

Washington Pink Shrimp Fishery Newsletter 2016

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Region 6 Shellfish Management Program
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*This newsletter provides a summary of the Washington commercial pink shrimp (*Pandalus jordani*) trawl fishery for the 2015 season and information for the 2016 season of interest to industry participants.*

For additional fishery information go to:
<http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/commercial/shrimp/>

2015 Season Summary

The 2015 shrimp season was a record breaker for Washington! Likewise, the 100 million pounds landed for Washington, Oregon and California combined exceeded all previous year totals.

The Washington pink shrimp fishery opened as scheduled on April 1, 2015 and the first landings were made beginning April 4. The fishery landed a total of 41.5 million pounds, exceeding the previous record high from 2014 (Figure 1). The number of limited entry permits has been stable, at 83, over the past decade; the number of actively fished licenses, however, increased in 2015 to 40 or the highest seen since 1996. As with catch, the 2015 total ex-vessel or direct value of \$29.7 million was a record high (Figure 2). The weighted average price per pound was 72 cents, up from 53 cents in 2014. The majority of shrimp (58%) were landed at a price of 67 cents per pound. Nearly half the landed catch originated from the mid-coast of Washington (Figure 3). Total monthly landings peaked in May and August (Figure 4). Except for October, landings for each month in 2015 were higher than in 2014, and substantially higher than the 15-year average. The October 2015 landed total was very similar to the 15-year average. Per regulation, the fishery season closed October 31.

Overall, increases in the Washington fishery can be attributed to a combination of shrimp abundance – the strong 2013 year-class, a substantial increase in processing capacity at Westport beginning in 2014, and an influx of vessels. The upward jump in participants is due to in part to vessels moving their home-port to Westport from Warrenton, Oregon following the processing plant fire there in 2013 and to long inactive licenses being fished again.

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Figure 1. Shrimp trawlers at Westport, WA.

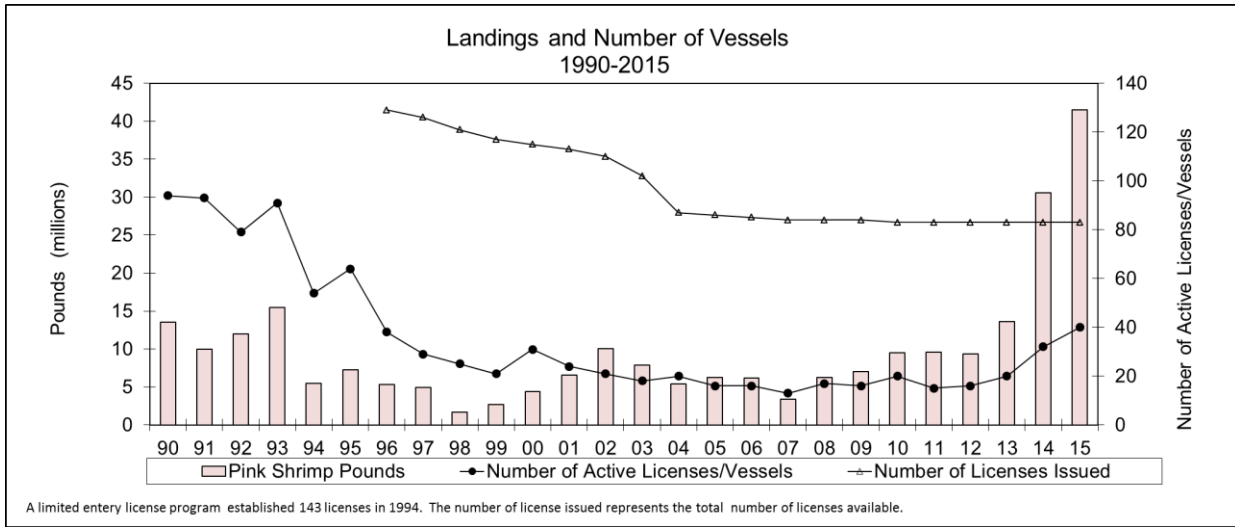


Figure 2. Washington pink shrimp landings, number of active vessels and number of limited entry licenses, 1990-2015.

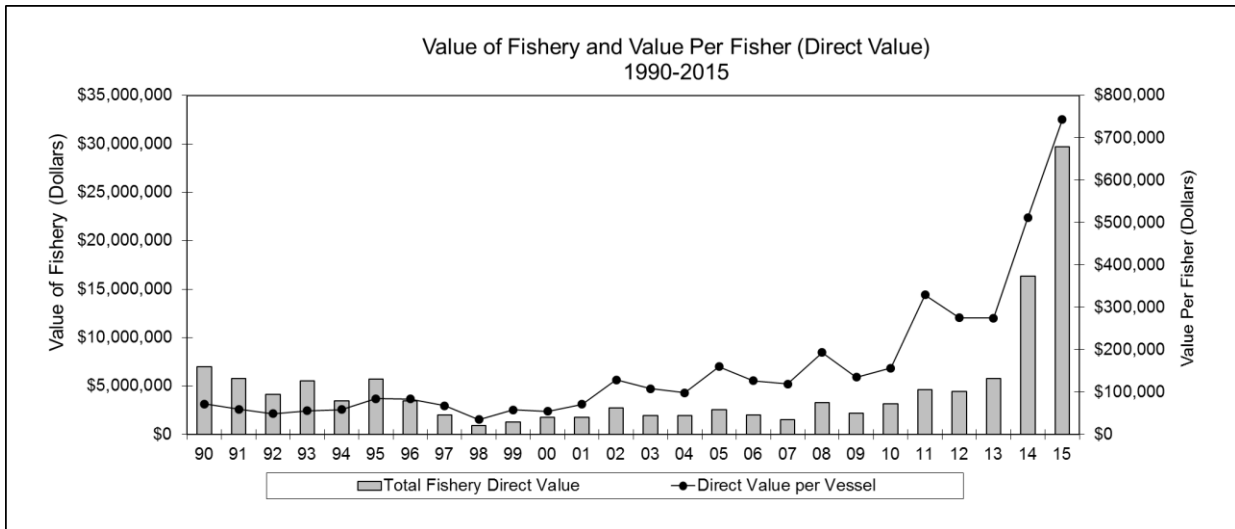


Figure 3. Washington pink shrimp total fishery direct (ex-vessel) value and direct value per fisher, 1990-2015.

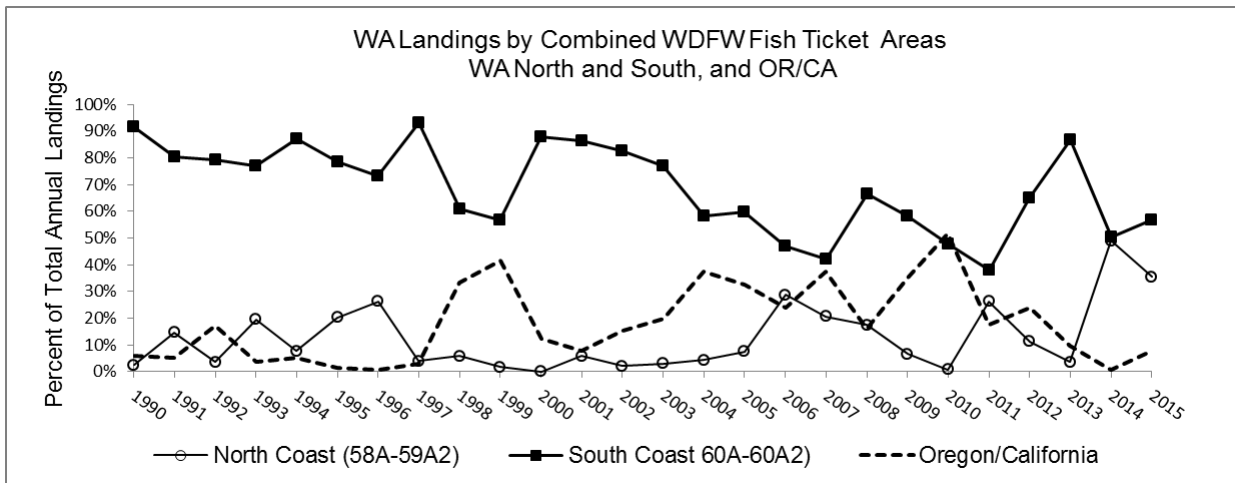


Figure 4. Washington shrimp fishery catch by combined fish ticket areas, 1990-2015.

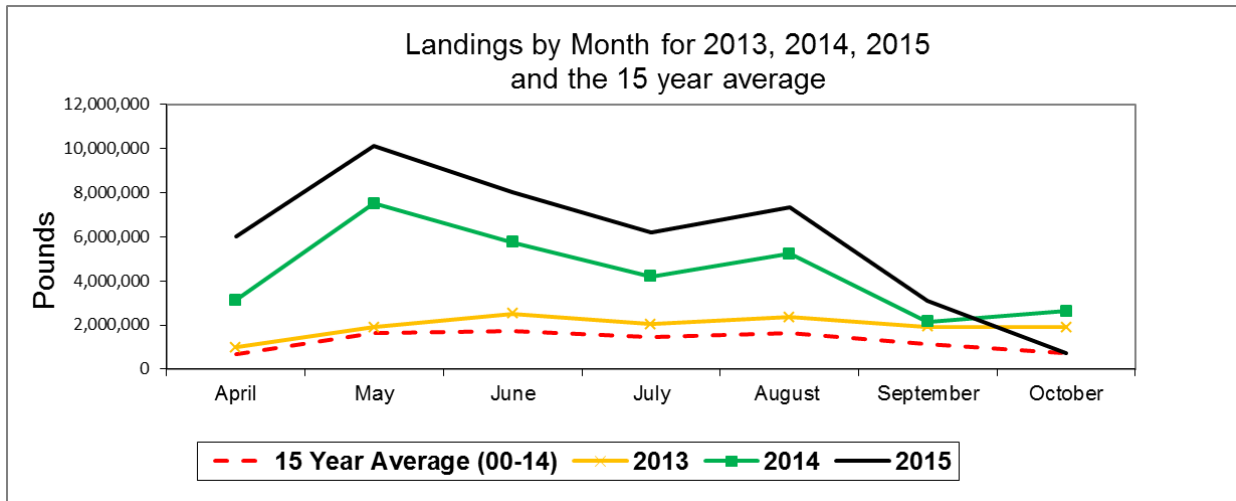


Figure 5. Washington pink shrimp landings by month for 2013, 2014, 2015 and the 15 year average.

MSC Certification!



In 2015 the coastal pink shrimp trawl fishery became the first state managed fishery in Washington to achieve the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification for sustainable wild-caught seafood. This certification was accomplished as a “scope extension” of the already certified OR shrimp trawl fishery. Certification was successful, in large part, due to strong similarity of the two state’s fisheries. The coastal shrimp stock is viewed as one stock and regulations are nearly identical in both states. WDFW management responsiveness to changing circumstances and new information also contributed to the positive rating. While most skippers would not consider themselves “managers” you deserve credit for being pro-active and moving the fishery towards greater sustainability.

Certification is not a one-time deal; in order to maintain certification the MSC process sets conditions and conducts annual audits to review progress. The next audit is March 2017 and will consider agency progress on fishery monitoring, a fishery management plan and consideration of new gear regulations.

2015 Enforcement Report



WDFW Enforcement officers are responsible for ensuring regulatory compliance of shrimpers. One officer provided the following observation: “Overall, I found this to be a very clean fishery. The main issues I found were bent or missing excluder bars and not accounting for bycatch in the logbook. The reason given for not accounting for the bycatch is the captains all stated it was less than ten pounds. This was reflected in the logbooks that were filled out correctly. Those captains were also showing bycatch rates of typically 10 pounds or less primarily composed of anchovies and smelt. The quality of the shrimp last year was of such that a quick glance would indicate the shrimp were well below the minimum count.”

In 2015, WDFW detachments report the following coverage specific to the pink shrimp fishery:

- Enforcement Hours: 88.5
- Number of Contacts: 251
- Not in Compliance Checks: 7 (4 Verbal warnings for excluder violations involving bent or broken bars, 2 Verbal warnings for logbook violations, 1 Citation for RCW 77.15.500 No alternate operator's license.)

Freezing Catch At Sea



In 2014, a shrimp trawler began shrimp fishing off Washington and freezing the catch at sea. This vessel had not previously fished in the Washington shrimp trawl fishery, nor had freezing catch at sea been done before in the fishery. WDFW Enforcement was alerted to and investigated this vessel's activities. Washington regulations do not explicitly prohibit freezing catch at sea, but to address fishery specific needs, the pink shrimp trawl fishery permit was conditioned with new provisions to support monitoring and sampling of frozen landed catch. In 2015, focused sampling was conducted to compare frozen and fresh shrimp counts per pound. This effort is not completed and will continue in 2016.

Separately, WDFW policy and rule-making discussions are moving forward, advancing a position that would prohibit freezing of catch (fish and/or shellfish) unless otherwise allowed by a WDFW rule or permit. Adoption of this rule is anticipated for 2016.

Implementation of Lights and Proposed Rule for 2017

Anecdotally most Washington shrimpers were reporting the use of LED lights in 2015. To better assess adoption, WDFW is conducting a survey of license holders. With 30% of active skippers responding, the results do point to nearly universal use of green LED lights, ranging from 8 to 18 per net. One Washington skipper is not yet using lights. Comments regarding the effectiveness of the lights at reducing bycatch ranged from good to very good – “They work!” The survey is also asking for information about ground gear design. The plan is to shift survey efforts to dockside interviews once the 2016 season opens to get a complete assessment of the fleet.

The use of LED lights is likely to be required under forthcoming National Marine Fisheries Service recovery plans for eulachon (i.e. the ESA listed southern distinct population segment). In anticipation of this, the ODFW is proposing the following regulation for adoption before or during the 2017 fishery season.

“It is unlawful to fish with trawl gear for pink shrimp for commercial purposes without approved and operational footrope lighting devices in use, arranged according to rule. Lighting devices must be securely attached to the fishing line of the trawl, defined as a line spanning, and attached to, the forward leading edge of the

trawl netting. Lighting devices are required along the center third of the fishing line of each trawl net and are to be spaced at a maximum of four feet apart.

Approved lighting devices include:

- (a) Lindgren-Pittman Electralume Light Emitting Diode (LED) lights.
- (b) Other footrope lighting devices that are deemed by the Department to have comparable or greater total illumination may be approved for use, on a case-by-case basis, through issuance of an Experimental Gear Permit (EGP).”

The proposed rule is a starting point for discussion. This draft language will be modified as needed to fit current WDFW regulation format and style. For example, to encourage and allow improvements, the ODFW rule includes provisions for an experimental gear permit. This portion of the rule isn’t necessary for the Washington fishery. Upon request, each Washington shrimp trawl permit can be conditioned to authorize skippers to test and report results of alternative lights or light arrangements. Comments on the proposed rule are highly encouraged and can be provided via email or by calling agency managers, contact information is provided on page 8.

Fishery Management

Guiding principles for fishery management are founded in the agency mandate to protect the resource and enhance commercial opportunity. In addition, expanding from this general directive, specific policy for the coastal pink shrimp fishery includes maintaining regulatory consistency with the states of Oregon and California. A commitment to pursue similar management derives from the 1980 Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) preliminary fishery management plan (FMP); the FMP was not adopted due to budgetary constraints, rather its objective was achieved through the states adopting the Council preferred option. Following formal and informal tri-state consultation, WDFW adopted regulations for mandatory excluders in the Washington coastal shrimp fishery concurrently with Oregon and California in 2003. Similarly in 2012, WDFW moved to adopt regulations for maximum bar spacing on excluder panels to coincide with ODFW implementation that same year. The justification for this action was based in part on ODFW research.

Fishery specific policy is not presently captured in any formal agency document. In response to the listing of eulachon as a threatened species and Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification of the Washington fishery, the need for a formal, written fishery management plan has been recognized. Accordingly, WDFW fishery managers have committed to developing a plan for consideration by the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission). Fishery management plan (Plan) development and internal review will be accomplished during spring and summer 2016 (Table 1). A public meeting(s) to provide industry and other stakeholders an opportunity to comment on the plan will be held in fall 2016 and will be scheduled consistent with fishery activity to ensure maximum participation. Presentation of the Plan to the Commission will

follow a two-meeting process: the first meeting is an informational briefing, with consideration for adoption taken at the second meeting.

Table 1. Timeline to adopt Pink Shrimp Fishery Management Plan

Complete draft fishery management plan	March – May 2016
Submit draft fishery management plan for internal review	June 1, 2016
Final Proposed Fishery Management Plan	October 1, 2016
Public meeting – Review Final Proposed FMP	October 2016
Fish and Wildlife Commission Public Briefing	November or December 2016
Fish and Wildlife Commission Public Hearing	January – February 2017

2016 Research Plan

Biological and Catch Evaluation



The primary objective for 2016 is to achieve full implementation of the fishery monitoring and sampling program. Following budget reductions the WDFW shrimp fishery project was disbanded in 1993. General fishery management oversight was maintained, but biological sampling and the shrimp fishery logbook program were discontinued. Elements of active management have been reestablished gradually. Routine count-per-pound compliance checks were reinstated beginning in 2008; the logbook program was restored in 2011, and biological sampling was initiated in 2015.

Presently, all logbook data are keyed into an Access database. Evaluation of logbook data for 2015 is pending completion of data entry in March 2016 and will be posted to the WDFW pink shrimp fishery web page. To better align staff resources and volume of logbook data and improve timeliness of reporting, a method to subsample logbooks for analysis will be developed and implemented in 2016.

Rather than establish separate protocols, WDFW adopted ODFW sampling guidelines and methods. This should support the ability to potentially compare results or combine data sets in future analyses. WDFW field technicians were trained by an ODFW port biologist in late spring 2015. A total of 13 samples were collected subsequent to the training. In 2016 routine sampling will expand to ensure temporal and spatial coverage of landings. A review of fishery landings and sampling activity will be scheduled in early June to evaluate, adjust and refine the program.

Bycatch Evaluation

To fully assess fleet utilization of lights and characterize ground-gear configurations, dockside interviews will be conducted in 2016 with any vessel that did not respond to the mailed survey or are newly participating in the Washington fishery. Results of the survey will help managers compare proposed rules for LED lights with current usage and the degree to which adoption of those rules

will impact participants in the fishery. As in past years, fishery managers will share new findings or research with skippers to facilitate and expedite adoption of best-practices in reducing bycatch.

Fishing Regulations

Coordination with Oregon

While most regulations are similar, when fishing offshore another state shrimpers are reminded to confirm that their operations conform to that state's regulations. For example, Oregon law does not authorize the landing of frozen shrimp, whereas this activity is permissible via permit in Washington. Also Oregon licensed shrimpers can trawl in that state's territorial waters; conversely Washington does not allow any trawling in its coastal territorial waters (0-3 miles).

Shrimp trawl logbooks are required by both WDFW and ODFW, and each agency will accept the other state's logbook.

Vessel Monitoring System (VMS)

The National Marine Fisheries Service requires any vessel using non-groundfish trawl gear in federal waters to have VMS installed. Declaration reports are also mandated prior to fishing. Specific compliance information can be found at the NMFS Vessel Monitoring System website at: <http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/management/vms.html> or contact the NMFS Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) at 206.526.6140

Groundfish Limits

Shrimp trawlers are limited to 1,500 pounds of groundfish per TRIP with a daily limit of 500 pounds. Included are sublimits for: lingcod – 300 pounds per month with a 24" minimum size, and sablefish – 2000 pounds per month. Canary rockfish, yelloweye rockfish and thornyheads are prohibited. All other groundfish species taken count towards the 500 per day or 1,500 pound trip limits and do not have species-specific limits.

Eulachon Management and Research



The WDFW eulachon management and research program is based at the agency's Vancouver regional office. WDFW also participates in eulachon recovery efforts, including holding the only non-NMFS position on the Eulachon Recovery Team. Program managers provided the following to highlight 2015 WDFW accomplishments to better understand eulachon population abundance and dynamics:

- Conducted presence/absence surveys in various coastal river systems and tributaries of the Columbia River to better understand the distribution of the species.
- Established an annual spawning stock biomass estimation (SSB) for the mainstem Columbia River eulachon population (upstream from the estuary), and for the Grays River (a tributary that enters the estuary); and established spawning stock biomass estimations for the Naselle

River and Chehalis River for the purpose of understanding the role that neighboring estuaries may play in stabilizing the total population and influencing the run to the Columbia River.

- Compared the patterns of spawning stock biomass estimations for the Columbia River eulachon populations with those from other populations, such as the Fraser River.
- Collaborated with the Cowlitz Indian Tribe to develop SSB estimations for the Cowlitz River, in order to better understand the distribution of spawning in the Columbia River mainstem and its tributaries.
- Made comparisons between larval collection events in order to determine if the estimations were being influenced by the time of day, frequency of collection, flow meter operations, etc.
- Carried out genetic analysis of the larvae to determine if there were temporal differences between the early and late components of the Columbia River eulachon run.
- Having determined that some of the larvae visually identified as eulachon were not actually eulachon, WDFW has launched a more thorough examination of the whole larval outflow period, and will develop genetic markers for longfin smelt that can be used to determine if these non-eulachon larvae represent spawning period and location overlaps between the two species.
- Carried out eulachon adult sampling in order to better parameterize the SSB estimation with emphasis on size, age, gender ratios, and relative fecundity differences between years.
- Presented at and participated in the Northwest Power and Conservation Council/ NMFS State of the Science and Science to Policy Forum in 2015; and presented eulachon fecundity research results at the 145th AFS National Meeting in Portland in 2015.



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