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ALASKA FISHERIES DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION NOW CONDUCTING  
RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT SURVEY IN ALASKA

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA -- Nearly 200 people in Alaska and Washington this month are helping plan research and development projects that could affect the seafood industry for years to come.

Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation, Inc. (AFDF) has begun a survey asking fishermen and processors what obstacles and opportunities the Alaskan seafood industry will face in the next few years, and what research support will be needed to take advantage of those opportunities. The information will be used to plan AFDF's seafood development projects over the next few years.

"Our projects have always been designed and implemented by the fishermen and processors themselves," said Mel Monsen, executive director of AFDF. "But this year is the first time we have conducted a formal, industry-wide survey of development needs and ideas. In fact, it may be the first survey on future R&D ideas that has been formally conducted for the Alaskan seafood industry."

Dittman Research Corp. of Alaska is conducting the survey. Results will be available to the public in late October.

The survey asks fishermen and processors to identify the largest unrealized opportunities for expansion in the Alaskan seafood industry, the species of fish not currently used that represent the greatest potential, and what technological problems will need to be solved to target those opportunities. It also asks the industry to identify ways to make seafood processing more efficient, and what factors now stand in the way of an efficient, profitable seafood industry.

"After just the first few days, we've heard some very exciting, thoughtful ideas," Monsen said. "We're looking forward to hearing from all those in the industry who have good ideas about how to help advance our current technology and knowledge to fully develop Alaska's seafood opportunities in the most responsible way."

AFDF has conducted seafood R&D projects in Alaska since 1978. The foundation sponsored the Surimi Industry Development Project, which started surimi processing in Alaska and helped Americanize the bottomfish industry in Alaska. Now AFDF is conducting projects to develop a new flatfish harvesting and processing industry in the Gulf of Alaska, to help food companies create new products using Alaskan seafood in non-traditional ways, and to increase Alaska's capacity to turn seafood waste into profitable meal, oil and other usable products.

Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation is a non-profit firm started by Alaskan fishermen and processors to help develop new technology and conduct research for the seafood industry of the North Pacific. AFDF is funded primarily by the Saltonstall-Kennedy program, which disburses a portion of the import tariffs from marine products toward domestic seafood R&D. The S-K program is administered by National Marine Fisheries Service.