

# Puget Sound Commercial Smelt Fishery: Quick Reporting Rule Change



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# Presentation Outline



- **Brief background**
  - State of the commercial smelt fishery prior to 2014
  - 2014 rule changes
- **Need for permanency of quick reporting rule**

# Commercial Smelt Fisheries – pre-2014



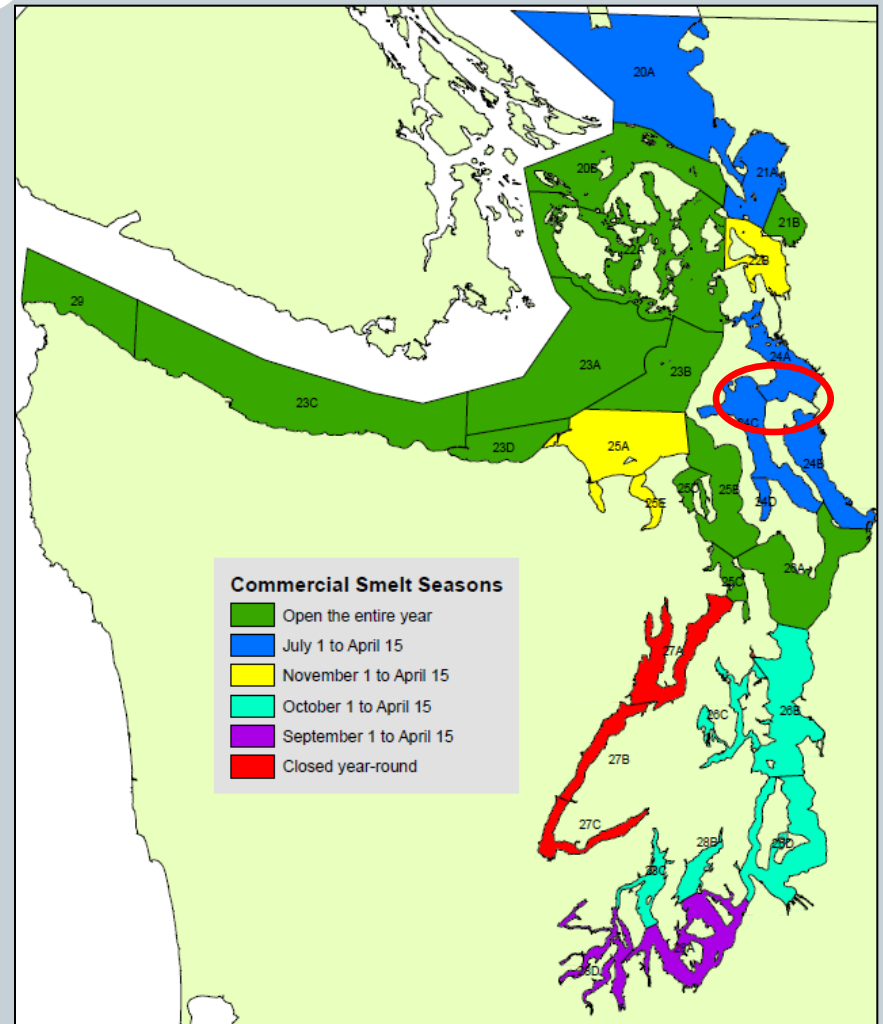
- Drag net (beach seine) was sole capture method being used
  - Purse Seine and Dip Bag Net open, but not fished
- Open access fishery (no limit on licenses)
  - Only ~7 active licenses annually



# Commercial Smelt Fisheries – pre-2014



- Commercial seasons vary by region
  - Designed to protect early spawning period
  - Provides exclusively recreational fisheries in summer (after Apr. 15)
- Hood Canal closed year-round
- Closed Friday and Saturday in all areas



# 2014 Fishery Changes

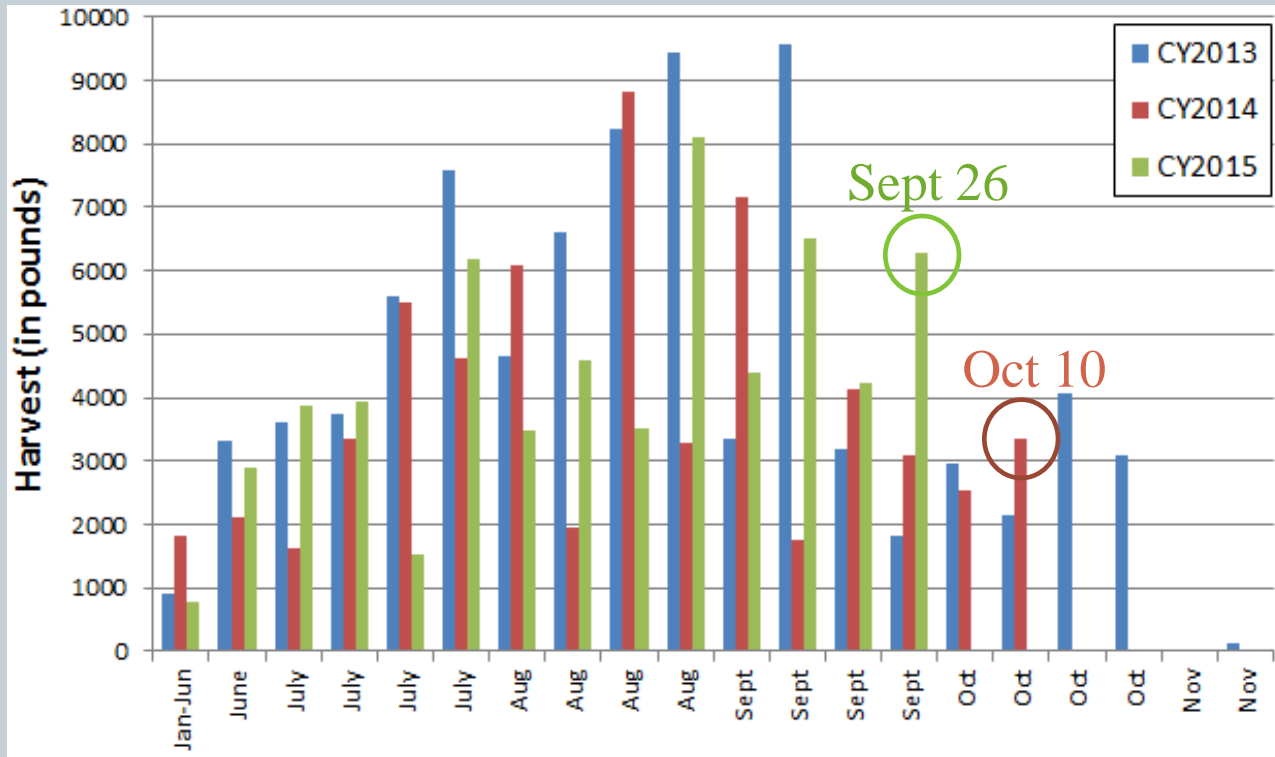


- Closed commercial fishery on Sundays
  - Open Monday through Thursday
- Implemented 10PM-6AM “night closure” on open days
- Closed inactive commercial smelt gear types
  - Purse Seine and Dip Bag Net
- Enacted a harvest quota of 60,000 lbs
  - Brings maximum harvest closer to 1970s-80s level, rather than 100,000 lb average of 1990s-2000s
  - *Requires active in-season monitoring (i.e., quick reporting)*

# Harvest Since 2014



- No fishing until April, despite year-round openings
- <3% of annual total taken by end of June



# Need for Permanent Quick Reporting



- Harvest quota has been successfully implemented for two calendar years
  - 2014 harvest = 61,209 (102%)
  - 2015 harvest = 60,263 (100.4%)
- Quick reporting has worked well
  - Final fish ticket estimates deviate <1% from in-season totals
- 2016 season opened January 1 with 60k-lb quota
  - Fishing expected to begin in June
- “Real time” management requires quick reporting
  - Weekly harvest updates posted once fishing begins
  - <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/commercial/smelt/>

# Components of New Rule



- Considered fisher and manager needs, as well as reviewing 2014+15 data
- Reporting is allowed via e-mail, fax, or phone
  - 1-844-611-3822
  - [smeltreport@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:smeltreport@dfw.wa.gov)
- Reporting deadline shifted from 10AM to 2PM to accommodate late days on the water
  - Fishing closes at 10PM, travel and product delivery may continue well after that
- Failure to report is an infraction



# Questions?

