**Alaska Fisheries Science Center**
**Resource Assessment Conservation Engineering Division**
**7600 Sand Point Way Northeast**
**Seattle, Washington 98115-6349**

**14 May 2012**

# CRUISE ANNOUNCEMENT

2012 Biennial Bottom Trawl Survey of
Aleutian Islands Groundfish Resources

Chartered Vessels *Ocean Explorer* and *Sea Storm* (Cruise 2012-01)

## AREA AND PERIOD OF OPERATION

The fishing vessels *Ocean Explorer* and *Sea Storm* have been chartered to conduct the 2012 biennial bottom trawl survey of groundfish resources in the Aleutian Islands region. Both vessels will be chartered for 72 days beginning in Dutch Harbor, Alaska on 4 June 2012. Following final preparations in Dutch Harbor, the vessels will undergo up to 2 days of sea trials for a new (to the survey) net measurement system and will then conduct standardization exercises before beginning the survey. Sampling will begin near Dutch Harbor in the eastern Aleutian Islands (longitude 165°W) and will proceed westward to Stalemate Bank (longitude 170°E), west of Attu Island (Figure 1). Both vessel charters will end in Dutch Harbor on 14 August 2012.

## OBJECTIVES

A primary objective of this survey is to continue the data time series begun in 1980 to monitor trends in distribution and abundance of important groundfish species. During these surveys we measure a variety of physical, oceanographic, and environmental parameters while identifying and enumerating the fishes and invertebrates collected in the trawls. Specific objectives of the 2012 survey include:

1. defining the distribution and relative abundance of the principal groundfish and commercially important invertebrate species that inhabit the Aleutian archipelago;
2. collecting catch and effort data used to estimate the abundance of groundfish species;
3. measuring biological parameters such as size, sex, age, growth, length-weight relationships, feeding habits, and spawning condition for selected species;
4. monitoring and recording trawl performance information; and
5. collecting samples and data requested by other researchers or research groups.

## METHODS AND GEAR

The survey design is a stratified random sampling scheme consisting of 420 stations selected randomly from a combination of successful tows completed during previous surveys and sites not previously trawled. The selected sampling sites are allocated to 45 sampling strata defined by geographical location, depth, and regulatory area, ranging from shallow, nearshore depths to approximately 500 m on the continental slope.

Whenever possible, the charter vessels will conduct survey operations in close proximity to each other with each vessel attempting 15-minute trawls at pre-assigned stations. Catches will be sorted, weighed, and enumerated by species. Biological information (sex, length, age structures, individual weights, stomach contents, etc.) will be collected for major groundfish species. Specimens and data for special studies (e.g., maturity observations, tissue samples, photo vouchers) will also be collected for various species, as requested by researchers at AFSC and other cooperating agencies and institutions. Specimens of rare fishes or invertebrates, including corals, sponges, and other sessile organisms will be collected on an opportunistic basis.

Stations will be sampled with the RACE Division's standard four-seam, high-opening Poly Nor'Eastern survey trawl equipped with rubber bobbin roller gear. This trawl has a 27.2 m headrope and 36.75 m footrope consisting of a 24.9 m center section with adjacent 5.9 m "flying wing" extensions. Accessory gear for the Poly Nor'Eastern trawl includes 54.9 m triple dandylines and 1.8 × 2.7 m steel V-doors weighing approximately 850 kg each.

## ITINERARY

| | |
|---|---|
| June 4 | First day of the charter – Begin setup in Dutch Harbor, AK |
| June 4-6 | Begin Leg 1 – Conduct sea trials, measure and mark trawl warps, conduct scope experiment. Begin trawl survey sampling operations when preliminary work is completed. |
| June 28 | End of Leg 1 in Adak - Resupply vessels, exchange personnel |
| June 29 | Begin Leg 2 - Resume survey |
| July 22 | End Leg 2 in Adak - Resupply vessels, exchange personnel |
| July 23 | Begin Leg 3 - Resume survey, conduct net measurement studies as needed. |
| August 12-14 | End Leg 3 – Pack and offload in Dutch Harbor, AK |
| August 14 | End of Charter |

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For further information, please contact Mr. Russ Nelson, Director, Resource Assessment and Conservation Engineering Division, Alaska Fisheries Science Center, National Marine Fisheries Service, 7600 Sand Point Way NE., Building 4, BIN C15700, Seattle, WA 98115-6349, Telephone (206) 526-4170, email Russ.Nelson@noaa.gov.

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**SCIENTIFIC STAFF AND AFFILIATIONS**
**ALEUTIAN ISLANDS BIENNIAL BOTTOM TRAWL SURVEY, 2012**

***SEA STORM* - LEG 1**

DATES: 4 June – 28 June
PORTS: Dutch Harbor – Adak

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| FPC | Paul von Szalay | AFSC |
| DB | Christina Conrath | AFSC |
| | Nate Raring | AFSC |
| | Robin Harrison | AFSC |
| | David Drumm | AFSC |
| | Rick Hibpshman | AFSC |

***OCEAN EXPLORER* - LEG 1**

DATES: 4 June – 28 June
PORTS: Dutch Harbor – Adak

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| FPC | Mark Zimmermann | AFSC |
| DB | Brian Knoth | AFSC |
| | Lyle Britt | AFSC |
| | Ned Laman | AFSC |
| | Paul Logan | IPHC |
| | Caroline Robinson | AFSC |

***SEA STORM* - LEG 2**

DATES: 28 June – 22 July
PORTS: Adak – Adak

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| FPC | Nate Raring | AFSC |
| DB | Bill Flerx | AFSC |
| | Wayne Palsson | AFSC |
| | Jon Short | AFSC |
| | Adriana Santacruz | Volunteer |
| | Caroline Robinson | AFSC |

***OCEAN EXPLORER*- LEG 2**

DATES: 28 June – 22 July
PORTS: Adak – Adak

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| FPC | Ned Laman | AFSC |
| DB | Jay Orr | AFSC |
| | Jim Stark | AFSC |
| | Lorin Anderson | AFSC |
| | Paul Logan | IPHC |
| | Kim Sawyer | AFSC |

***SEA STORM* - LEG 3**

DATES: 22 July – 14 August
PORTS: Adak – Dutch Harbor

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| FPC | Wayne Palsson | AFSC |
| DB | Jim Stark | AFSC |
| | Erika Acuna | AFSC |
| | Jenny Gardner | UW |
| | Melissa Johnson | UAF |
| | Rick Hibpshman | AFSC |

***OCEAN EXPLORER*- LEG 3**

DATES: 22 July – 14 August
PORTS: Adak – Dutch Harbor

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| FPC | Paul von Szalay | AFSC |
| DB | Bill Flerx | AFSC |
| | Colin Sayre | FMA |
| | Megan Burwell | CMB |
| | Paul Logan | IPHC |
| | Kim Sawyer | AFSC |

**Acronymns**

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|---|---|
| FPC | Field Party Chief |
| DB | Deck Boss |
| AFSC | Alaska Fisheries Science Center |
| IPHC | International Pacific Halibut Commission |
| UW | University of Washington |
| UAF | University of Alaska Fairbanks |
| CMB | Coastal Marine BioLabs |

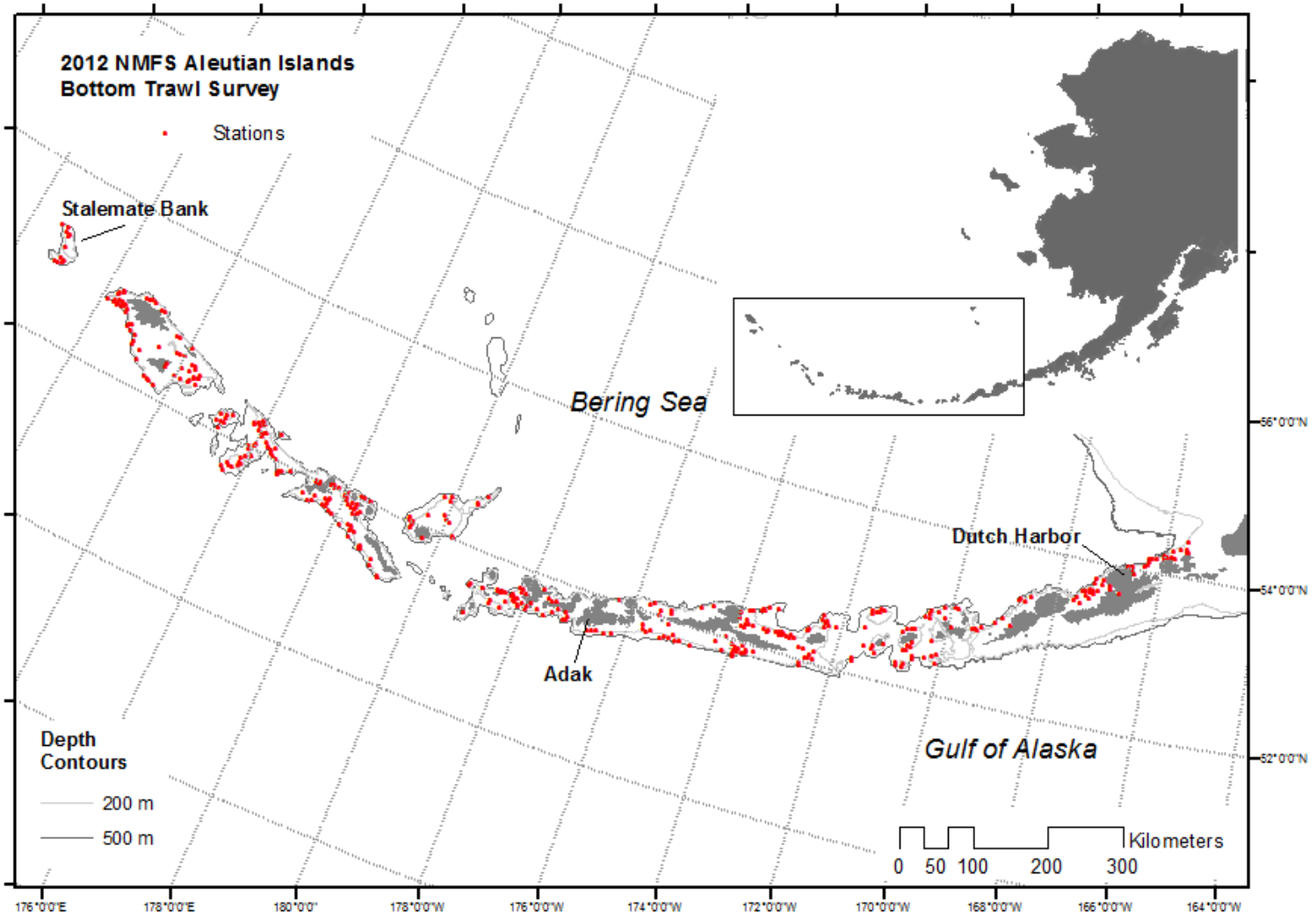


**Figure 1.** Stations to be completed during the AFSC 2012 Aleutian Islands bottom trawl Survey (N = 420).