



48 Devonshire Road • Montesano, Washington 98563 • (360) 249-4628 • FAX (360) 664-0689

December 7, 2009

Dear Washington Shrimp Trawl License Holder:

The purpose of this letter is to let you know of a proposal by the Department of Fish and Wildlife to require all ocean shrimp trawl license holders participate in the National Marine Fishery Service's West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP). As a participant in the program, vessels would be required to carry a federal observer upon request and comply with WCGOP regulations. As proposed, this action would be accomplished by amending the ocean pink shrimp trawl rule (WAC 220-52-050) to create a new permit for the fishery which would include participation in the federal observer program as a requirement. The permit (see example enclosed) would be issued annually along with shrimp trawl licenses at no cost. This letter also briefly summarizes industry concerns which have been received in response to this proposal.

WDFW Commission Meeting

The Department will be presenting this proposal to the Fish and Wildlife Commission for their consideration when they meet January 8th and 9th at Olympia. This meeting is intended to be a "briefing", staff will provide the background and rationale for the rule change, but no final action will be taken. The January meeting is also the opportunity for public comment. Comments are welcomed and if you would like to attend and provide your comments in person, please see the enclosed instructions for providing public testimony. However, if you are unable to attend the meeting, your written comments by letter or email are encouraged. These should be submitted in advance, and are due December 31. The Commission will make their final decision on the proposed rule changes at their meeting February 5-6, 2010. An agenda for the January meeting is not available at this time; you may contact me for the specific date and time or check online at <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/commission/>.

Hearing location:

Natural Resource Building
First Floor, Room 172
1111 Washington St. SE
Olympia, WA 98504
Date: January 8-9, 2009

Submit written comments to:

by December 31, 2009
Rules Coordinator
600 Capitol Way No
Olympia, WA 98501-1091
e-mail: Lori.Preuss@dfw.wa.gov
fax: (360) 902-2155

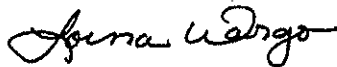
Summary of Responses to Rule Proposal

An industry meeting was held at Westport in October for those fishers active in the fishery at that time. This was followed by a notice to all license holders on November 12, 2009. In addition a public meeting to discuss the rule proposal was held on December 2, 2009 at the WDFW Region 6 office at Montesano.

Overall, license holder response to the proposal has been relatively favorable. A few have questioned the necessity of including Washington license holders in the observer program since data are already collected from Oregon and California shrimp trawl fleets. Because of the similarities between the Washington and Oregon fleets, in particular, data collected from Washington licensed vessels is not necessarily going to be any different. Concerns for safety relative to vessel size have also been raised. For some small vessels, carrying an observer isn't viewed simply as an inconvenience but as a safety hazard. [Note: the WCGOP does have a process to evaluate vessels based on size (and other criteria) and will issue waivers to qualifying vessels.]

Please find enclosed the proposed rule making announcement (CR-102) and a copy of the draft rule changes for WAC 220-52-050. The draft rule has not been modified from earlier versions that have been provided; the enclosed copy is simply in the official format and by law must be sent. Please call or email me if you have any questions: (360) 249-1221; Lorna.Wargo@dfw.wa.gov

Sincerely,



Lorna L Wargo
Marine Fish Biologist

cc: Craig Burley, WDFW Fish Management Division Manager