City Council Backs GOA Observer Funding

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

The Kodiak City Council came out in favor of federal funding for fisheries observers at processing plants and aboard boats in the Gulf of Alaska. Vessels participating in federal fisheries are required to have observers. For vessels between 60 and 125 feet, they must have observers 30-percent of the time. Over that length, and observers must be aboard every fishing day. Likewise, observers are required at plants either zero, 30 or 100 percent of the time depending on how much groundfish they process.

Jay Stinson is a Kodiak trawl fisherman. He says observers result in better data with which manager can run a fishery. However, it’s become a financial burden on the fleet:

-- (Observer 1 Stinson 29 sec “… it’s an issue we need assistance with.”)

Trawler Al Birch told the council that it cost him 68-thousand-dollars off the top to pay for observers last year. He said that money could have gone to pay his captains and crew, who would have spent more of it in town than the observers, who are largely outsiders.

Ian Bruce is a crewman in the trawl fleet:

-- (Observer 2 Bruce 32 sec “… why not let the feds fork up some of the money?”)

Councilman Jack Maker, who serves on the Kodiak Fisheries Advisory Committee which addressed this issue, said he was in rare agreement with the trawlers:

-- (Observer 3 Maker 34 sec “… and this, that and the other thing.”)

Councilwoman Josie Rosales agreed a federally-funded observer program would benefit everyone involved:

-- (Observer 4 Rosales 15 sec “… for the people who work in the fishing industry.”)

The city council members passed the resolution five-to-zero. It calls on the state’s congressional delegation to secure funding for all or part of the observer program, which they hope will be in place by late next year. A similar resolution will come before the Kodiak Island Borough Assembly.

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