

## **Summary, A Social Snapshot of the Columbia River Gillnet Fishery, by Irene Martin.**

- ◆ Over two thirds of licensed Columbia River gillnetters live in four lower river counties: Wahkiakum, Pacific and Grays Harbor, in Washington; Clatsop County in Oregon. The remainder live along the river, or in scattered locales throughout the two states and Alaska.
- ◆ A Columbia River commercial fishing business depends on a Columbia River gillnet permit plus a portfolio of other permits from several states, including Oregon and Washington shrimp, crab, razor clam, troll, and numerous Alaska permits. The money from these other endeavors returns to the Columbia River region.
- ◆ In 2003, a year of low salmon prices, Columbia River gillnetters in a sample of four Alaska fisheries (Bristol Bay gillnet, Prince William Sound gillnet, Cook Inlet gillnet and Kodiak seine) brought in \$3,989,863. This figure does not include multipliers, but is simply ex-vessel, and represents only these four select fisheries. The actual income from non-Columbia River permits owned by Columbia River fishermen would be much higher, but is elusive due to confidentiality of data or lack of data.
- ◆ The income brought in by these businesses comes to an area with significant negative social and community health statistics, due to high poverty rates. The four counties all rank in the lowest per capita income field of \$14,000-\$19,600 according to the U.S. Census of 2000. Mortality rates are also significantly higher than state rates. Other indicators, such as adult and juvenile alcohol violations, child abuse, drug use and adolescent suicide rates are all higher than corresponding state rates, sometimes double or triple. The age of death of fishermen in Wahkiakum County in recent years averages 65, 10 years younger than the average age of death of a U.S. white male.
- ◆ Community issues include reduction in incomes, lack of fishing time, uncertainty over future fishing issues, and community instability, due to ESA listings of salmonids and declining runs. Increased allocation of fish to the recreational sector, thus downgrading the value of the Columbia River permits, and the lack of understanding of the needs and problems of rural areas by a largely urban-oriented recreational fishing population in the I-5 corridor were all cited by fishermen as reasons to reconsider their commitment to the Columbia River.

This study was done to place the Columbia River gillnet fishery in its social context. An economic study is under way, conducted by Dr. Hans Radtke and Shannon Davis, to provide detailed numbers regarding the value of the fishery, including the SAFE areas, processing and other value-adding.

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