



SE POT SHRIMP SURVEY

October 11, 2023

SE Pot Shrimp permit holder,

(42 responses)

Comments on a question are in italics

Southeast Alaska Fishermen's Alliance (SEAFA) would like to encourage you to fill out and send back the following confidential SE pot shrimp survey. Results will be provided at the next Shrimp task force meeting (early '24) While this is SEAFA's survey, we did consult with ADF&G and have incorporated any questions they were interested in getting more feedback on.

- Did you fish in the spring 2023 pot shrimp fishery ___30_ Yes ___12_ No
 - a. **If NO**, please mark all applicable reasons: ___1_ Participated in another fishery; ___3_ Not available to fish springtime; ___2_ Market conditions; ___1_ Personal reasons ___4_ Other-
Explain – ordered new pots that never showed up;
More Lucrative to longline in spring;
Spring Trolling
The quality of shrimp in May is inferior to the fall product (chalky meat)
 - b. Do you plan to fish in the spring in future years ___5_ Yes ___3_ No
 ___1_ Don't Know ___3_ No Answer
 (only No I didn't fish responses collated on this question)
 - c. Please go to the final question about preference of fishing season

If you answered Yes to Question #1

- Was this your first year shrimp fishing as a permit holder? ___2_ Yes ___26_ No
 - a. **If YES**, did you buy the permit because of the change in season ___ Yes
 2 NO
- Do you freeze onboard? ___14_ Yes ___16_ No
- How long have you fished? ___5_ 1-5 years ___4_ 6-10 years ___17_ Over 10 years (2 new permit holders both said they had deckhanded for over 10 years)
- Did you shrimp in the same districts & area as you did in previous years?
 ___31_ Yes ___0_ No

- Was your market affected by the change in season? 14 Yes 12 No
(One of the permit holders who didn't fish commented that their market was affected)

- Did the distribution of shrimp change by depth and/or location from fall to spring?
 26 Yes 4 No
 - a. Depth Changes 15 Yes
 - b. Explain:

 - c. Location: 11 Yes
 - d. Explain: *COMMENTS – yes and no refer to response to whether there was a change in distribution by depth or location.*

- *(NO) Expected shrimp to have relocated, After shallow to deep depths, the best fishing was at same depth*
- *(yes, depth & locations change) shrimp were deeper*
- *(yes) Shrimp were shallower and in lower volume than 3 previous years – Location: some of the main areas had almost no shrimp at all, not likely depth*
- *(yes) same depth – spread out – not as thick as in the fall – we fished the same area as we normally do*
- *(yes) way more spread out*
- *(yes) shrimp were not as deeper depths/location: ½ of the grounds I normally fish, the shrimp were not there*
- *(yes) they are not catchable for whatever reason at any depth -It's the equivalent o trying to gillnet sockeye in November*
- *(yes) scattered no volume – location: shrimp seemed to have moved off the bank in a lot of our normal sets.*
- *There one day – gone the next*
- *(yes) More sporty's and new boats participating in area. Had to move to get gear out.*
- *(yes) they seemed to be coming out of the mud from their molt*
- *The shrimp were in the same spots but thinner. I got the impression they were just creeping out of the mud from molting. There were mostly unegged. But soft. Some very mushy & soft. Location: As last explanation, I caught on hard bottom right on mud edge, deep, coming out of molt.*
- *The shrimping was horrible. In all the same spots I've always done very well. (over 10 year fisherman)*
- *(yes) they were shallower*
- *(yes) Shrimp were in shallower waters. Noticed right away that the normal depths from fall only produced shrimp that were molting and not many. Found all the shrimp were just in shallower.*
- *(Yes) Banding at different depths, not 90% at normal depth, 50-605 at normal levels*
- *Less in normal depths – seemed deeper*

How did the shell and flesh quality compare between fall and spring?

___2___ Better ___13___ Comparable ___13___ Worse

(One person who didn't fish marked that they felt the quality was worse)

- *Softer shells and flesh*
- *Eggs were too developed – they had eyeballs*
- *No answer – it's better quality in the fall*
- *(from a didn't fish response) wont sell soft chalky shrimp, it is bad for our market*

- How did the market price compare between fall and spring?
___7___ Better in fall ___10___ Better in Spring ___9___ Same
- *I have had same market in Japan for 17 years, they prefer eggless shrimp and price is strong (over 30 year permit holder, received feedback from market and considered spring better)*

- Did you quit before the area/season where you were fishing closed because of the way the season was going? ___9___ Yes ___20___ No

- Did you experience more soft-shelled shrimp? ___16___ Yes ___10___ No
___1___ Same
- *(same) actually the quality was better*
- *Season should be passed to June 1st*
- *Only in deep water*
 - a. Did this affect value? ___15___ Yes ___15___ No

- Did you receive any feedback from your market about the change of the season?
___17___ Yes ___12___ No
 - a. ___10___ Better ___6___ Worse
- *(worse) no shrimp for local residents*
- *(from a fishermen that didn't fish - worse) They are disappointed I won't fish (because of quality)*

- Did you experience increased encounters with sport or personal use fishermen?
___10___ Yes ___19___ No

- Are you considering selling your permit in the next couple of years?
___11___ Yes ___19___ No Would that change if the season reverted back to a fall fishery?
 ___10___ Yes ___10___ No

- *One marked they would sell their permit if it changed back to fall*

- *(No) I want a fall fishery! But this is my Livelihood! It's total bullshit to have changed season. Some of these questions are vague?? Put it back to fall.*

- **Would you prefer in the future a fall or spring fishing season?**

__19__ Fall __16__ Spring _7_ No response or comment

- *Going whenever they open it*
- *One no response commented Prefers weather in the spring, quality better in fall.*

Of those surveys who did not fish in 2023 the breakdown on the preference for a spring or fall fishery was: 3 Fall 5 Spring 3 No Answer or comment

2 Comments - *to early to explain don't know where the shrimp are in the spring & I am not fishing this permit anymore. It is non-transferable. I will leave it to active fishermen to choose when they will fish.*

GENERAL COMMENTS

- *Leave fishery in spring, better market quality, give it a chance. I would propose a change to start 2 weeks later or June 1st. Shrimp off bite May 15th. Started getting good catch rate 10 days later.*
- *Only suggestion I'd make is to move the season closer to June, Give Prawns a tad bit more time to insure 100% hard shell and they will become more active. Think I might be the minority when it comes to fleet wanting to fish during spring but quality of product frozen with no eggs is 100X better. Egg melt makes a yucky mess Hopefully interest will wane a tad bit & season will stretch out – make it a better for resource & lil guy*
- *The weather was a lot nicer – no wind to deal with. You want a small boat fishery.*
- *Much better market - \$25 lb (answer to market affected by change in season)*
- *Plan to fish in the spring IF FORCED!*
- *Just filled out the shrimp survey. I have a couple of comments to add. It was my first year fishing as a permit holder but have been around deckhanding and on shrimp boats for over the past ten years and am familiar with the Fall season. In my personal catch this spring I saw less than a half of a percent had eggs and were hard shelled. Where as in fall season the exact opposite, is apparently mostly all full of eggs. My market was good and didn't affect the price from fall to spring. In discussions with other fishermen on the grounds they are seeing similar catches. Ive heard a lot of older fishermen/women were bitter with the season change just because it affected their normal routine and schedule. A lot of them complaining and fabricating data to the exact questions of this survey. The ageing of the fleet is very apparent in this fishery. I could fish either season but am in favor of keeping it in spring and letting them spawn.*
- *(from a fishermen that didn't fish) Lingcod season is, and has always been May 16. By choosing May 15 for shrimp, I was eliminated from the shrimp fishery Why didn't they pick a date that doesn't directly conflict with another fishery? Is April 20 or May 1st too much to ask? I feel cheated out of the shrimp fishery! With everything else going on with salmon and blackcod, losing the shrimp fishery has been devastating to me and my family and crew. ADFG should be ashamed of themselves for not taking the timing of the fishery more seriously.*

- *The 2023 spring fishery was slower for me than previous fall seasons. Quality of shrimp was good, and a spring season is great for dock and local sales. My customers down south also appreciated both the sustainability aspect of a spring fishery and the lack of eggs. I am in favor of continuing the spring season in the hope that it will eventually lead to a larger harvestable population. The two things I would like a shrimp task force to work on, rather than season timing, is increased opportunity through increased surveying and finer toothed management, and decreasing effort through some sort of permit reduction program. Please keep in in the loop on any meetings or other info on the task force.*
- *Have you ever heard the saying about reinventing the wheel by making it square? Or the doctors oath to (do no harm)? I thought not. Because the covid decision by the board of fish, with the shrug of adf&g on changing the timing of the SE commercial pot shrimp fishery is all of that & worse!*

I have participated in the SE pot shrimp fishery for 30 years. The last 13 as a permit holder. This fishery was always stable income, that fit into my program of 4-6 other fisheries, all in SE. I derived 15-20 percent of my yearly income from this fishery.

That is all in disarray & gone, because of a decision I & no one I know had any idea was on the table! I was physically out halibut fishing when this happened. Doing my job! Before I get the stone of being uninvolved in fishery politics thrown at me..... I do belong to two different fishing organizations, and have for a number of years. I'm also known to the the salmon & shellfish managers in Juneau & Petersburg. As well as speaking to managers in Sitka & Haines when I've felt the need. I'm not shy, uninformed, or hard to get ahold of. Let's not forget all the time & venue changes prior to this actual BOF boondoggle! Why were us permit holders not asked if we wanted to change?

My understanding is this change came at the request of a small number of people in Sitka? Were they permit holders? Did the fleet (majority of other permit holders agree? (No & No!) Let me list the reasons that I'm aware of for taking a profitable fishery that was successfully managed for 40-50 years (more?) and turning it on its head.

- (1) Canada fishes in spring*
- (2) wont catch spawners (shrimp with eggs)*
- (3) get paid more (no eggs) Better quality*
- (4) a handful of folks thought summer would be nice*

My answer to above after just finishing first summer season.....

(1) who cares when Canada fishes? They're track record on fisheries is nothing I want to emulate! Also they catch way more shrimp than us. Why do we want to go head to head with a more dominate player in the market? We had our nitch & markets developed over many years. All in disarray now. PWS also fishes in spring....our resource is much healthier. So why do we want to follow they're lead?

(2) well, I caught shrimp that still had remnants of eggs. As far as saving females....that's insane. A dead female is a dead female. Wether it's egged or not. Ridiculous argument. In fact we will kill more females to reach quota since there's no egg weight. My personal observations & fears is were pounding on the best spawners in May as the come out spawn/molt first.

(3) I call BS on quality & getting paid more. I'm sure someone got "more". But it wasn't me, or the folks I know. I had a percentage of soft/mushy shrimp. As stated above, some had a bit of

eggs. And I'm getting paid exactly the same as two years ago!

(4) I worked & bought into the spot shrimp fishery because it fit my program.

I was able to get excellent/experienced crew because the October fishery fit they're program.

That's all gone to hell. My regular crew are boat owners that have other fisheries going in May.

May has "always been my month for major boat/home projects in the good weather. Where quotas are still going guys are missing memorial weekend with they're families. Got kids or grandkids? Wanna miss they're graduations? Me neither. But, I've got to support myself & them.

These things are personal. But is why most of us bought into an October fishery. The days of being a dumb fisherman & fishing when "you" want are long dead. It's all about business plans.

Sharp pencils & an unwillingness to fail. We need predictability. I do not fly by the seat of my

pants. My crew, markets, plans are made a year in advance most times. I cannot stress enough, what a disaster this arbitrary decision has made of my business plan. That's been 30 years in the making for the pot shrimp fishery. Thrown on its head for what?

The following are the reasons that I & the permit holders that I know think this decision needs to be turned around, with the SE Pot Shrimp Fishery going back to an October First start

(1) safety of the resource

There are decades of history of a fall fishery. (None for spring)

My catch rate was about half of fall fishery. I felt like I wasn't doing the biomass any favors

(2) traditional timing. The fall fits my program. The catch rate is double.

The shrimp are hard & healthy. My markets are there. It's a time period we permit holders bought into for a reason.

(3) there is very little conflict in October with sport & subsistence fishermen.

Let them & other summer users do they're thing. It all works better if we fish after them.

(4) there's a regulation conflict between pot fishing for shrimp after June first & participating in the Dungeness crab fishery. Which is ridiculous, but problematic.

(5) I know it's personal.....but I really don't want to loose another holiday.

(Besides upsetting a bunch of sportsmen) And I don't want to have to choose between making a living & attending my grandkids & friends graduations, weddings, etc.

(6) I lost my entire shrimp income in 2022 because of this arbitrary change.

No one thought of that in the rush to push this covid era agenda! For you regular job

holders.....that's about 2 months pay! Stop & think about that for a minute. Oops. I think that

would be a pretty big deal if it were done to someone on a salary. But were supposed to shut up

& buckup! I got to fish this year.....worst year I've had in my 30 years. I caught about half of

normal. So there goes a months pay this year! Seems like pretty brutal price to pay for an

experiment that I wasn't made hip to. Or asked my opinion about?

In closing.....you don't have to take my word on this. Let's poll the permit holders. That's who needs to decide if we need this uncalled for regime shift.

If 51% percent think this is great, and I'm in the minority. Great! I'll go away. Sell out whatever.

But if I'm right.....we need to change this fishery back to October. Right now. It can be achieved by October 2024 if we hop to it.

This was a bad decision. The only thing worse is not correcting it!

Thank you for participating in this survey. **Please respond by December 1, 2023.**
Please provide any additional comments that you would like to make about the change from fall to spring fishing season with your survey.

You can return the survey by

E-mailing to kathy@seafa.org Fax: 907-917-5470

Text a picture of both pages to 907-465-7666

Or mail: 1008 Fish Creek Rd, Juneau, AK 99801