



*Fed at 180 copies to Yakutat 9/18/07*

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

*National Marine Fisheries Service*

*P.O. Box 21668*

*Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668*

September 17, 2007

Dear Yakutat Set Gillnet Permit Holder:

The National Marine Fisheries Service Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program, Saltwater Inc., and the Yakutat-based observers thank you for your cooperation this fishing season. It is our objective to continue through this season with the open communication and good working relationship that we have established with you. Knowing and understanding each fisher's dependence on salmon, we respect and appreciate the importance of this fishery to the local community, and we seek to treat every permit holder with respect.

We have made it a priority to communicate the goals and methods of the program to permit holders and other interested parties by providing detailed information through letters, our website, public meetings, and daily communication with observers in the field. For us to gather the most accurate data, permit holders are required to provide information to observers, including gear characteristics, fishing locations and durations, and other relevant data. Observers record information on marine mammals caught in the nets, as required by the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). Additional information is collected, also as required under the MMPA, to facilitate our understanding of the circumstances that may influence whether or not a marine mammal is caught. Sea bird interaction information is collected as allowed under the MMPA to support additional scientific research requests by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Specific information collected from individual fishing operations is strictly confidential and will not be released to any unauthorized individual. Data will only be released to the public in a summarized form, where no individual permit holder's data can be identified.

Throughout the summer, we have met our target of sampling approximately 5% of fishing effort, which translates to over 200 permit samples to date. Our understanding of actual fishing effort provides the basis upon which we can accurately determine needed observer coverage. The number of permits observed in a particular area is proportional to the number of permits fishing in that area during an opener. For example, if 60 permit holders fish an area each day of a four day opener, 12 permit holders would be sampled in that area during that opener, or three per day.

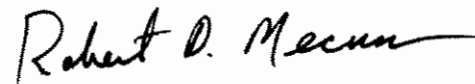
To ensure fairness and an unbiased survey of the fishery, permit holders are selected for observation in random order, using computer-generated random lists. Each list contains the name of each active permit holder only once, and permit holders are selected for sampling in the order they appear on the list. When all permit holders on a random list have been sampled, a new random list is generated and used for selecting sample order. It is possible for a permit holder to appear at the end of one randomly-generated list, and at the beginning of the next randomly-generated list, potentially leading to multiple observations over a relatively short period of time. However, that permit holder would not be sampled again until his or her name appeared on the next random list. Variations in the sampling rate for individual permit holders may occur as individual fishing effort varies.



Cooperation and communication between permit holders and observers is essential for this program to continue to run smoothly. We encourage your constructive input to facilitate a successful observer program for the remainder of this year and for next year.

If you have comments or questions about the Alaska Marine Mammal Observer Program in Yakutat, please speak with one of our observers, contact the Saltwater Inc. office in Yakutat at (907) 784-3964, or call Bridget Mansfield, NMFS AMMOP Coordinator, in Juneau at (907) 586-7642.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert D. Mecum". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Robert D. Mecum  
Acting Administrator, Alaska Region