

U.S., Soviets agree to pact for Bering Sea

The U.S. State Department has informed the Alaska Congressional Delegation that the United States and the Soviet Union have reached an informal understanding on fishing in areas of the Bering Sea, according to the delegation.

The areas have been the scene of several incidents recently involving fishing vessels, the U.S. Coast Guard and armed Soviet vessels.

The understanding was reached during discussions between the two nations which were held in Washington, D.C., Oct. 8-10, part of an ongoing effort to resolve maritime jurisdiction differences between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Each nation said it would not take enforcement action against vessels of the other country fishing in the area covered under the understanding. In addition, both nations said they would not give permission to the vessels of any third country to fish in the area, and they could take enforcement action against any third nation's vessel fishing in the area.

The agreement came about because of several incidents over the last few months, including:

- U.S. crab fishermen were chased out of the disputed area by Soviet vessels during last summer's crabbing season.

- A Japanese crab boat was caught fishing the area by the U.S. Coast Guard. The captain of the Japanese vessel had permission to be in the area from the Soviet Union.

- In 1985, an armed Soviet vessel stopped a Japanese fishing vessel in the area and held a National Marine Fisheries Service observer for two days before releasing her to the U.S. Coast Guard.