Time to see the LED lights!

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THE BUSINESS MAGAZINE FOR FISHERMEN

DECEMBER 2014

Scale scandal

• Rounding up lost pots
• A whiting 'emergency'

2015 PACIFIC FISHING CALENDAR INSIDE
They're coming for you. Just hold on. The deck was under your feet. Then it wasn't. Sky, water – it's all black. It's been 20 hours, but now the sun's up. They're coming. Stay focused. Check your equipment again; seals are good – no leaking from the gloves or zipper, rescue light secure in pocket, pillow inflated. Stay warm. Take some breaths into the suit's mouthpiece. It'll circulate warm air to your fingers and toes. They should be close by now. Wait. There. A ship! It's getting closer. They're dropping the rescue boat. They're coming. You're going home.

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ON THE COVER: The American Seafoods trawler American Dynasty at Dutch Harbor. Jim Paulin photo

Save the skates!

We fish journalists spend a lot of time poring over fine print.
One of the best sources of fine print is the Federal Register, an endless compilation of public notices and pending regulations.
It’s amazing what you can discover in the Federal Register.
Here’s one example. On Oct. 8, the National Marine Fisheries Service published a “notification of availability” of Amendment 104 to the fishery management plan for the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands.
The amendment, if NMFS approves it, would designate six areas of skate egg concentration as “habitat areas of particular concern.”
Hmmm. Sounds suspiciously like protection of these rare skate nurseries could mean a ban on commercial fishing in the areas, which encompass about 82 square nautical miles.
The notice explained that skates are long-lived, slow-maturing species that deposit egg cases on the seafloor, where they might be vulnerable to trawl gear.
So kick out the trawlers, right? It sure wouldn’t be the first time trawlers were excluded from productive fishing grounds off Alaska.
In this case, however, fishing probably won’t be banned, at least not initially.
The North Pacific Fishery Management Council, which developed Amendment 104, did not recommend regulations to limit fishing in the skate areas “because there is no evidence of adverse effects from fishing on skate populations,” the notice said.
That could change, as the council recommended that NMFS monitor the areas for changes in skate egg density or other potential effects of fishing.
As with so many notices published in the Federal Register, we the people are invited to comment on the pending Amendment 104. See the notice posted at tinyurl.com/q7uc8x7.
The move to designate the skate nurseries serves to highlight something we doubt the general public fully recognizes. The North Pacific has become a patchwork of “special” areas. It’s a trend that’s bound to continue, driven in part by activists leaning on regulators to protect corals, seamounts, canyons, marine mammal rookeries, essential fish habitat, and so forth.
We’ll continue scanning the fine print to keep you informed.

Don’t miss it: Daniel Mintz has a fine story on page 12 looking at how fishermen in California are working to recover lost crab pots for resale to their former owners. Talk about a win for the industry as well as the environment!

Wesley Loy is editor of Pacific Fishing magazine and producer of Deckboss, a blog on Alaska commercial fisheries. You can reach him at editor@pacificfishing.com or (206) 324-5644, ext. 234.

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Pacific Fishing (ISSN 0195-6515) is published 12 times a year (monthly) by Pacific Fishing Magazine. Editorial, Circulation, and Advertising offices at 1028 Industry Drive, Seattle, WA 98188, U.S.A. Telephone (206) 324-5644.

Subscriptions:
One-year rate for U.S., $18.75; two-year $30.75; three-year $39.75; Canadian subscriptions paid in U.S. funds add $10 per year. Canadian subscriptions paid in Canadian funds add $10 per year. Other foreign surface is $36 per year; foreign airmail is $84 per year. The publisher of Pacific Fishing makes no warranty, express or implied, nor assumes any legal liability or responsibility for the information contained in Pacific Fishing. Periodicals postage paid at Seattle, Washington. Postmaster: Send address changes to Pacific Fishing, 1028 Industry Drive, Seattle, WA 98188. Copyright © 2014 by Pacific Fishing Magazine. Contents may not be reproduced without permission. POST OFFICE: Please send address changes to Pacific Fishing, 1028 Industry Drive, Seattle, WA 98188.
Plan names pot grows as salmon threat: An extensive coho salmon recovery strategy released Tuesday by the NOAA Fisheries Service names marijuana cultivation in Humboldt County and the surrounding region as a threat to the dwindling species. – Times-Standard

Aquaculture sales rising: Total sales of aquaculture products in 2013 was $1.37 billion, an increase of 26 per cent from 2005, according to the latest figures in the 2013 Census of Aquaculture. – The Fish Site

Early close to pollock season: This season, the trawl fleet wrapped up a full month early thanks to an abundance of mature pollock. – KUCB

Feds find flaws in Susitna study: Federal fisheries officials have identified numerous flaws in data collection and analysis included in the initial study report prepared by the Alaska Energy Authority for the proposed Susitna-Watana Hydropower project. – Cordova Times

Fishing offset hunger: It is widely acknowledged that fisheries has the capacity – if supported and developed in a regulated and sensitive manner that is both environmentally and socially responsible – to address the challenges and further contribute positively towards eradication of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. – The Fish Site

Casting call for ‘extreme’ seafarers: Jason Watt is an executive producer for Al Roker Entertainment, the company that recently put out a casting call for a new documentary series that will highlight individuals with extreme relationships with the sea. – KDLG

Tanner crab catch soars: The biggest Bering Sea crab surprise is the whopping increase for bairdi Tanners, the larger cousin of opilio, or snow crab. The Tanner catch tops 15 million pounds, the largest in 20 years. – Alaska Fish Radio

Susitna Dam manager blasts NMFS: In a news release, Susitna-Watana Project Manager Wayne Dyok says the NMFS letter “relies on mischaracterizations and generalizations.” The actual response letter by AEA, which is signed by Dyok, goes even further, saying that assertions made by the Fisheries Service are “untenable, bordering on the absurd.” – KCAW

Scientists warn of acidification impacts: A group of 30 scientists meeting in South Korea warned fishing countries, and especially those in the Caribbean, of the increasing ocean acidification. – Fish Information and Services

Millions of sockeye in B.C. run: Millions of sockeye salmon are returning to the Adams River near Kamloops in one of the most spectacular displays of natural beauty in the world. – CBC News

American Seafoods in $1.75M settlement: NOAA and American Seafoods Company (ASC) this week agreed to settle three civil enforcement cases involving flow scales on board the ASC’s fishing vessels. – NOAA

‘Seafood ambassadors’ wanted: A call is out for fishermen who want to be unofficial ambassadors for Alaska seafood. – Alaska Fish Radio

Russian pollock labeled as Alaskan: Russian fish masquerading as Alaskan, when tensions between Moscow and Washington keep escalating, has politicians and others furious. – National Journal

Black cod, halibut prices rising: Prices are rising for black cod and halibut, and there are big changes ahead for EU labelling laws as more information will now be required for better transparency. – The Fish Site

SE Alaska LED salmon catch: Fishermen in Southeast Alaska hauled in the most salmon of any other region again this summer – narrowly edging Prince William Sound by just 404,000 fish. – Pacific Fishing columnist Lautre Welch, reporting for Alaska Fish Radio

NOAA releases 2013 fisheries report: The annual Fisheries of the United States 2013 report states that while national fish and shellfish totals remained about the same, total landings of wild salmon was up 68 percent from 2012. – KDLG

Halloween fish tales told: Once again it’s Halloween. Kodiak’s fishermen shared some of their real-life scary experiences with Fish Radio. – Alaska Fish Radio

*You can subscribe to Fish Wrap by sending an email to circulation@nwpublishingcenter.com. Write your first name, your last name, and the words “Fish Wrap: Do it now, before you go another month without Fish Wrap.”
THE FIRST STEEL HULL FISHING VESSEL FROM DELTA HAS ARRIVED

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A n accelerating trend in the industry is the shift to LED lights for use both above and below decks. (LED is an acronym for light-emitting diode, but don’t worry about remembering what it stands for).

LED lights produce light far more efficiently than traditional lights and require up to 70 to 80 percent less power. Shifting to LED lights can pay off handsomely for vessel owners via fuel savings, decreased maintenance costs, and better crew safety.

Replacing two 500-watt halogen lights with a single 150W LED deck light saves 850W of power – which directly relates to lighter generator loads and lower fuel consumption. For a 75-kilowatt generator running at 75 percent load, the fuel savings over a year can add up to more than $750 – enough to recover the LED light’s cost in less than two years.

When comparing LED lights for use as deck or look-forward lights, you’ll find that there are many choices in the market with a wide range of prices for seemingly similar lights. To help sort through the choices and enable you to make a purchase decision with confidence, here are some tips to help guide you.

**Two categories:** First, there are different types of LED lights and the fixtures or housings that contain them, with significant pricing differences between them. In general, they fall into two categories: optically lensed and those which use the housing shape itself to aim the light.

Optically lensed refers to a light that has a large number of small LED light sources (from four or five to more than 100) arranged in an array or grid, where each light source sits behind a lens that shapes the light to “land” in a controlled pattern. Optically lensed lights tend to carry higher prices but provide excellent ability to target light, whether far in front of your vessel or to specific areas of your deck. They also tend to have higher quality components, higher IP ratings (more on IP ratings below), and longer manufacturer’s warranty periods – in some cases, up to five years or more.

LED models that use the housing shape alone to direct light frequently have a yellow-colored square mounted in the center of a reflective housing that is typically rectangular or conical in shape and usually advertised as an “LED floodlight.” These lights are generally less expensive, since they don’t have the capability to optically target their light, and typically carry lower IP ratings and a one-year manufacturer’s warranty.

LED light bars, ranging in length from one foot to four feet or more, can either be fixture-aimed or optically lensed. You’ll be able to tell the difference by inspecting the face of the housing and also by checking the price level.

**Wattage and color:** Second, you’ll want to understand how to choose the right wattage and light color for the task at hand. It can be tempting to use light output (measured in lumens) as the deciding factor in choosing the wattage for a particular light, but the most effective measure is the amount of light that “lands” (measured in lux) where you need it, which changes based on distance from the light source and the beam angle of the light source (think “spot” vs. “flood”).

For reference, the U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, recommends 54 lux for shipyards and 108 lux for construction areas. A knowledgeable
LED light dealer can help you choose the right wattage light to give you the lux needed.

Lighting for decks and below-deck areas calls for a color akin to daylight, and most LED lights imitate the color of daylight. For high visibility look-forward lights that need to penetrate fog, rain, or snow, the light of choice has been the High Pressure Sodium or HPS light, with its distinctive amber light. Amber light has a longer wavelength than white light, so it reflects less light back toward the light source – resulting in better contrast and penetration and little to no “high beams in the fog” effect.

LED lights are just now being produced with the same penetration capabilities as HPS and at similar cost – but without the relatively short bulb lifespan, separate ballast, and susceptibility to vibration.

One final piece of advice: Work with a reputable and knowledgeable LED light dealer who knows your industry and how your vessel works to choose the right mix of lights that will give you the right light to do the job effectively and safely and that will also fit your budget.

Footnote on IP ratings: IP, or Ingress Protection, ratings are managed by the Geneva International Electromechanical Commission and indicate a light’s tested and certified ability to keep dust or dirt and water out. For marine applications, an IP65 rating is the minimum to consider, with IP67, IP68, and IP69K ratings best suited to stave off the elements and remain in service for the 50,000 to 100,000 hours that LED light manufacturers claim.

Joe Williams is CEO of Elmore Electric.
Researchers have discovered a simple but extraordinarily effective means of keeping threatened eulachon out of fishing nets trawling for pink shrimp: light up their escape route.

Scientists with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife found that LED lights attached to the trawl lines illuminate the escape path under the net, allowing eulachon and other species that enter the net to find their way back out.

Early results indicate that illumination reduces the unintended catch, or bycatch, of eulachon. Of 42 tows, evaluated under a variety of conditions, the new technique demonstrated a 90.4 percent reduction in eulachon bycatch. The catch of pink shrimp – the target species – was largely unaffected, reduced by less than 1 percent. Bycatch of other fish species, including darkblotched rockfish and slender sole, also was significantly reduced.

“Though we’re still fine-tuning the method, the use of properly placed lights really is showing a remarkable reduction in the catch of eulachon while still retaining shrimp,” said Bob Hannah, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

The new technique was shown to be effective when the lights were placed four feet apart across the center third of the footrope, an area near the bottom of the trawl that keeps the net open as it moves through the water. Researchers caution shrimpers to not place the lights around the rigid-grate bycatch reduction device, or BRD, as it actually decreased the effectiveness of the BRD for eulachon.

Shrimpers are encouraged to start using and testing a lighted fishing line immediately.

“We need the fleet to start using these lights. But more than that, we need shrimpers to tell us about their experiences, what worked well and what didn’t, so we can find the optimal arrangement of lights for reducing bycatch,” Hannah said.

The research was funded through NOAA Fisheries’ Bycatch Reduction Engineering Program and administered by the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. The preliminary results hold promise for conserving eulachon, which is federally protected under the Endangered Species Act.

Eulachon has long been caught in the ocean shrimp fishery. The fishery was identified by NOAA Fisheries as one of the primary threats to the species and its recovery.

To learn more about the study, go to tinyurl.com/nd67ej8.

Megan Morlock is with NOAA Fisheries, West Coast Region.
Challengers top Alaska incumbents Begich, Parnell in tight races

The Nov. 4 general election results rocked Alaska’s political landscape, with incumbent U.S. Sen. Mark Begich, a Democrat, and Republican Gov. Sean Parnell appearing to lose re-election bids.

The results have significant implications for the commercial fishing industry. Begich chairs the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard. And the governor has a major say in who serves on panels such as the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

According to the latest unofficial results available at press time, Republican challenger Dan Sullivan had 110,203 votes or 48.7 percent of the total, compared to 102,054 votes or 45.1 percent for Begich.

In the governor’s race, Anchorage attorney and former Valdez mayor Bill Walker, running as an independent, had 107,395 votes or 47.8 percent, compared to 104,230 votes or 46.4 percent for Parnell.

Don Young won his 22nd term as Alaska’s sole congressman. The Republican pulled 51.7 percent of the vote compared to 40.4 percent for Democrat Forrest Dunbar.

Begich has served only one term in the Senate. In 2008, he narrowly defeated longtime Sen. Ted Stevens, who was hobbled at the time with allegations of corruption.

Much of the North Pacific commercial industry supported Begich for re-election. He picked up endorsements from United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA), Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers, and others.

Sullivan formerly served as Alaska attorney general and state natural resources commissioner. Fishing industry support for Parnell seemed less solid. He became governor in 2009 after Sarah Palin resigned mid-term.

In one notable legislative race, Republican Louise Stutes, of Kodiak, defeated Democrat Jerry McCune, a Cordova commercial fisherman and lobbyist for UFA.

Minimum wage, Bristol Bay: In other election results, Alaska voters overwhelmingly passed a ballot measure to increase the minimum wage. The measure raises Alaska’s minimum wage from $7.75 to $8.75 per hour as of Jan. 1. The minimum wage will be raised further to $9.75 per hour as of Jan. 1, 2016. The measure also ensures that Alaska’s minimum wage will be at least $1 above the federal minimum wage.

Alaska voters also handily passed a ballot measure designed to further protect the salmon-rich Bristol Bay region from large-scale mining, such as the proposed Pebble copper and gold mine. Specifically, the measure requires legislative approval of such mines.

Minimum wage, Bristol Bay

Oregon results: U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley sailed to victory over Republican challenger Monica Wehby. And Oregon voters narrowly rejected a measure to require labeling of genetically modified foods.
Bycatch hauls blindside West Coast whiting industry

A perfect storm of bycatch issues temporarily halted the West Coast whiting trawl fishery in October and triggered an unprecedented emergency meeting of the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC).

Most of the recommendations approved at the Oct. 17 emergency meeting were quickly implemented by the National Marine Fisheries Service, allowing the fishery to reopen and avoiding millions of dollars of losses to the at-sea fleet and processing industry.

And now that the smoke’s cleared, there’ll be lobbying and debate over streamlining the process of transferring bycatch allotments between fishery sectors.

Bycatch shocker: As of Oct. 10, the whiting (hake) season was proceeding normally. Following its May 25 start, 1.69 tons of darkblotched rockfish bycatch were harvested in a whiting haul of 48,000 tons.

With a 6.3-ton cap on the bycatch in place, it seemed the fishery’s mothership sector – which consists of trawlers that deliver to processor boats or motherships – would reach its annual 68,000-ton allotment of whiting without incident.

That suddenly changed on the morning of Oct. 11, when several trawlers fishing 20 miles off Bandon, Oregon, caught a combined 5.42 tons of darkblotched rockfish delivered to three processor boats. That pushed the sector over its bycatch cap and fishing stopped immediately.

It was a shock to the sector – its vessels had been fishing in the area for two days prior without significant bycatch. But a school of the rockfish moved unexpectedly into the area, and tons of it ended up in the trawl nets along with 723 tons of whiting.

There was another complication – the rockfish bycatch occurred as another cap was tripped.

The fishery’s three non-tribal sectors – the mothership fleet, catcher-processors, and shore-based trawlers – together are allowed a bycatch of no more than 11,000 Chinook salmon. With that threshold having been reached, the industry and NMFS were obligated to respond to two bycatch issues at once.

Management actions had to be taken quickly to prevent a fishery shutdown that would have stopped the fleet from harvesting more than 21,000 tons of its whiting allocation. The ex-vessel and ex-processor losses combined would have totaled $10 million.

Urgent actions: The emergency meeting was conducted via webinar technology, and the PFMC recommended a 3-ton rockfish bycatch allotment transfer from the catcher-processor sector to the mothership sector. The catcher-processors agreed to it, as their bycatch level was only at 48 percent of its threshold after the transfer.

The salmon bycatch was addressed through implementation of a Salmon Conservation Zone, which prohibits fishing from shore to a depth of 100 fathoms.

But since many large “hits” of salmon
bycatch had occurred at depths between 100 and 150 fathoms, routine transfers of unused tribal fishing allotments to the mother-ship and catcher-processor sectors were conditioned on voluntarily working at a 150-fathom minimum depth.

When the tribal allotments are transferred to the shore-based trawl sector, it will become mandatory for all sectors to fish at 150 fathoms.

Those recommendations were quickly approved, and the fishery resumed on the morning of Oct. 20. Though resolved, the situation highlights a range of bycatch management issues.

**Not so fast:** Among the written public commentary for the emergency meeting was a letter from Richard Carroll of the Washington-based Ilwaco Fish Co. He wrote that the meeting’s haste prevented “the opportunity for full public participation and full stakeholder representation.”

Carroll added that the lack of full consultation “reinforces the perception of inequality and overt favoritism by council management in its dealings with stakeholders.”

This is the first time any fleet has trespassed a bycatch limit since groundfish trawl rationalization started in 2011, and Ralph Brown, an Oregon-based trawler, described the bycatch transfers as “a very bad precedent.”

“Realocating fish because one sector can’t or won’t stay within their quota destroys the credibility of the catch share program,” he wrote.

But the mothership sector’s bycatch maximums are “fairly small,” said Heather Mann, the executive director of the Oregon-based Midwater Trawlers Cooperative, which represents motherships and the trawlers that deliver to them. “That hasn’t caused premature closures, but it’s cost us in moves.”

Mann said that prior to the October bycatch quake, mothership vessels changed fishing locations several times to avoid other bycatches. Last spring, trawlers moved from off the Washington coast to less productive waters south of the Oregon-California border to avoid another species under bycatch caps – Pacific ocean perch.

“That cost us a half-million dollars in fuel alone,” Mann said.

**Too much bureaucracy?** There’s also concern about calling emergency meetings for actions that Mann believes can be done automatically.

“The reason it was extraordinary is that the council held an emergency meeting,” said Mann. “In the 20 years I’ve been involved in the industry, that’s never happened before.”

Mann believes NMFS can automatically transfer bycatch allotments at its discretion. Regulations allow flexibility, she continued, which should make the process less cumbersome.

“It’s frustrating for all of us in the fishery to jump through bureaucratic hoops to get fish that are just sitting there,” Mann said.

The emergency meeting approach is also an issue for shore-based processors, said Rod Moore, executive director of the West Coast Seafood Processors Association. He said a more effective method of setting bycatch levels would be to “better tailor those to the needs of particular fisheries.”

The salmon bycatch-related depth minimum will push trawlers out of their favored fishing areas. There’s less bycatch as trawlers move to deeper waters, but that’s also where fishing is less likely to occur, Moore said.

At 150 fathoms, he said, “it can be way too far out for vessels to be run and then come back to deliver their catches.”

Another issue is that when trawlers move out that far, delivery to processors takes longer, affecting quality of product.

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**Report examines Bristol Bay salmon permit buyback program**

The Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association in October released a report on the idea of a permit buyback program in the Bristol Bay salmon drift gillnet fishery.

Consulting firm Northern Economics prepared the report for the BBRSDA. It is available online at www.bbrsda.com.

Bristol Bay hosts the state’s most valuable salmon fishery. State records show there were 1,863 active permanent and interim drift gillnet permits in the fishery in 2014.

For years, people have talked of trimming the size of the fleet by buying back some of the permits. The goal would be to improve the economics for those gillnetters who remained in the fishery.

The Northern Economics report was commissioned after the BBRSDA board in 2013 asked Bristol Bay drift permit holders: “Do you believe that the BBRSDA should investigate the options available for a buyback program, including but not limited to costs, social and economic impacts to the entire fleet, plus a potential timeline and general feasibility?”

Of those responding, 81 percent answered yes to that question, the BBRSDA said.

Among other things, the report examines previous buybacks in other regions, buyback program authority and design, and potential economic effects.

In 2004, the state Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission completed an “optimum number” study that put the ideal number of drift gillnet permits at 800 to 1,200.

— Wesley Loy

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Deckhand Travis Velas walks across crab pots aboard the F/V Second Wind in Trinidad, Calif. A program to recover and sell lost pots is gaining momentum in Northern California. Jennifer Renzullo photos
California fishermen buy into crab trap recovery program

Losing traps is inevitable when crabbing, and sometimes fishermen are able to recover them. Now more lost pots are being reunited with their owners in Northern California under a new recovery and buyback program.

Prior to this year, the California Lost Fishing Gear Recovery Project operated mostly in Southern California, where divers were contracted to search for and recover fishing nets and lobster traps. But telephone hotline reports from salmon trollers and crabbers themselves indicated that a lot of gear was being lost in Northern California, said Jennifer Renzullo, the field manager for the crab pot program.

She said a Department of Fish and Wildlife warden told her that a longtime Crescent City fisherman, Ron Fosdick, had been pulling crab pots and selling them back to their owners for years, entirely on his own.

“The warden thought, ‘Gosh, this guy is doing a really good job, maybe you should pair up,’” Renzullo said.

They did. In 2008, Fosdick’s field costs were covered through the formative program, and Renzullo said 300 traps were recovered in the Crescent City area that season.

By 2010, a pilot project was started in the Eureka area. The effort reached a milestone this year, when a $109,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s Fishing for Energy program was awarded to the University of California, Davis, for a comprehensive project.

Recovery captains: The Humboldt Fishermen’s Marketing Association was sub-awarded $50,000 of the grant to recruit captains, cover their expenses, and buy recovered pots from them for resale to their original owners.

Craig Goucher, a longtime Trinidad fisherman well-known locally for pulling derelict traps on his own, volunteered to cover his area.

Kevin Pinto took the Eureka area, and Fosdick’s grandson, John Beardon, covered the Crescent City area.

Beardon described his grandfather as “the inspiration for my work.” They teamed up to build Beardon’s boat, the 33-foot fiberglass Stormy II, after Fosdick’s boat – the F/V Stormy – was lost in a 2011 tsunami.

After discussing the recovery project with Fosdick, Beardon decided it was something he wanted to support and be involved in.

“I’ve had my own gear stuck out there, and I told Jennifer I was ready to go,” he said.

Beardon and the other captains were uniquely qualified for the work – they are among the minority of fishermen who have the water-pumping and hose equipment needed to blast traps out of sand.

They’re also among the experienced seafarers willing to work under the challenging conditions involved with pot recovery. Traps are often pulled from shallow break zones, where sneaker waves can hit without warning.

Willing buyers: As of mid-October, Renzullo reported that 620 lost pots had been pulled and more than $19,000 worth had been sold back to their owners, with the earnings channeled into next year’s program. She said 250 traps were remaining to be sold.

The going price for recovered traps is $50 to $75, not a bad deal considering the average pot with a line and buoy runs as
Once you clean off the squid eggs and barnacles, the majority of pots we recover are usable," Renzullo said. But before the program started, buybacks were merely theoretical.

"We didn’t know how willing people would be to pay the bill,” Renzullo said. “Overall, I’m very impressed with the willingness of the fishing community to buy the gear back.”

So is Pinto, the Eureka area captain. But there’s a lot of incentive for Dungeness crab fishermen to support the program.

The lines attached to stuck traps are entanglement hazards and make the problem of lost gear self-perpetuating.

“They’re a big problem to fish around,” Pinto said. “You can’t move them and you can’t set around them. Eventually, you end up fishing right through them.”

The barnacle-encrusted lines of stuck traps make that a risky proposition. When the lines of operational pots tangle with those attached to the derelict ones, they can be cut.

“It’s like a saw blade,” Pinto said. “It can happen very fast, very easily.”

Fishermen are talking about ways to continue the program and fund it, he said. Options for new legislation are being considered, and one of them is to reserve a portion of pot identification tag fees for recovery.

“This program is going to expand and, as more ports get on board, we’ll need funding for them,” Pinto continued.

Mandatory buyback? The statehouse isn’t new territory for the program. Assemblymember Wesley Chesbro sponsored the bill that made it legal for the captains to pull other fishermen’s gear. Goucher, the Trinidad area captain, lobbied for the bill as a member of the state’s Dungeness Crab Task Force.
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So you want to be a fisherman?

Editor’s note: Here’s an excerpt from Dead Reckoning, a new book by Dave Atcheson, of Sterling, Alaska. Skyhorse Publishing calls it the true story of a young man navigating a world of people on the edge and extreme danger at sea. The chapter reprinted here sees the author join the crew of a boat whose skipper was “so confounding, so complex and so frightening.”

LANCER, JUNE 1984

Who, in their earliest twenties could be anything but unsure of themselves, yet so much less cautious about taking a chance? That was me: new to Alaska, wide-eyed, and willing to go anywhere life took me. So it was with barely a hesitation that I climbed into the car with Mark and The Quiet Man, and in a cloud of dust we took off toward the Seward boat harbor.

If I’d known anything whatsoever about the sea, about fishing, or about boats, the fact that the Lancer needed two deckhands – two greenhorn deckhands – just days before the season opened would have tipped me off and would have sent a bright red flare above the turbid sea of my brain, warning me of impending disaster. But I didn’t know the first thing about the sea, this boat, or about Mark, for that matter, and no warning flare was ever lit.

On our way to the harbor we passed the vast, rusty array of blue and green cannery buildings, a corroded, self-contained village that had suddenly come to life with forklifts, cranes, and a flotilla of boats gearing up for the approaching season. Following a quaint seaside street dotted with small gift shops, tour operators, and charter fishing outfits, we passed boats held suspended in dry dock, perched high on rusty barrels and 2x4s. These were either being diligently worked – sanded, caulked, and painted in a frenzy – or sitting neglected, dilapidated, and repossessed. The smell of dreams filled the air, those of fiberglass and fresh paint mixing with the dry rot of those long forgotten. The ghosts of each passing season hanging on the breeze, waiting to be caught and resurrected by newcomers like us.

I looked at Mark sitting there. Though he had the air of a rough older brother, he could be, at the same time, trusting and somehow childlike. One minute a man of the world, the next asking me for something I thought everyone knew, like helping him mail a package or make a transaction at the bank. Either way, as we emerged from the car and headed to the docks, I was glad he was there, glad he’d be with me on this first giant leap into the unknown.

The Quiet Man took the lead, down a ramp and into the world of boats. I had no idea there could be so many. We walked past all kinds, sail and power boats owned mostly by businesspeople from the suburbs of Anchorage who would drive down for a weekend during summer to polish their teak and sip martinis on the back decks. Perhaps they’d take their friends on a little trip around the bay or an occasional troll for salmon. Then we passed the tour and charter boats: large hundred-foot vessels, windowed water buses, fiberglass and utilitarian, their lines straight and not very pretty; or twenty-five-foot aluminum-hulled speedsters set up for sport, halibut poles racked up like weaponry along the outside of their cabin walls.

We headed on to where the working boats were tied, a flurry of activity crossing each slip – men and a few women, tough looking and road-weary, coiling lines, stacking and mending nets, scraping last minute paint and putty. I knew immediately these men and women lived much nearer to Mark’s world than mine; they all appeared to possess at least some of that same swagger, something I hoped might rub off on me.

“Hey, you guys got everything ready to go?” someone called from the deck of one of the boats.

“Yeah, you bet,” The Quiet Man called back, acknowledging a fellow sea dog with the first of his few words and a wave of his hand. He was clearly a part of the annual hustle and drive that springs to life on the docks each year – fishermen and boat people emerging from the winter woodwork. The good ones and the lucky ones, who caught a lot of fish last year, returning from months on a beach in the South Pacific or Central America; those not so lucky, the sourdoughs – sour because they’re stuck in Alaska, with no dough to get out – back from a hard winter spent in the local bars or under the harsh city lights of Anchorage. Whether tanned and trim and full of sun and surf, or down and out and full of drink and despair, they all knew The Quiet Man who walked among the docks in every port town, as much a part of the annual transitory realm of the sea as the tides. It was a realm I saw through a landlubber’s eyes, rough, dirty, and untamed … and so unmistakably foreign.

Continued on page 38
From sea to serve, Lynden’s new Cool Chain℠ logistics service manages your seafood supply chain from start to finish. Whether you’re shipping Alaskan salmon to Seattle, or crab to Bangkok, Cool Chain℠ picks up where seafood is caught and delivers to where it is consumed. Fresh or frozen seafood is transported at just the right speed to meet the particular requirements of customers, all the while controlling temperature to maintain the products’ top quality. Lynden’s Cool Chain℠ can deliver via air, highway, sea, or store the product at our cold storage facilities. And, Lynden brings you the latest in e-commerce technology, allowing you to ship online, track, create reports and even receive your invoices via PDF format, all from our suite of EZ Commerce services.
**AROUND THE YARDS**

**Wegley completes Miss Natalie; Hansen freshens up Beauty Bay**

**Bellingham:** Wegley Boats recently completed a 42-foot fiberglass combination boat for Monterey, California, fisherman Domenic Aliotti.

A third-generation fisherman, Aliotti said he was looking forward to delivery of his new boat, which was launched Oct. 10.

Christened Miss Natalie, Aliotti’s new 42-footer will be used primarily as a light boat for the squid operation he runs with his seine, the Aliotti Brothers.

Miss Natalie is equipped with a 13.5-liter John Deere engine and a 35-inch wheel.

“One of the main things is we try to get as much speed out of the hull as we can looking for product,” Aliotti said.

The vessel has five holds totaling 650 cubic feet. Miss Natalie also will be available for multitasking.

“Right now I do squid,” Aliotti said. “As an alternate thing, I might try crab and salmon trolling.”

Aliotti said Wegley Boats had built Bristol Bay boats for his cousins and uncles.

The builder closed its doors for some years, then reopened. Jim Wegley is the owner.

“When Jim started building again, I located him,” Aliotti said.

Now, the new boat is “finally to the point where we are going to get it wet,” he said.

“Jim is pretty excited about this one and says it is probably one of the better ones that he’s made since he started up again,” Aliotti added.

Jim Wegley said he’s happy to be back in the boat-building business.

“Dad started the boatyard in 1971,” he said. “We had a downturn for eight or nine years. We were able to lock our doors and walk away and come back again.”

Wegley’s father is still around.

“He was able to hang in there,” Jim Wegley said. “Now he is 89.”

**Everett:** Rick Hansen, vice president of Hansen Boat Co., reported in mid-October that the only new construction was a ship-assist tug.

“We did, however, just finish up a one-month drydocking and maintenance on the factory longliner Beauty Bay,” Hansen said.

“The boat comes down every two years for paint and general maintenance.”

The bottom, hull, and house received paint jobs, the factory refrigeration system was overhauled, and a lot of piping throughout the boat was upgraded.

The entire boat was opened up, cleaned, and inspected prior to a U.S. Coast Guard tank inspection.

Some dented bottom plate was replaced and rudder bearings were renewed. One stern bearing on the starboard main shaft was changed out. The factory line itself was refurbished, and some watertight doors were repaired.

The interior wall laminate in the mess area was renewed and pilot house window springs replaced.

A machinery space forward was rearranged with new shelves and deck grating.

The boat left the Hansen yard on Sept. 19 and a few days later headed out of Seattle for Dutch Harbor.

**La Conner:** Isaac Oczkewicz, La Conner Maritime Service general manager, reported the company was building two boats and developing a new model.

The two boats under construction are both 48 feet by 18 feet and will be combination fishing boats for customers in Southeast Alaska, who plan to use them for gillnetting, shrimping, and crabbing.

The new model under development is a high-capacity 39-by-14-foot hull mold.

“We will have the ability to build lengths from 32 up to about 45 feet in that width,” Oczkewicz said. “It’s a larger version of our successful 13-foot-wide Bristol Bay and coastal crabber platform built in the ‘80s and ‘90s and will be a very affordable and economical platform to purchase and operate.”

The vessel can be configured for Bristol Bay, Southeast combination, longline, coastal crabbing, or other fisheries where that size range is appropriate, he added. The house has undergone some design changes to make it roomier and more efficient to work on deck.

**Wrangell:** Kelly Ellis at Wrangell Boatshop reported in mid-October that the shop had a full calendar of wooden boat repairs through the fall.

The shop had in the wooden seiner-tender Misty Morn for plank replacement, with the Norseman coming from Petersburg for fiberglass work.

Following the Norseman, the Symphony from Petersburg was scheduled to come in for plank replacement work.

Two trollers were coming in after that for wood work, the Maranatha from Juneau and the Lady Jane out of Kake.

The boat shop also had the Marine Star booked in for refastening and plank replacement.
LETTER FROM UNALASKA

Crabbing opens with higher quotas; wind hits food supply

Crab blitz: As the Bering Sea crab season began, fishermen were looking ahead to a busy winter. The catch limits for some of the most lucrative species had increased – like red king crab. An extra 1.4 million pounds is up for harvest this year compared to 2013. The harvest limit for bairdi Tanner crab is at a 20-year high, and the snow crab cap is up nearly 26 percent over last season.

Alaska’s fleet isn’t the only one with a lot of crab on the table, though. Russia also bumped its catch limits this year – which could flood the market and push prices down. That’s compounded by concerns about Russia’s illegal and unreported catch. Those were stoked by a recent World Wildlife Fund investigation into the issue. Although the illegal crab harvest appears to be on the decline – possibly due to interventions by Russia’s own government – the Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers trade group isn’t taking chances. They’re lobbying Congress to sign a port inspection agreement that would target suspected pirate fishing vessels.

Blown away: A string of high-powered storms battered the Aleutians as fall gave way to winter. On Halloween, one of them hit hard enough to damage the cargo crane at the Unalaska city dock. The crane slammed into its emergency stops as a Horizon Lines freighter was pulling in to offload groceries and other domestic deliveries.

Although the dock belongs to the city, Horizon Lines owns the crane that’s permanently staged there – and the company usually pays tariffs to move containers out. Horizon couldn’t do that without a working crane, though. So while mechanics checked the machinery for damage, Horizon moved its cargo ship down to the American President Lines yard for an offload.

Two days after that process started, fresh produce and milk were back in stock at Unalaska’s supermarkets.

“...and we still don’t have everything we ordered,” said one exasperated checker at Alaska Ship Supply.

Special delivery: There are a limited number of ways to ship goods to Unalaska. The postal service is usually a reliable option – unless you’re trying to move narcotics.

That’s what Unalaska police suspected 30-year-old Kyle Eby was doing this fall. They worked with postal inspectors to monitor Eby’s mail and intercept about $70,000 worth of heroin and methamphetamine bound for his address.

The drugs allegedly were mailed by 24-year-old Jesse Lee, a woman living in Washington state and who’s the co-registrant on Eby’s post office box in Unalaska.

The amount of meth that the pair is accused of sending is enough to trigger federal drug-trafficking charges. But as of press time, Eby and Lee had been charged only in Alaska Superior Court.

Arctic drilling in play: Shell Oil has been laying the groundwork for another prospecting trip to the Arctic in 2015. The company has submitted new exploration plans to federal regulators. And it has been lobbying for an extension on its leases, seeking five extra years to help make up for lost time and money. A lot of both went into fighting legal battles with environmental and Alaska Native groups who want to block drilling.

But Shell notched a big win in October. That’s when the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management finished a court-ordered review of the potential environmental effects associated with the sale of $2.6 billion worth of Chukchi Sea leases to Shell and other oil companies. A federal judge had accused the bureau of doing a poor job at estimating the region’s real potential for development before hosting the sale in 2008.

On second look, the agency said that the Chukchi Sea is more likely to yield 4.3 billion barrels of oil – as opposed to the 1 billion originally estimated.

But John Callahan, a spokesman for the BOEM in Anchorage, says it won’t translate into bigger impacts to the Arctic environment.

“With the benefit of hindsight, we now know where companies are looking at drilling,” Callahan says. It’s a much smaller area than what government scientists had originally looked at in their last environmental impact study. “For example, impacts for polar bears went from minor to negligible because of the location and the small number of active leases.”

Callahan admits that the case has raised questions at BOEM about the way it estimates the impact of a proposed lease sale.

The Obama administration is mulling a new sale in the Chukchi Sea just two years from now.

Lauren Rosenthal is a reporter for KUCB, Unalaska. Previously, she worked for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.
Calif. adopts law warding off genetically modified salmon

‘Frankenfish’ opposed: For more than four years, the AquaBounty Technologies company has sought federal approval for a first-of-its-kind product. Dubbed as AquAdvantage salmon by its maker and Frankenfish by detractors, genetically engineered salmon stands a chance of being the first genetically altered animal approved for human consumption.

Though the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has made various declarations about its safety, the agency hasn’t yet touched the hot potato of approving it.

In the interim, California has taken action of its own – as this year’s commercial ocean salmon season wound down, Gov. Jerry Brown signed a bill that heads the FDA off at the pass.

The bill, authored by North Coast Assemblymember Wesley Chesbro, bans commercial production of transgenic salmon or, if one prefers, Frankenfish.

In a press release announcing the bill’s approval by the governor, Chesbro described a potential apocalyptic scenario for the state’s wild salmon.

“If these ‘frankenfish’ were to escape into our waters, they could destroy our native salmonid populations through interbreeding, competition for food, and the introduction of parasites and disease,” he said.

The bill was endorsed by a variety of commercial fishing and environmental groups and like others Chesbro has authored, it emerged from his work as chairman of the state legislature’s Joint Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture.

And it will be his last. Chesbro will be termed out at the end of the year.

Salmon marketing’s challenge: “A rather strange, mixed season” is how David Goldenberg of the California Salmon Council described this year’s Chinook salmon season.

The season started on a disappointing note as high winds left salmon unbothered by fishermen through much of May and into June.

“A lot of fishermen didn’t go out, and those who did weren’t finding much to catch,” Goldenberg said. “As much as we try to gear up and be ready, it was very disheartening to gear up a marketing program and then find that the fish are not there.”

A media event planned for San Francisco fizzled, he continued, because “there just weren’t deliveries of any significance coming in.”

But the council’s week-long promotion drive in the Sacramento area got media attention as the capital city’s restaurants participated in a salmon dish contest.

Dam regulation recommended: Languishing in drought, California is increasingly clamoring for more water and looking to reservoirs for relief. But a recently released study warns that the fate of fish is hanging in the balance between human needs and river flows.

Published by the University of California, Davis Center for Watershed Sciences, the study ventures into politically hot territory when it points out that only 38 of the 181 dams it identifies as potentially posing harm to fish are being operated under Endangered Species Act and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission regulations.

The other 143 aren’t subject to those authorities — yet.

The study tosses a potential bombshell by stating that the 143 dams are “considered a high priority for assessing compliance with state environmental flow requirements.”

In other words, “state policy and enforcement mechanisms” may be applied to a lot more dams in the future. If so, those who benefit from irrigation, flood control, hydropower, and water supply will likely be gearing up for a new round of drought-era fights.

Poaching pleas: Days before a scheduled Nov. 3 trial, Humboldt County Harbor District Commissioner and Humboldt Fishermen’s Marketing Association President Aaron Newman pleaded guilty to three misdemeanor charges related to misreporting recreational takes of abalone and deer and giving false information to the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Newman’s three-year probation sentence includes a $3,000 fine, and 250 hours of community service work.

The legal imbroglio cost Newman his posts as the Pacific Fishery Management Council’s salmon adviser and chairman of the California Salmon Council. But Newman has held onto a valuable item that was potentially on the table for revocation — his commercial fishing license.

Boom year’s numbers: The late October release of the National Marine Fisheries Service’s Fisheries of the United States, 2013 report revealed the extent of last year’s California salmon bounty.

Continued on page 38
TOUGH GIRL

Seining at Sitka – no fish and running low on liquor, chew

A big @#$%^ fest is what I would call the summer of 2014 seineing. And I’d rather cut off my own foot and shove it down my throat than go through that again. Much like dating another Canadian. I also found out that you know you’re drunk when it takes three guys at the Pioneer Bar in Sitka to open your lip gloss … but then no one can and they ask the bartender for a wine opener and, bam, done deal.

“Is it 6 p.m. yet?” Oh, thank God, it is! This has been one of those days that you don’t even want to look at the clock to see what time it is. It’s the second-to-last opening of the worst season I’ve ever had in my life, but it went by quickly. That’s what we all are focusing on now. Down to my last can of chew. I tried to quit. Also tried to quit snoring after the skiff man who slept below me called me a grizzly bear chasing a rabbit in my sleep.

Laundry, anyone? The Naked and Famous song “Punching In a Dream” is what I always used to play on watch after we either got done unloading a hatchful or were on our way to a nearby Trident tender. God, I missed fishing for Trident this summer! I’ve never appreciated them so much until I had to fish for Sitka Sound!

This year is different though – no hatchfuls, and it’s “twerkin for a Birkin.” As in we will all have to find winter jobs.

I can almost see the Johansons on the Sabrina running alongside us from across the strait, shooting off fireworks for the Fourth of July. That’s what I miss. I do not miss this shit. No fish, and I don’t know the area or the boats. @#$%^ it. It was fun at first, but not now. It only makes me long to be near the pink salmon capital of the world. It isn’t Sitka. It’s Ketchikan.

“Five bucks a load if you want me to do your laundry in the sink, then dry it in the engine room,” I joked with the guys again.

Stuck and jealous: We just pulled into town this morning, after catching 10 fish at Deep Inlet. Everyone else is south near Ketchikan, or near Craig, but not us. We are stuck up here.

Chew and liquor supplies were running low, so the bitch factor for the crew was at an all-time high – obviously. We were even down to old moose meat in the freezer, but I kept the inspiration on the Shackleton at an all-time high.

“It’s fun fishing around many boats I have never fished by before, but it would be even more fun if we were actually catching fish,” I told Eric while he was opening a jar of adobo sauce with a screwdriver. Took him 10 minutes, and I was giggling the whole time until he got it opened. That’s when I began to gag.

“Holy shit, would you look at that!” I said to the guys on deck, after we loaded up for the first time this summer. We even got “chum shot” in the face on that last one. But I just got word from a friend fishing out of Ketchikan. They got 85,000 pounds for two days, and the guys fishing Noyes Island were loaded by noon. I’m happy for everyone catching, but I’m obviously jealous. Hope we get our time to shine here soon, because we haven’t gotten shit since I’ve been on here.

No mistake: The good thing about this is that I will get back down to my ideal weight after all the sets we made each day. Much to my mother’s dismay, my rib cage and vertebrae will be showing again.

‘Nothing in this world happens by mistake,’ a good friend told me over the phone today, while I was having my morning Irish coffee. I think he was right, because I was able to think about things in a different way than I ever had before. Because it’s seriously 15 bucks for an entire year’s subscription, for Christ’s sake.”

I had my Poke Island tide-like temper at this point. But … we had a dance party in the galley afterwards. Thankfully, deer season began yesterday. Calling this seine season a loss. Time to go kill something, and another day closer to fishing squid on the Pillar Bay with my buddies Matt and Gabe out of SoCal and away from my douchebag of a boyfriend.

Amy Majors writes monthly for Pacific Fishing.

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Amy Majors writes monthly for Pacific Fishing.
American Seafoods agrees to pay $1.75 million civil penalty

**Scale scandal:** American Seafoods Co. has agreed to pay a $1.75-million civil penalty to settle enforcement cases related to flow scales aboard three of the company’s factory trawlers.

In an Oct. 14 press release, the National Marine Fisheries Service said the cases charged that personnel aboard the factory trawlers *American Dynasty*, *Northern Eagle*, and *Ocean Rover* violated federal law “by causing the flow scales to weigh inaccurately.”

The flow scales weigh pollock catches in the Bering Sea, where the vessels operate. Accurate scale data is essential for properly managing the fishery, NMFS said.

The enforcement cases stemmed from events occurring between 2007 and 2012. Fishery observers assigned to the vessels noticed weight “discrepancies,” the agency said.

NMFS, in its press release, did not indicate whether it sought criminal prosecution of the company and vessel captains or crew.

Seattle-based American Seafoods is one of the highest-profile commercial fishing companies in the North Pacific. It operates the largest fleet of factory trawlers targeting Bering Sea pollock, which is one of the world’s largest and most valuable fisheries.

Separate from the enforcement action, NMFS is proposing tighter regulations on flow scales. One provision would require video monitoring of flow scales.

**Yakutat aquaculture:** Cora Campbell, commissioner of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, has approved an updated salmon plan that could usher in hatchery operations at Yakutat.

The new plan builds upon the original Yakutat salmon plan adopted 30 years ago. That plan emphasized rehabilitation and stream enhancement projects and discouraged supplementing salmon runs with hatcheries.

Since then, however, Yakutat area rivers have changed with glacial activity, and wild salmon stocks have diminished greatly in some systems. Local fishermen have seen the financial benefits of hatcheries in other parts of the state. And so we have “an attitude of change towards hatcheries and salmon fishery enhancement” in the Yakutat region, the new salmon plan says.

In 2011, Yakutat fishermen voted to form a regional aquaculture association. That same year, the commissioner confirmed the Yakutat Regional Aquaculture Association, which has a website at www.yraa.org.

“With the revised regional comprehensive salmon plan YRAA will be able to move forward on salmon fishery enhancement and supplementation,” the salmon plan says. “YRAA have already started project planning and received a management feasibility analysis from the department for some potential remote release sites for either pink or chum salmon at Humpback Creek, Redfield Cove, Broken Oar Cove, Puget Cove, Monti Bay, and Eleanor Cove.”

**Togiak herring outlook:** We could see another enormous haul of herring next spring in the remote Bristol Bay waters near the village of Togiak.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game is forecasting a potential harvest of 29,012 tons in the Togiak District sac roe fishery.

Last season, the fishery saw a harvest of 25,136 tons. Despite the large haul, the fishery tallied an ex-vessel value of only $1.26 million, based on an estimated grounds price of $50 a ton.

The herring are valued primarily for their eggs, or roe. Most if not all of the catch is exported frozen to Asia.

Togiak roe, of course, must compete with roe produced in other U.S. and Canadian fisheries.

It will be interesting to see, in the upcoming season, whether processors continue to buy such large volumes of Togiak herring.

Wesley Loy is editor of *Pacific Fishing* magazine and producer of *Deckboss*, a blog on Alaska commercial fisheries.
Mighty Dutch Harbor again leads nation in fishery landings

Alaska on top: Alaska claimed the nation’s top three fishing ports for seafood catches last year, and wild salmon landings - 95 percent from Alaska - topped 1 billion pounds, an all-time record and a 70 percent increase from 2012.

That’s according to a new report, *Fisheries of the United States, 2013*, just released by the National Marine Fisheries Service. The report is posted at tinyurl.com/k2dohb3.

Dutch Harbor topped the list for landings for the 17th year running with 753 million pounds of fish, valued at nearly $200 million, crossing the docks last year. The Aleutian Islands region ranked second for landings, thanks to the big Trident Seafoods plant at Akutan. Kodiak ranked third for both seafood landings and value.

For the 14th year in a row, New Bedford, Massachusetts, ranked first for landings, valued at $380 million. That’s due mostly to pricey sea scallops, which accounted for more than 80 percent of New Bedford’s 130 million pounds of landings.

In all, 14 Alaska ports made the Top 50 list: the Alaska Peninsula (8), Cordova (9), Ketchikan (10), Sitka (15), Petersburg (16), Seward (20), Naknek (21), Valdez (24), Bristol Bay (26), Kenai (38), and Juneau (41).

Most ports showed huge increases in fish landings and values, meaning a nice return in local and state tax dollars.

Overall, fishermen were paid less for their catches. The average dock price for salmon (all species) was 67 cents a pound, down a nickel from 2012.

For halibut, the average price of $3.89 was a drop of 58 cents. All but 76,000 pounds of the nation’s halibut came from the Pacific fishery.

The average king crab price of $5.37 per pound was a decrease of 18 cents.

While U.S. fishermen landed about the same amount of fish and shellfish last year - 10 billion pounds - the value of $5.5 billion was a $400 million increase from 2012.

Maybe the jump in price is the reason Americans didn’t eat more seafood. The NMFS report shows that U.S. per capita consumption stalled at 14.5 pounds of fish and shellfish for the second year in a row.

Figures for recreational fishing activities remained strong. Nearly 9.5 million recreational saltwater anglers in the United States took more than 71 million marine fishing trips in 2013 and caught more than 430 million fish, 61 percent of which were released alive.

Southeast rules: Fishermen in Southeast Alaska hauled in the most salmon of any region this summer, edging Prince William Sound.

Preliminary state figures show the Panhandle produced a catch of 49.7 million salmon, with Prince William Sound yielding right at 49 million (44 million of which were pink salmon).

Bristol Bay ranked third at nearly 31 million salmon, mostly sockeye.

Kodiak ranked fourth for total salmon catches this summer at 14.4 million. Pinks made up the bulk of the pack, with sockeyes coming in at 3.4 million.

The Alaska Peninsula had a harvest of 5 million salmon, mostly sockeye.

Cook Inlet ranked sixth in salmon landings with about 3.7 million fish, nearly all sockeye.

More than 2 million salmon came out of the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim region this summer.

In all, Alaska’s statewide salmon catch was 156 million fish, 20 million more than expected. That’s thanks to a bumper harvest of nearly 44 million sockeyes.

At press time, the state still had not come out with an estimated ex-vessel value for the 2014 salmon harvest.

Ambassadors wanted: The Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute is looking for fishermen willing to serve as unofficial Alaska seafood ambassadors to the world.

Sign up at fishermen.alaskaseafood.org.

“There’s a lot of times when individual retailers or media outlets are looking for folks to talk with who are involved in the fisheries in Alaska,” ASMI spokesman Tyson Fick said.

Pacific Fishing columnist Laine Welch writes the Fish Factor newspaper column and produces Fish Radio out of Kodiak.

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B.C. UPDATE

Hake fishing, sales were problematic in Canada this year

Hake headaches: Jock Bray, chief executive of Aqualine Seafoods, owner of the factory processors Northern Alliance and Viking Enterprise, reported two troubling aspects to this year’s hake fishery.

First, he said, the fish didn’t show up on the grounds as per normal. “The plant boats didn’t get much fishing,” he said, referring to vessels that deliver to shore facilities.

“They got some in July, and it petered out right until today,” he said Oct. 1.

Fishing for factory processors was reasonably steady, Bray said. “Our boats have been coming in with full loads every eight to 10 days,” he said. “They are pretty much on schedule, maybe a trip and a half behind.”

The second issue was the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, two major markets for British Columbia hake, Bray said.

“The Russian and Ukrainian people are hammering each other, and the currency there has devalued,” he said. “Buyers are having trouble getting U.S. dollars.”

Bray said sales in the Ukraine have been sporadic and very slow, and the price for hake dropped significantly when Russia shut the border to Canadian products in retaliation for Canadian sanctions against Russia.

A lot of companies with fish already on freighters had to go to different ports to try to get rerouted, and the Canadian government and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency made a large effort to work through issues with health certificates.

Once a health certificate is issued to Russia, for example, the product has to go there. Numerous containers ended up in Germany, and arrangements had to be negotiated with the German veterinary service.

It was a colossal headache with a lot of people involved, Bray explained, and containers had to be rerouted to different places like Moldavia or Georgia, where there was no ban.

One window for the Canadian producers was China, a market Bray said his company has been cultivating.

“We have always supported the Chinese reprocessing plants, so we immediately turned our attention over there and made deals with significant volumes to keep our boats working,” he said. “We were fortunate because we did that quickly. Some people weren’t as quick and inventories are piling up.

“It has been a difficult season to get substantial orders in China. We had to adjust our price downwards, and since we took our orders, the market has dropped even further. It is not a good situation anywhere for a hake producer.”

Tuna update: Greg Holm, president of the British Columbia Tuna Fishermen’s Association, told Pacific Fishing that the albacore tuna season in Canadian waters was good for both Canadian and U.S. boats.

“It was very, very good, starting in June and July. They had very good fishing, and in August it slowed down,” Holm said. “And at the end they had capacity fishing up in the Charlottes (Queen Charlotte Islands).”

Holm said he had two trips out of the area himself and that virtually all the tuna were very large.

“On the last trip I only had 68 fish under 15 pounds,” he said.

Prices were in the range of $3,200 a ton at the start of the season and rose to $3,400 before dropping in the middle of the season, Holm said.

Overall it was a very good season, he said, adding that it was good to see U.S. boats participating in the fishery in Canadian waters.

“The fish were right off the top of the Charlottes. Apparently, the big, heavy-hitting American boats were up there,” he said, noting that 29 U.S. vessels were counted in the area in one overflight.

“I heard of no issues on the grounds. Everything went well. I think the catch rate was up. Price was a little lower, but volume of fish made up for that,” he said. “By and large, it was a good season and good to see the Americans utilize the grounds. It was positive all the way around.”

Robert Fraumeni, president of Finest At Sea Ocean Products Ltd. in Victoria, said that initial good catches of albacore tuna in July had the effect of dropping the price to fishermen for most of the season.

“All the buyers thought it was going to be a huge production season, and they dropped the price way down,” he said. “The price started to recover later when the buyers didn’t get the millions of pounds they thought they were going to get.”

That first crop of fish virtually disappeared at the end of July and early August, and catches dropped dramatically, Fraumeni said.

A late push of big fish plus a price bump helped make the season for fishermen, Fraumeni said, but it didn’t turn out to be a great season.

“It is hard for the boats to make it at low prices. With good fishing it helps, but as far as the fleet was concerned, it wasn’t a boomer year,” he said. “The boys had fun, but their bank accounts aren’t bulging and they aren’t running down to buy new trucks.”

Dangerous gillnet rule: At the Sept. 25 Fish SAFE industry safety meeting in Richmond, gillnetter Don Ekroth asked Fish SAFE to support his request that Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) reduce the extra-long becket requirement for 90-mesh nets.

In Areas 3, 4, and 5, the province’s northernmost fishing areas, fishermen may use 60-mesh or 90-mesh nets. Users of 60-mesh gillnets are permitted to hang the net right to the cork line, but 90-mesh users must employ a 1.5-meter (58.5-inch) hanging becket.

The result of this, Ekroth explained, was that when the net is wrapped on the drum, the long becket folds in half and makes loops that are 29 inches long, creating a potential safety hazard if looped around a person’s hand.

He circulated photos of a fisherman who had his arm caught and bruised when caught by a loop.

Ekroth asked Fish SAFE to support his request to DFO that the long becket requirement be cut in half to 0.75 meters (29 inches) so that when wrapped on the drum, the loops would only be 14.5 inches long and not pose a danger.

The sad irony of the extra-long hanging becket, Ekroth said, was that it was designed to avoid catching surface-swimming steelhead, a move he feels is unnecessary.

“The DFO needs to show to the steelhead lobby that they are doing something to conserve steelhead,” he said. “But the steelhead are not in danger. We are conserving something that doesn’t need conserving.”

Former fisherman Glenn Budden, now an investigator with the Transportation Safety Board of Canada, pointed out that whenever a safety incident such as Ekroth described occurs, it is essential that it be reported and recorded. If it isn’t, he said, then authorities such as DFO have no evidence that changes such as the shorter gillnet hanging becket are necessary.

Michel Drouin has been covering the fishing industry since 1990.
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Prices in DECEMBER vary in accordance with market conditions.* in thousands. + denotes an increase from last month. N/A denotes No Activity. – denotes a decrease from last month.

By Mike Pointer and the Permit Master

Gillnet: Bay permits dropped slightly in early November to around $165k and buyers started to make offers again. SE permits slipped a bit more with at least one permit available at $90k. PWS permits were starting to move at around $230k. Cook Inlet permits were down to right around $60k. Area M permits were asking $160k and offers were up to $130k.

Seine: No new interest in SE permits with sellers holding out for $300k so far. PWS permits were slow to move, even with permits available as low as $210k. Cook Inlet permits were available as low as the mid $80s, but not much in the way of interest. Kodiak permits were down a bit again with asking prices into the $40s. Area M permits were available starting at $60k.

Troll: SE Power Troll permits started to come down a bit with at least one permit for sale @ $40k. Hand Troll permits were moving at around $11k. Lower 48 Troll permits remain hard to find at any price. Demand is strongest in Washington and California.
Halibut & Sablefish IFQ Prices
Recent market activity in halibut and sablefish quota shares

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Regulatoy Area</th>
<th>Vessel Category*</th>
<th>Poundage</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Ask (per pound)</th>
<th>Offer (per pound)</th>
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<td>Block/</td>
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<tr>
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**Vessel Categories: A = freezer boats  B = over 60’  C = 35’-60’  D = < 35’

NOTE: Halibut prices reflect net weight, sablefish round weight. Pricing for leased shares is expressed as a percentage of gross proceeds. ** Too few to characterize.

A few small blocks of 2C quota moved in the low $40s in the last week of fishing. There was quite a bit of interest in the high $30s. Last minute 3A sales were right up in the $40 range. There are currently no 3B listings available. The last sales were in the low $20s. Quite a bit of 4A on the market, but not much demand at the close of the season. Several small blocks of 4B available @ $10, with no interest.

Several buyers called regarding unblocked SE Sablefish listings in late October. Interest in WY remained down. Buyers were still looking for unblocked CG at less than $20. No recent interest in WG. Still slow in BS/AI.
Classifieds

For Sale

Kodiak ocean front bed and breakfast home, 4000 sq. ft., 5 bed/5bath with multiple living units and large storage area, gourmet kitchen, private beach access, city utilities, hot tub, well-built in 2008. $695,000. (307) 217-2777.

F/V HADASSAH: 58x19 Delta seiner, longliner, pot boat. 343 main; 9kw Northern Lights generator; upgrades include large rolling chaulks, UHMW guards, metalized hydro valves and SS lines; bulbous bow; Furuno sonar; Pilkington deck winch. Also available: 19' Rozema skiff. (907) 399-7219.

F/V WESTERN FREEDOM


47' custom twin diesel Sportfisher completely rebuilt in 2006. $289,000. YW# 1442-2529549. Contact Tom Cardosa at (619) 813-9263 or tom@ensignyachts.com

54' fiberglass freezer troller. Very well maintained boat with a very large fishhold. 1800 gal fuel capacity. 30 kw genset new in 2008. AK power troll permit available. $295,000. (360) 280-2675.

1974 54' heavily built aluminum seiner. 73,000 in RSW. 3406B cat, 26 inch gripper, super heavy duty rigging, fast and very fuel efficient. Owner financing possible with at least $50,000 down now and $50,000 after the first of the year. $369,000 o.b.o. Skiff, seine, and P&W.S. permit also available. (360) 531-3074.

1979 Marco aluminum 32x12. 1st of 25 to be built for Bristol Bay. 425 Caterpillar, this boat is fast and has packed 26,000 lbs. Refrigeration bow thruster, electronics and many extras. $200,000. Also selling permit. (707) 249-6221.

Price reduced to $299,000. 75 foot commercial passenger carrying vessel. Coast Guard current for 100 miles offshore. Call Don (949) 279-9369.
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And a Prosperous New Year

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FOR SALE
California 90-ton commercial squid seiner. All license and equipment. $3.1 million. Call Don. (949) 279-9369.

WANTED
California near-shore permit needed. Right away! Buyer has cash. Please call Don. (949) 279-9369.

FOR SALE
65’ solid fiberglass custom sportfishing charter boat. Licensed USCG for 47 people and 24 bunks for overnight. All electric galley. $312,000.00. Call Don at (949) 279-9369.

WANTED:
Purse seine vessel to run for Southeast salmon season 2015. 40 years of experience and good catch record. Contact Chad Peterman, (360) 378-5260, or birdyp@gmail.com. Area M also considered.

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February ’15 issue, Ad materials due 12/16/14 • March ’15 issue, Ad materials due 1/19/15
Skipper sentenced for sleeping while vessel under way

An Oahu man pled guilty to eight charges of operating a commercial fishing vessel in a grossly negligent manner, said an Oct. 27 press release from the U.S. attorney’s office in Hawaii.

Kevin Lam, 43, was sentenced to a year’s probation and 60 hours of community service.

The press release said that “on multiple occasions, Lam, while master of the commercial fishing vessel, the Lady Ann Margaret, slept for extended periods of time while the vessel was under way, with no other lookout or helmsman on watch.”

“Mariners who intentionally sleep while on watch or abandon the wheelhouse after setting the helm on autopilot put the lives of their crews and other mariners at risk,” said U.S. Coast Guard Capt. Shannon Gilreath.

National water use declines to pre-1970 levels, USGS says

Water use across the country has dropped to the lowest recorded level in nearly 45 years, a new report from the U.S. Geological Survey shows.

About 355 billion gallons of water per day were withdrawn for use in the entire United States during 2010, the USGS report says.

This represents a 13 percent reduction in water use from 2005, and is the lowest level since before 1970.

“Reaching this 45-year low shows the positive trends in conservation that stem from improvements in water-use technologies and management,” said Mike Connor, deputy interior secretary. “Even as the U.S. population continues to grow, people are learning to be more water conscious and do their part to help sustain the limited freshwater resources in the country.”

In 2010, more than 50 percent of the total national withdrawals were accounted for by 12 states: California, Texas, Idaho, Florida, Illinois, North Carolina, Arkansas, Colorado, Michigan, New York, Alabama, and Ohio.

In August, USGS released the 2010 water use estimates for California in advance of the national report. The estimates showed that in 2010, Californians withdrew 38 billion gallons of water per day, compared with 46 billion gallons daily in 2005. Surface water withdrawals in the state were down whereas groundwater withdrawals and freshwater withdrawals were up. Most freshwater withdrawals in California are for irrigation.

Seattle Aquarium grant to support sea star research

The Boeing Co. has awarded a $75,000 grant to support the Seattle Aquarium’s sea star wasting disease initiative.

In fall of 2013, sea stars in Puget Sound and along the West Coast began dying from a strange disease that makes them appear to melt, a Nov. 3 press release from the aquarium said.

Since the outbreak, millions of sea stars have been affected by the disease, now known as sea star wasting disease. This massive wildlife disease outbreak, one of the largest ever recorded in history, was first detected in Washington waters, the aquarium said.

Since the outbreak began, over 20 different sea star species have been affected, including the primary species in Puget Sound - the sunflower sea star, ochre star, and sun star.

The cause of the disease is not yet known.

In an effort to understand and respond to the massive die-off, the Seattle Aquarium has been collaborating with a number of institutions including the Monterey Bay Aquarium, SeaDoc Society, Cornell University, the Wildlife Conservation Society, and the U.S. Geological Survey.

The initiative’s immediate goal is to investigate and determine what is causing the sea star deaths, and disseminate findings to the scientific community, policymakers, government agencies, the media, and the general public, the aquarium said.

The long-term goal is to inform conservation management decisions in Puget Sound.

Objectives include continued monitoring and sampling of local sea star populations and other related species.
YOUR BUSINESS continued from page 14

He said another new approach being considered is requiring buybacks. Now, if a recovered pot isn’t sold, the grant funding is tapped to make up the balance.

“It shouldn’t be the grant that pays for the pot, it should be the owner,” he said.

Regardless of the funding mechanism, Goucher thinks there’s enough support for the program to sustain it as a fishermen-run operation.

“There’s a lot of talking going on right now on how to create our own program – we’ll get there,” he said.

Renzullo said the current program is “exceeding expectations,” and she’s investigating the possibility of getting more grant money for next season as fishermen work on permanent funding.

It seems as inevitable as losing crab traps.

“The main thing is that the community support and support from the fishermen has been very impressive,” she said.

“This has been a truly collaborative approach to cleaning the ocean.”

BOOKSHELF continued from page 16

Too far in to turn back now, I followed Mark and The Quiet Man deeper into uncharted territory, finally rounding the corner onto another finger of dock and ambling down a long row of vessels before spotting the one we were after. Its name, Lancer, was not written in some fancy Gothic script, like many of the boats we’d passed, or in carefully painted block letters, but stenciled haphazardly across its bow, the way the letters were scrawled on Mark’s fingers, as an afterthought or just another job to do.

That’s when I saw Woody on deck, old and weather-worn and engrossed in the intricate task of splicing two pieces of line into one. The old man looked a lot like the Lancer – compact, tempered, yet battered and a bit rusty. Perhaps he’d been one of those spending a long winter in the bars of Seward.

He looked up as we approached, absentely dropping the ball of line that had so absorbed him a moment earlier. He wore a sort of spotted, chocolate-brown cap that once must have been as white as his remaining hair but was now stained with what looked like years of diesel oil and grease. I couldn’t help but notice his hands; they were squat and leathery like a pair of old-time baseball mitts that hadn’t been oiled in decades and shy a few fingers.

“Woody,” Mark said, surprising me how sheepish his voice suddenly sounded, “this is my friend – the one I was telling you about.”

Something about the way he sized me up from the deck of his boat, his stance, his stabbing glare – a look that told me he and he alone was the boss, off shore and on – made me hesitate, even when he finally asked us in a gravelly voice to come aboard. But as we began to take that step over the rail and onto the boat he stopped short, turning abruptly to look me in the eye and catching just a glint of my momentary panic.

“So, you want to be a fisherman,” he said, more of a wager than a question.

Then, without waiting for a response he quickly turned, leading us into his kingdom, the beginning of my long and desultory alternative education. My introduction to the sea.

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The state’s salmon landings – principally of Chinook – neared 4.4 million pounds, a haul valued at $23 million ex-vessel.

That’s almost 1.5 million pounds and $10.1 million more than seen in 2012. The average ex-vessel price per pound in 2013 also topped the previous year’s average of $4.47, coming in at $5.29.

In another California staple fishery, Dungeness crab landings totaled 31 million pounds, a 20 percent increase from 2012. The state led the nation in landings, bringing in more than 35 percent of the U.S. total.

California’s two northernmost ports – Eureka and Crescent City – each saw seafood landing increases in 2013. Eureka’s landings rose to 15 million pounds from the previous year’s average of $4.47, coming in at $5.29.

Crescent City’s landings jumped to 18 million pounds, up from 13 million. Total ex-vessel value also rose to $34 million, a $6 million increase from 2012.

Pacific Fishing columnist Daniel Mintz has reported on Humboldt County’s government and natural resources industries for more than a decade.
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