



Fish News

Oct. 28, 2013

Highlights from the Recent Alaska Board of Fisheries Meetings

By Ernie Weiss, AEB Natural Resources Director

The Board of fisheries took three actions to increase fishing in Western Alaska Guideline Harvest Level (GHL) State-waters fisheries during the recent Statewide Pacific Cod meeting:

- The Board established a new GHL Pacific Cod fishery in the Bering Sea State-waters for pot vessels 58 feet and under, from 164° to 167° W longitude, midway of Unimak Island to midway of Unalaska island, 3% of the federal BSAI TAC.
- The Board increased the GHL for the State-waters South Alaska Peninsula P. cod fishery from 25% to 30% of the federal ABC for the WGOA.
- The Board established a new State-waters Atka Mackerel fishery for purse seine gear in the Aleutian Islands, 10 % of the AI TAC.



Two P. cod proposals passed that changed season dates for the Chignik P. cod fishery:

- The Chignik State-waters P. cod season now opens March 1st or seven days after the federal pot cod season closes, whichever is later.
- The Board also changed the date to rollover Chignik P. cod GHL for all gear types from October 30 to August 15.



All other adopted changes could be termed ‘housekeeping’, including a proposal by King Cove fisherman Corey Wilson to modify the preseason P. cod pot storage regulations.

The following are excellent stories on the recent Board of Fisheries Statewide Pacific cod meeting:

<http://www.alaskajournal.com/Alaska-Journal-of-Commerce/October-Issue-4-2013/AK-Peninsula-Aleutians-could-see-increased-fishing-opportunity/>

<http://www.alaskajournal.com/Alaska-Journal-of-Commerce/October-Issue-4-2013/Board-creates-new-state-waters-cod-fishery-in-Bering-Sea/>

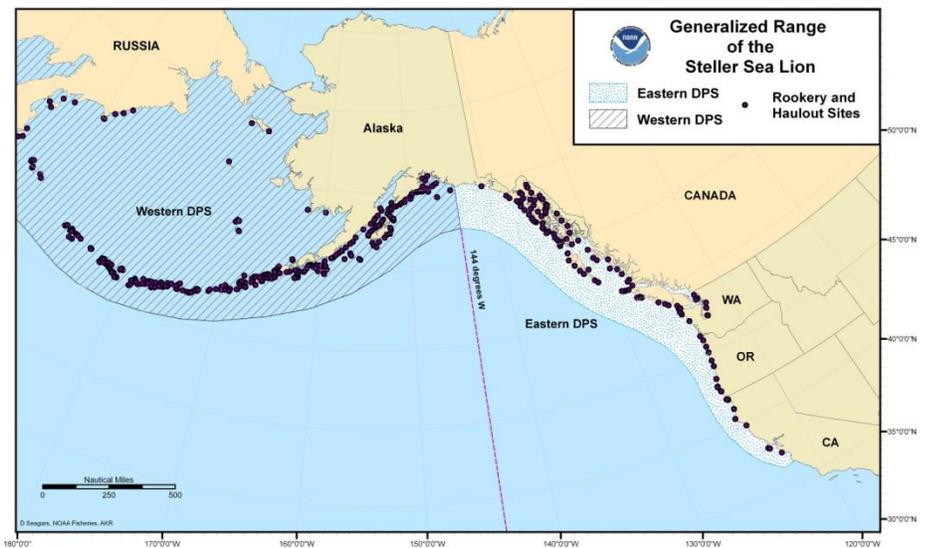
Eastern Steller Sea Lion No Longer Threatened; Western Steller Sea Lion Remains Listed as Endangered

By Ernie Weiss, AEB Natural Resources Director

On October 23rd, 2013 the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) published the Final Rule to remove the eastern distinct population segment (DPS) of Steller sea lion (SSL) from the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife, while clarifying that existing regulatory protections for the western DPS of SSL continue to apply.

When the SSL was first listed as threatened in 1990, it was considered a single species. Not until 1997 did NMFS formally identify the two distinct population segments, eastern and western, divided by 144° W longitude, near Kayak Island. Coincidentally or not, Kayak Island is where the Vitus Bering Expedition vessel, the *St. Peter*, first made landfall in Alaska in 1741. Georg Steller became the first non-native to set foot in ‘Alyeska’ or the ‘great land’. Steller was also the first European naturalist to describe a number of North American plants and animals, including the Steller sea lion.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) describes an endangered species as ‘in danger of extinction’ while a threatened species is “likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.” In 1997, NMFS elevated the listing status of the western DPS to endangered, but left the eastern DPS status as threatened. In 2010, during a review of the eastern DPS SSL, NMFS received petitions from the States of Washington and Alaska to delist the eastern DPS. The recent NMFS Final Rule delists the Eastern DPS of SSL.



Also in 2010, NMFS published a Biological Opinion on the western DPS SSL, and determined that commercial fishing in the western Aleutians was causing nutritional stress on the animals that was likely resulting in ‘jeopardy of continued existence and/or adverse modification of critical habitat’ (JAM). NMFS then implemented severe fishing restrictions in the western Aleutians. The State of Alaska along with members of the fishing industry challenged the finding and the restrictions by NMFS in court. While the court ruled that the regulations were allowed to stand, NMFS was required to initiate an Environmental Impact Statement to measure the impact of the federal action on the human environment (including sea lions). The final SSL EIS is due to be released March 2014. The recent Final Rule by NMFS leaves the western DPS endangered status intact and clarifies the regulatory protections for those animals. On October 16, 2013 the Ninth Circuit Court denied the State of Alaska et al. plaintiff’s request for a rehearing of the case.

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council’s preferred alternative for the court-

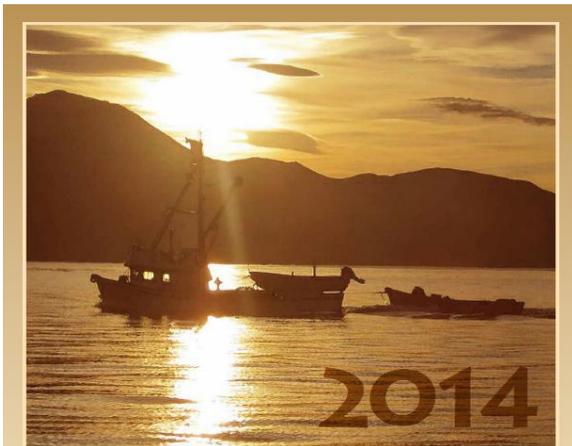


Steller sea lion haulout at Amak Island.

mandated EIS is somewhat less restrictive than the current fishing restrictions and will result in a formal ESA Section 7 Consultation. NMFS Protected Resources division will produce a new BiOp, after consultation with the Sustainable Fisheries division. Alaska Board of Fisheries actions at the recent Statewide Pacific cod meeting could result in additional removals of fish, which may again

result in an informal or formal consultation at NMFS.

AEB Gears up for 2013 Pacific Marine Expo



King Cove Skipper Robert Gould Jr., owner of the *F/V Our Wind*, heads out to beach seine on a gorgeous July morning in belkofski bay. Photo by Paul S. Ouchlan

The six communities of the Aleutians East Borough sit at the center of the world's richest fisheries and have infrastructure in place to support the fishing industry. Several recently completed and ongoing marine infrastructure projects will make mooring in the region even more convenient. The Borough is committed to providing modern and cost-effective facilities for fishermen. For more information about the Aleutians East Borough, please go to our website: www.aleutianseast.net

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Aleutians East Borough public officials, staff and residents are gearing up for the 2013 Pacific Marine Expo (a.k.a. “Fish Expo” or “Boat Show”) in Seattle Nov. 20 – 22, 2013. The Borough will showcase its harbors and other infrastructure at its booth, located in the Alaska Pavilion (Booth #507) at the CenturyLink Field Event Center.

Recent exhibit display updates include photo enlargements of the False Pass and the Akutan Harbors, a new diagram of the Robert “Babe” Newman Harbor in King Cove and revisions to the Borough’s Harbor Facilities and Amenities Poster. All of the flyers have been revised, reflecting the progress made in each of the communities. The refreshed flyers also present a more polished, professional look.

One of the highlights of the giveaways at Expo is the Borough’s annual calendar. This

year, it features a breathtaking photo of the F/V Four Winds, as King Cove skipper Robert Gould Jr. heads out to beach seine on a gorgeous morning in Belkofski Bay. The photo was taken by Paul S. Dushkin.

Calendar of Fish Meetings



- **Groundfish Plan Teams** – Nov. 18 – 22, 2013 – Alaska Fisheries Science Center – 7600 Sand Point Way N.E., Building 4, Seattle, WA
- **AEB Fishermen’s Meeting** – Nov. 21, 2013 at 9 a.m. – Silver Cloud Inn - 1046 1st Ave. South, Seattle WA
- **International Pacific Halibut Commission** – Dec. 4 – 5, 2013 - interim meeting – 2320 W. Commodore Way, Seattle WA
- **Alaska Board of Fisheries** (Chignik finfish) – Dec. 5 – 6, 2013 – Anchorage Egan Center
- **Alaska Board of Fisheries** (Lower Cook Inlet) – Dec. 8 – 11, 2013 – Anchorage Egan Center
- **North Pacific Fishery Management Council** – Dec. 9 – 17, 2013 – Anchorage Hilton Hotel
- **Alaska Young Fishermen’s Summit** – Dec. 10 – 12, 2013 – Anchorage Marriott Hotel – 820 W. 7th Ave., Anchorage

Visit www.aebfish.org for more information.

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