



NOAA to Deploy Bottom-Moored Echosounders near Sanak to Complement Annual Pollock Survey

NOAA scientists from the Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) have been conducting annual surveys to estimate the pollock biomass in the Shumagin Islands since 2001 and around Sanak since 2003 (except 2004 and 2011). The NOAA ship, Oscar Dyson, has conducted the surveys since 2009 using both trawl and acoustic

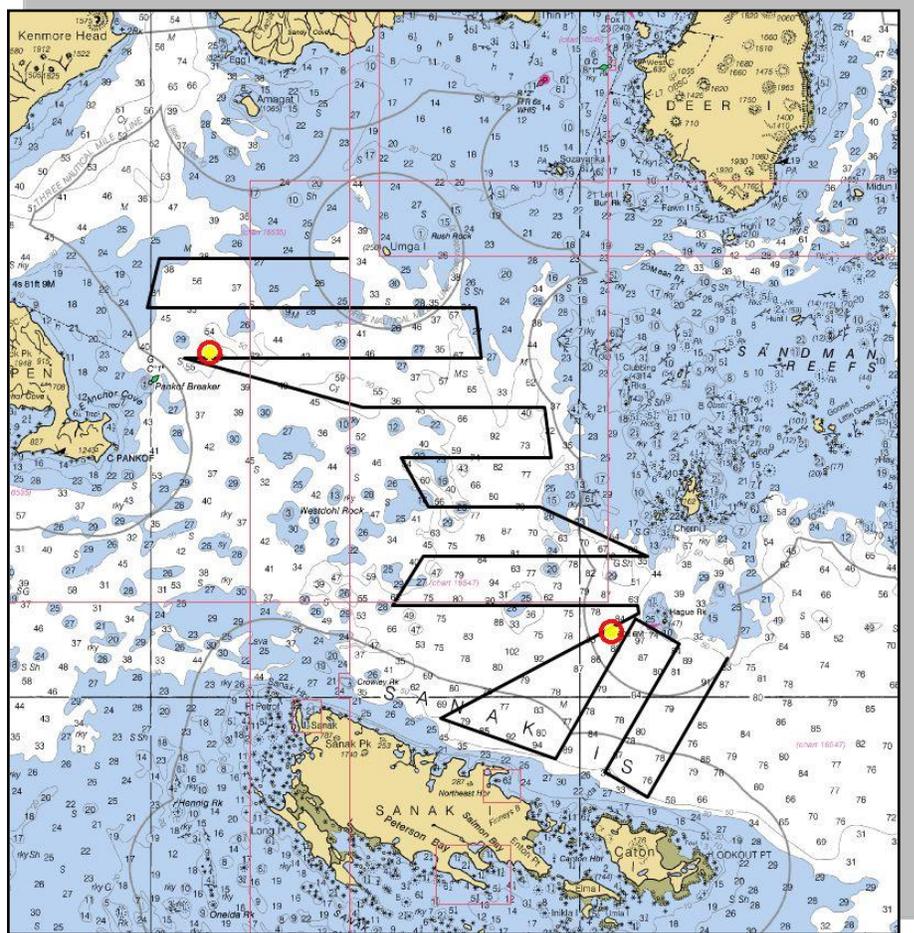


Mooring assembly composed of green trawl-resistant cover and instruments inside, which weigh about 850 pounds with a 1-inch thick plate steel anchor as the base. Photo courtesy: NOAA/AFSC.

survey instruments to assess the pollock distribution and abundance throughout the Gulf of Alaska. In 2015, AFSC researchers tried a new approach to complement the ship assessment surveys for pollock. In addition to the traditional acoustic-trawl surveys, scientists deployed 3 upward-looking Simrad echosounders in trawl-resistant housings on the seafloor in the Shelikof Strait pollock survey area. The moorings were deployed in February 2015 and recovered in May 2015 to monitor pollock as they moved into and out of Shelikof Strait during the spawning season.

When the upward-looking echosounders were retrieved by a chartered commercial vessel after the pollock spawning season, they provided data for Shelikof that confirmed the traditional survey methods within 10%. These low-power 70kHz split-beam echosounder moorings were again successfully deployed and recovered in Resurrection Bay earlier this year to estimate the timing of peak pollock spawning in the Bay. The mooring data from Resurrection Bay will help to determine the appropriate time to conduct the Dyson acoustic-trawl surveys on pollock as they move into the Bay to spawn.

AFSC scientists expect to charter a fishing vessel for initial deployment of two trawl-resistant echosounder moorings in the Sanak Island area this November. A main goal of the project is to help determine the optimal timing for the ship-based pollock spawning survey. This year, the R/V Oscar Dyson surveyed the Sanak Trough on February 16th, finding about 55% of the adult female pollock in the pre-spawning stage of maturity. Typically, however, relatively fewer adult female pollock are in this stage of maturity, and more have already spawned by mid-February, based on vessel surveys conducted in February in other years. It is important to determine the timing of peak spawning so that the acoustic surveys are conducted when most fish are on the spawning grounds. An additional complication is that if the survey timing isn't correct, more fish may have completed spawning and may therefore be relatively lighter in weight (e.g., they have released their eggs) which could also skew the survey biomass estimate to less than what it would have been had the survey been conducted immediately prior to spawning.



Projected mooring locations identified as yellow dots with red edges in the Sanak area. November 2016 mooring deployments are dependent on weather and vessel availability. Graphic courtesy: NOAA/AFSC.

Data collected between Nov 2016 and May 2017 from the upward-looking echosounder moorings will help to determine when most pollock spawn in the Sanak area. Although AFSC researchers know that the Sanak fish generally spawn earlier than those around the Shumagins, they are confident that the mooring data will allow them to better pinpoint the Sanak time of peak spawning. This information will enable them to better estimate the appropriate time for a vessel survey of the Sanak area. While the mooring technology is most useful in conjunction with the traditional acoustic-trawl survey, which provides the needed scientific catch information of fish length and other biological data, the moored echosounder technology could have other advantages. These bottom-moored devices could potentially show broader fish movement patterns and confirm or disprove some speculation of pollock movement between the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea.

Chris Wilson of the AFSC & Ernie Weiss, of the AEB contributed to this article

Paul Gronholdt Appointed to Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission

Sand Point resident Paul Gronholdt has been appointed to the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) for a four year term, replacing former PSMFC member Eric Olson. Olson is also former Chair of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.



Sand Point resident Paul Gronholdt has been appointed to the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission.

The five Pacific States of Alaska, Oregon, Idaho, Washington and California each have three seats on the Commission. PSMFC's primary goal is to *'promote and support policies and actions to conserve, develop and manage'* the fishery resources of the Pacific States. Established by Congress in 1947, PSMFC's activities are funded through federal grants, special contracts, and dues from its member states.

Paul Gronholdt was appointed to the [PSMFC](#) by Governor Walker earlier this month and will attend the Commission's annual meeting September 25 - 28, 2016 in Portland Oregon.

Upcoming Fishery Management Meetings:

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

Anchorage Hilton - October 3 - 11, 2016.

[Agenda](#) items include: Initial Review of EM Integration, Final specifications for 6 crab stocks, Observer Program Annual Deployment Plan, 10 year review of Halibut IFQ Program.

Alaska Board of Fisheries Work Session

Soldotna Regional Sports Complex - October 18 - 20, 2016.

[Agenda](#) Items include: Agenda Change Requests, Stocks of Concern, Cycle Organization.

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