



733 N Street  
Anchorage, AK 99501  
907-276-3241

April 20, 2012

Dear Southeast Alaska Drift Gillnet Permit Holder,

You have received previous notices from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) of the planned study to monitor the level of marine mammal interactions with the Southeast Alaska drift gillnet fishery beginning this summer. This study, implemented by the NMFS Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program (AMMOP), will partially fulfill requirements of the Marine Mammal Protection Act through trained observers collecting information about the nature and level of these interactions. The first part of this study will occur with the start of sockeye management in Alaska Department of Fish and Game management Districts 6 and 8, and the Anita Bay terminal harvest area during the 2012 and 2013 fishing seasons. This letter provides information about the nature of this study and your required participation while fishing in these areas.

Public meetings will be held in late May 2012 to present information on the program. A meeting in Wrangell will be held on May 24<sup>th</sup> in the Wrangell Fire Hall from 6 -8pm, and in Petersburg on May 25<sup>th</sup> at the City Council Chambers from 6 -8 pm. For those unable to attend, a toll-free conference line has been established for each meeting: 877-216-1555, participant code 1003197 (followed by the # sign).

### ***Who is conducting the study and when?***

Saltwater Inc. is the observer company working with NMFS to implement the marine mammal observer program. Saltwater Inc. is an Alaskan-owned company headquartered in Anchorage with over 23 years experience providing observers to the fishing industry. We maintain a professional staff of biologists formally-trained to collect data in commercial fisheries throughout Alaska, Hawaii, and the West Coast.

The study will commence with the opening of the commercial drift gillnet fishery in District 6 on or about June 11, 2012, and in Districts 8 and Anita Bay during the next following openers. The study will continue in these areas for the duration of the fishing season.

### ***What will the observers be doing?***

***Because of the small size of gillnet boats, observers will not be placed onboard fishing vessels. Observers will collect data from nearby, independent work boats operated by trained captains.***

During observations, data will be collected about fishing practices, gear characteristics, and marine mammal and seabird gear interactions. This information includes fishing location, numbers of sets and hauls, and net characteristics, such as mesh size, color, float size, etc. Observers may retain samples from live or dead marine mammals or seabirds, including whole carcasses, incidentally caught in gillnets. **The observer procedures are designed to not disrupt to your fishing.** However, observers will need to occasionally communicate with you

during observation to collect information. They are trained to limit communications to a time that will not interfere with your work. To facilitate this process please review the enclosed AMMOP gear data form to familiarize yourself with some of the information you will be required to provide.

After the period closure, observers will also collect information in Districts 6, 8, and Anita Bay about total fishing effort during that opener. You will be asked to provide your best estimate of the total fishing hours for each day during that opener. Observers will be asking you these questions either while alongside tender boats, near processor docks, or by phone call after you have made your final delivery.

### ***What will happen with information collected?***

This is not a voluntary observer program; therefore, permit holders are required by federal regulations (50 CFR 229) to provide information asked by the observer. The data collected and questions asked by the observers have been reviewed and approved by the federal Office of Management and Budget. **All information collected by observers will be kept strictly confidential in accordance with federal data confidentiality policies (NOAA Administrative Order 216-100).** Data will not be released to the public except in aggregate form that does not identify any individual's catch or fishing operations information. You or your authorized representative may request data collected from your individual fishing effort upon submission of written request (see enclosed Data Request Form). All federal AMMOP staff and Saltwater Inc. employees or subcontractors, including observer and observer boat operators, are legally obligated to uphold the program's integrity, confidentiality, and conflict of interest requirements.

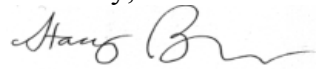
The successful implementation of an observer program is dependent on the cooperation and constructive support of all participants. If you have any questions or concerns please contact Stacey Buckelew, Saltwater Program Manager at: (907) 276-3241 ext. 6 or [stacey@saltwaterinc.com](mailto:stacey@saltwaterinc.com).

From May 15 to October 15, 2012 questions may be directed by phone or in person to our field offices:

Petersburg (907) 772-2443 1103 S Nordic Drive, Joan Mei building  
Wrangell (907) 874-2443 224 Front St, Chamber of Commerce building

We look forward to working with you this season!

Sincerely,



Stacey Buckelew  
Program Manager, Saltwater Inc