



**COMMISSION
AGENDA MEMORANDUM**

Item No.

7a

BRIEFING ITEM

Date of Meeting

April 28, 2020

DATE: April 20, 2020

TO: Stephen P. Metruck, Executive Director

FROM: Stephanie Jones Stebbins, Managing Director Maritime
Kenneth R. Lyles, Director Maritime Operations & Security

SUBJECT: Fishing Industry COVID 19 Response Briefing

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Port staff will provide an overview of how industry is responding to COVID-19, with consideration of what the Port of Seattle can do to support this foundational industry for our stake holders.

INDUSTRY OVERVIEW AND ECONOMIC IMPACT

Commercial Fishing is the foundational industry of the Port of Seattle and is classified as an “Essential Business” by the State of Washington. Fishermen’s Terminal opened for business in 1914 and has since established Seattle as the Homeport of the North Pacific Fishing Fleet. Since 1976 Terminal 91 has been the Homeport to the Trawl Catcher Processor Fleet. Both homeported fishing fleets have provided sustainable economic contributions to the citizens of King County and have served to feed the country with wild harvested seafood.

The economic impact of these homeported commercial fishing fleets contributes approximately \$1.4 billion in business output to the State of Washington’s economy by way of direct, indirect and induced taxes and revenues. During the economic downturn in 2007, the commercial fishing industry continued to prosper employing thousands during this period of economic recovery.

COVID 19 IMPACTS

The fishing fleets at these Port of Seattle facilities; Fishermen’s Terminal and Terminal 91, are preparing for the Spring and Summer commercial fishing seasons in Alaska and Washington waters respectively. The small boat fleet will begin mending Salmon sein and gill nets at Fishermen’s Terminal for the Summer Salmon fishery in Alaska, and the larger Trawl vessels will begin crewing up for the Hake fishery off the coast of Washington in late Spring.

Like other industries, the Coronavirus or COVID-19 National Health Crisis has placed the commercial fishing industry in unprecedented times. In this otherwise sustainable industry, it

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too, is subjected to the standards and protocols of maintaining safe working conditions for its most valuable resource, the employees. Because of State and National social distancing mandates, the large boat catcher processing companies and the independent fishers alike will have to certify its employees are virus free and will be subjected to additional safety measures such as testing and quarantines of crew members. Some coastal towns in Alaska, which include tribal communities, have lobbied the State of Alaska to cancel this year's salmon fishery that would result in the closing of prime salmon fishing grounds.

As a response, commercial fishing industry associations such as AFISHC or the (Alaska Fishing Industry Safety and Health Committee), have been working to design compliance protocols that would respond to the health crisis and would provide State mandated health safety compliance to crew members who work on catcher boats and deliver their harvested fish to processing plants in coastal communities in Bristol Bay, and South East Alaska.

The Salmon and Hake fishing seasons have not yet started, so it is difficult to predict how national and international economic factors will influence the price of wild seafood, the results of which will determine how the fleets are impacted financially. Vessels are eligible for moorage relief from the Port of Seattle, consistent with Commission Motion. Additionally, the Salmon harvesters are eligible for Federal stimulus programs operated by the US Small Business Association (SBA) such as the SBA Paycheck Protection Program, SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan and Emergency Advance, SBA Express Bridge Loans, SBA Debt Relief, as well as two programs created by the recent coronavirus economic stimulus package known as the CARES Act, the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance and Section 12005 Seafood Industry Assistance. This program includes \$300 million in funds specifically set aside for commercial fishers.

ATTACHMENTS TO THIS BRIEFING

- (1) Presentation slides

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTIONS OR BRIEFINGS

None