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Kenai Peninsula 2020 Commercial Fishing Industry COVID 19 Action Plan

PURPOSE

This document expands on the ASA COVID 19 general action plan that proposes actions to conduct a viable commercial fishery throughout the Kenai Peninsula Borough in 2020.

There are three primary areas that this plan seeks to address: People, Product, and Management. Objectives for each area are supported by general goals to meet each objective. Each goal is supported by tasks that should be considered to meet goals and objectives.

Note: It is important to understand that given the evolving nature of the community and industry response to the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic, the information provided herein is subject to revisions and changes as deemed most appropriate by industry representatives.

Kenai Peninsula Commercial Fishing Industry Objectives – 2020

1. PEOPLE: Develop and implement worker safety and health protocols so harvest and processing sectors can continue to harvest and produce products for distribution in the region and beyond.
2. PRODUCT: Ensure consumers of Kenai Peninsula fish products have confidence that all regional commercial seafood products are safe for consumer consumption.
3. MANAGEMENT: Confirm ADF&G managers have clear authority to implement in-season emergency orders to allow for rational harvest opportunities by all gear types within existing escapement goals.

Objectives, Goals and Proposed Tasks

1. PEOPLE

- ***Develop and implement worker safety and health protocols so harvest and processing sectors can continue to harvest and produce products for distribution in the region and beyond.***
 - Work with appropriate local and state agencies to develop and implement safe travel and vetting practices for harvest and processing crews.
 - To the extent practical, undertake local and state approved screening of all personnel arriving from out of the local area to monitor actual and potential risk of infection of C-19. (i.e. at regional and local airports)

- Identify on-going C-19 assessment requirements to mitigate the threat of developing in season exposure between various elements of workforce.
- Identify and mitigate hazards related to processing staff interaction consistent with appropriate agency guidelines.
 - Monitor and implement worker safety protocols as updated and revised by state and federal worker safety agencies.
 - Determine if agencies provide standardized forms or logs to document compliance consistent with agency expectations or requirements.
 - Document implementation of safety practices as appropriate.
- Each processor will comply with evolving local, state and federal worker safety protocols related to mitigation of risk and spread of COVID-19 among processing staff.
 - Document monitoring and compliance with pre- and in-season changes as directed by appropriate agencies.
 - Work with suppliers of consumables used to protect workers during all aspects of handling, processing, storing and transporting fish products.
- Vessel captains and shore-based crew bosses will be provided written recommendation and protocols to manage interaction of crew personnel during the season.
 - Processors can provide documents and information to harvesters as appropriate that explains appropriate hygiene and risk mitigation practices that should be implemented by harvest crews.
 - Crews that work in somewhat confined spaces will be monitored and separated in the event flu-like symptoms appear.
 - Harvesters that suspect or confirm potential health concerns of crew shall report them to their processor and follow medical reporting requirements as directed.
- Remote-based hatchery operations will provide instructions to remote crews based on current and evolving local, state and federal worker safety practices.
 - Adopt practices that minimize the number of staff required to maintain and work at remote sites throughout the region.
 - Implement regular monitoring of health condition of staff at all remote work sites and provide that data to health agencies as appropriate.
 - Follow appropriate hygiene and safety practices at community based facilities.

2. PRODUCTS

- ***Ensure consumers of Kenai Peninsula commercial fish products have confidence all commercial seafood products that are produced in this region are safe for consumer consumption.***
 - Identify and implement inspection protocols to ensure product quality at various levels of the production process (i.e. buying, transport, processing, storage, shipment, etc.).
 - Work with appropriate AK Dept. of Environmental Conservation and related food safety agencies to identify and implement COVID 19-specific food safety protocols.
 - Document how these season-specific protocols are implemented at each stage of the salmon processing process as appropriate.

- Consider marketing program to communicate product safety and quality to consumers.
 - Work with AK Seafood Marketing Institute to determine what support they can offer to assist in ensuring consumer confidence in salmon products during the 2020 season.
 - Identify local resources such as Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development District, local media, etc. to promote the efforts of the local industry in providing high-quality Cook Inlet salmon products during the 2020 season.
- Coordinate inspection and marketing programs with appropriate agencies / partners.
 - Determine if any special food quality inspections will be conducted for salmon products during the 2020 season.
 - Comply with any new food quality programs and include a description of these efforts in any related marketing efforts.
- Pursue relief from / postponement of state anti-trust laws so area processors can collaborate production / transportation efforts in order to more efficiently process 2020 harvest.
 - Work with United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA) on their initiative to see relief for these business constraints for the 2020 season.
 - Each processor will work with their respective legal counsel to ensure compliance with any accommodations or conditions related to this initiative.
- Consider providing product to regional buyers as priority to mitigate the potential effects of social distancing and travel restrictions on recreational anglers to provide fresh fishery products as a food resource to individuals.
 - Work with internal marketing and sales staff to identify regional buyers that may be interested in increased access to product.
 - Explore new ways to provide salmon products to local communities to offset any reduction in recreational opportunities to harvest personal salmon.

3. MANAGEMENT

- ***Confirm ADF&G managers have clear authority to implement in-season emergency orders to allow for rational harvest opportunities by all gear types within existing escapement goals.***
 - Work with local management staff to identify strategies to manage fishing opportunities based on various scenarios requiring change in public access (i.e. closures to recreational gatherings, etc.).
 - Coordinate with local salmon harvest organizations to reach consensus on in-season management options.
 - Establish lines of communications with appropriate industry representatives to facilitate in-season exchange of information to assist local managers in managing openings and closures to meet escapement goals.
 - Work with local staff to generate statement explaining proposed in-season management options in light of restrictions on travel and public gatherings.
 - Work on a common statement by ADF&G staff and industry in order to manage expectations of harvesters, including those from L-48, processors and consumers.

- This should be completed in sufficient time to allow for appropriate planning by various industry sectors.
- Support ADF&G in determining essential and non-essential staff and projects for ensuring prosecution of fishery can be managed with anticipated staffing constraints.
 - Work with UFA to support ADF&G realignment of staff, including canceling of non-essential in-season projects to reduce stress on the department during the 2020 season.
 - Work with area legislators in order to support reductions in demand on limited ADF&G financial resources and re-focus on COVID 19-related measures to support and manage an orderly commercial salmon fishery in Cook Inlet in 2020.
- Identify examples of what industry can suspend or do to mitigate reduced ADF&G programs related to managing the fishery.
 - Work with local ADF&G managers to identify and support this initiative.
 - Work with local government, area legislators and others to support the Administration in reducing non-essential ADF&G projects and focus on COVID 19 measures to support commercial salmon harvest in 2020.