

STAFF STATEMENT
on
Crab Pot Buoy Identification
for Public Hearing October 12, 1984

Problem

A uniform method is needed to identify crab buoys for enforcement purposes.

Background

At the August 24, 1984, Commission Hearing on crab regulations, staff was directed to research a method to mark crab pot buoys keeping in mind cost and inconvenience to fishermen, methods already in use, compatibility with existing method in Washington State, and manageability.

Several buoy marks are already used which include fisherman's name or initials, boat name, numbers, designs, symbols and colors. Colors are used by all fishermen and many use other marks as well. Some fishermen also have their initials welded onto the pot frame or weight bars.

Other States

California does not require buoy identification although all fishermen do use colors. In Washington State fishermen must register their brand (boat name, initials, etc.) with the state. Numbers are assigned to these without a personal brand. We have been informed that a number of problems have been encountered. Dorothy Burn (206-753-6590) has details on this. She will be in Monday.

Alaska also requires that the 5-digit ADF&G number is put on buoys. Problems encountered include fading of the numbers, poor quality buoys that birds peck at and destroy, and keeping track of all the fishing gear.

Industry Views

Staff has talked with a number of fishermen about buoy brands. The response has been generally favorable, citing a need for simplicity and low cost. Their main concern centered more on the timing of when they would need to have their gear marked. Since gear work is already well under way for next year's fishing it would be inconvenient and more costly to fishermen to implement a marking requirement prior to the 1985 season. Fishermen were also inclined to use marks already used in other states.

Enforcement

Staff met with enforcement people and again simplicity was a main point although colors and symbols were not favored for official identification. Buoy colors fade and there would be great difficulty in describing all the different colors and combinations. A simple number system was preferred.

Discussion

The ideal marking system is one that is simple, costs little, is easy to apply, readily identifies the owner of the gear and is simple to administer. The more variation incorporated, the more the difficulties encountered. Colors, designs, and symbols are difficult because of variation and interpretation. Initials will be repeated and boat names for many will be too long for the buoys. Short names would be fine.

We must keep in mind that about 400 boats will be involved initially with 20-50 boats added each year.

The simplest method would be a 4-digit number assigned to each boat. Numbers registered in other states would be o.k.. Some boat names could also work if short.

For record keeping purposes an assigned number for each boat would be most workable and still allow fishermen to use any additional mark wanted.

PURPOSE

At the August 24, 1984, Commission hearing on crab regulations, staff was instructed to research a method to mark crab buoys keeping in mind the cost and inconvenience to fishermen, methods already being used, compatibility with existing marking in Washington State, and manageability.

DISCUSSION

Staff met with Oregon State Police and fishermen to discuss methods to identify crab bouys which include colors, names, initials, numbers, and designs either singly or in combination. The simplest method would be a 4-digit number assigned to each fisherman. Fishermen would be allowed to retain existing markings on present buoys, but as buoys are replaced the assigned number would be required along with any other marking wanted by fishermen. Washington State numbers already being used would be acceptable. However, existing buoys with only color markings would need a number by 1985-86 season.

Administratively the 4-digit number would be easy to manage. The system would be computerized which would make recordkeeping simple. Numbers would be issued on request.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Require a 4-digit assigned number for each crab fisherman.
2. The number of each buoy must be clear and legible.