Public Input Needed for New Fishing Vessel Regs

Tuesday, 24 April 2012

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Jennifer Canfield/KMXT

Fishing vessel owners have a lot to be prepared for in 2013. Along with sweeping changes to NOAA's observer program, in 2010 Congress passed extensive new safety regulations as part of the Coast Guard Reauthorization Act. Some of those regulations still need to be finalized and fishermen will be invited to participate in the drafting process. Several of the regulations will become effective with the new year.

"When Congress passed the law they directed the Coast Guard to change the regulations for certain parts of the existing commercial fishing vessel safety regulations and so as a regulatory agency the Coast Guard can not enforce most parts of the law. They have to be enacted through a rule making process so that they can become a regulation and then now they can be enforced. What we have now is a kind of limbo situation between the requirements being in law and the requirements being in regulation."

That's Ken Lawrenson, the fishing vessel safety coordinator for the Coast Guard in Juneau. He explains further how the new regulations will go into effect over time.

"There are some of these changes that were so specific in the law that the Coast Guard will just release those as a regulation. Then what is going to happen is the other parts of this where those changes were not specific, those are going to require a tremendous amount of input from the public and the industry."

Lawrenson says many of the new regulations will actually make things easier for vessel owners, especially one that went into effect earlier this year.

"Using the boundary line to using that three nautical mile line from the territorial sea baseline which is going to make everyone's lives a lot easier because it's going to be using an existing gray line that's on everyone's nautical chart. So it becomes very easy to tell whether I'm shoreward of that and so I only have to comply with these requirements or am I operating beyond that line so I have additional requirements that I have to comply with."

You can find more information on the regulations here.

Full interview with Ken Lawrenson:

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