

Experimental Shrimp Trawling May Pave Way for Subsistence Food

In line with the State Department of Fish and Game's policy to seek new economic opportunities for the people of the Seward Peninsula and Bering Sea, department biologist Rae Baxter, assisted by Mort Henry and Mike Geiger, conducted experimental shrimp trawling in Norton Sound off Nome.

A mini shrimp trawl, ten feet in width, was dragged along the bottom in depths ranging from 50 to 116 feet. A dory powered by two small outboard motors was used to drag the trawl.

Prior to each drag, a small sampling dredge was lowered to test the composition of the sea bottom. Mud bottom was found best for catches and ease of dragging; a rocky, debris-strewn bottom was destructive to the trawl.

A total of 13 drags were made, each lasting from 15 to 30 minutes. No large quantities of marketable shellfish were discov-

ered in the brief survey but a wide variety of marine organisms were obtained including shrimp, small codfish, crabs, sculpins, mollusks, flounders, etc.

Results from this experimental exploration were not considered conclusive as to the relative abundance of shrimp off Nome.

The operation did demonstrate that fishing with a small trawl was feasible, relatively inexpensive and required little manpower.

It is an operation that local residents with small capital and need for seasonal work might engage in commercially if commercial quantities of shrimp are found.

Local residents may also engage in this type of trawling to obtain seafoods to fill their subsistence food lockers.

Biologists believe that further exploration work of this nature in Norton Sound seems warranted.