dockside. One alternative to sorting at sea is to increase the dewatering hole size in barrels. This would improve the pot's ability to select for larger hagfish. Research suggests a hole of 5/8 inches may be optimum. This approach may be more practical and also preferable since it is likely some level of mortality occurs as the sorted hagfish descend back to depth.

### **Dumping and discarding hagfish**

Dealers and fishers handling hagfish after delivery shoreside should contact local authorities before dumping any hagfish, live or dead, at port. There have been reports and complaints regarding this practice. Although discard shoreside is not regulated under fishery regulations, orderly operation is expected so every effort should be taken to avoid the need to dispose of unmarketable, dead or undersize hagfish.