

UFMA sponsors workshop for Kodiak area fishermen

by the United Fishermen's
Marketing Association Inc.

for the Tundra Times

The United Fishermen's Marketing Association has announced the first in a series of seminars and workshops March 21 in Kodiak, designed to assist Kodiak fishermen in their efforts to share in the development of the bottomfish fishery in Alaska.

"We are in a transition period now where many of our small- and medium-size vessels in Kodiak are going to be very important in furthering the development of the Alaskan shore-based bottomfish industry," said Ron Jolin, UFMA president.

"For many years, UFMA has been working through the political process to create advantages in bottomfish for Alaskan fishermen, processors, processing plant workers and small businesses that depend on the fishing industry," Jolin said. "Bottomfish is very important to our local fleet. UFMA is determined to see that the small- and medium-size Kodiak vessels share in the harvest of bottomfish.

UFMA Manager Jeff Stephan points out that for the shore-based bottomfish plants in Kodiak and other Alaskan coastal communities to survive, there must be a concerted effort to assist Alaskan-style vessels in converting to trawling.

"There are a large number of good fishermen in Kodiak with the knowledge, experience and ability to share in the bottomfish resources," Stephan said. "UFMA intends to see that the transition from foreign fishing and processing to American fishing and processing takes place."

Stephan said many fishermen in the organization are converting or planning to convert to longlining, and that many also are planning to convert to trawling.

"UFMA has been encouraging a diversified approach to bottomfish harvesting for many years now. We are devoting this workshop to those fishermen that are now involved or plan to be involved in trawling," he said.

"Kodiak's fishing industry is very diversified. The bottomfish plants need a mix of longline- and trawl-caught fish if we are going to prove that foreign processing is no longer in the best interest of Alaska," he said.

The trawl-orientation workshop will be held in Kodiak March 21, during the annual Kodiak Marine Trade Fair, known this year as "Com Fish Alaska."

Richard McLellan, an expert in the field of bottomfish trawling and a recognized leader and pioneer of the specialized technique of pair trawling, will be one of the featured guests of the UFMA workshop.

McLellan will be joined by Bill West, trawl development manager for Nor'Eastern Trawl Systems Inc., a large manufacturer of quality trawl nets used in Alaskan bottomfish trawling.

The workshop will attempt to open the door for many Kodiak fishermen who are in the process of determining whether a trawl conversion is feasible for their particular circumstances and vessel configuration.

The workshop also will be directed at those fishermen who are currently participating in the trawl fishery, and those that have already begun the process of a trawl conversion.

In addition to the workshop, UFMA has arranged for McLellan to spend a week in Kodiak to meet with individual vessel owners and operators to discuss their particular conversion

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plans.

West also will be available to meet with fishermen on an individual basis, or in additional group meetings that develop from the workshop.

Further workshops will be held throughout the year, directed at the longline and trawl fisheries.

Those who would like more information may contact Stephan at the UFMA office, Box 1035, Kodiak 99615; phone, 486-3453.