

CFEC Launches Optimum Number Study for Cook Inlet

The Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) is constitutionally and statutorily required to adopt an optimum range of numbers for all limited entry fisheries. To date, optimum number ranges have been adopted in regulation for Bristol Bay driftnet, Northern Southeast Inside sablefish, and Sitka herring seine, none of which resulted in voluntary buyback.

CFEC recently sent out surveys to conduct an optimum number for the Cook Inlet setnet fishery. Eventually, CFEC will conduct studies and establish numbers for each of the remaining 63 limited entry fisheries. The method of setting these numbers relies heavily on survey data and economic analysis, which guide the optimum numbers study.

CFEC is developing strategies for gathering information from limited entry fishery participants, which may include voluntary telephone and in-person interviews, direct mailings, and online surveys. CFEC will use the information gathered through these channels and the relevant agencies to complete the optimum number studies.

In order to protect the interests of the fishermen, the optimum number studies must be based on accurate data and objective economic analysis specific to the unique aspects of each fishery. Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) will provide key information on catch and management. However, to best understand the economics of the fishery, the permit holders' participation will be crucial to help ensure that CFEC has accurate data when conducting each optimum number study. CFEC can assure that personal information and personally identifiable information will be kept confidential. Additionally, once analysis of a fishery has begun, CFEC will refrain from discussing the details until the study results are made public.

While CFEC is heavily focused on defining its process and moving forward with optimum number studies, there is no set timeline for completion of this work. Cook Inlet setnet study will go a long way towards helping CFEC refine its tools and construct a solid set of procedures for the optimum number project. We thank you in advance for your support!

If you have questions about the project, please contact Brad Robbins, Research Section Leader at (907)790-6943 or brad.robbins@alaska.gov.