Crabber Advocates Merge

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

An organization formed to push for Bering Sea crab rationalization has decided to cease operations this summer and merge with a larger umbrella group of crab fishermen. The board of directors of the Crab Group of Independent Harvesters announced Monday they will join the Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers.

The Crab Group was initially formed to push for a crab license and vessel buy-back program and Bering Sea crab rationalization. With those two goals achieved, Crab Group consultant Linda Kozak said the two groups have been working towards the merger for some time.

Kale Garcia of Seattle is an Alaska crab fisherman. He was getting ready to sail north Monday when reached for comment. He thinks combining the two organizations is the right move.

-- (Crab Group 1 -- 37 sec "Well, I was a part of both ... represent and stuff like that.")

Garcia says the Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers have many things on their agenda - ranging from the environment to North Pacific Fishery Management Council issues:

-- (Crab Group 2 meeting.") -- 26 sec "The list is long and growing ... next upcoming council

For that meeting, Garcia says the group will be looking to get two items on the agenda: emergency relief for crabbers who suffered severe losses in the Bering Sea this last winter, and a reduction in the amount of paperwork associated with NOAA's Economic Data Reporting forms:

-- (Crab Group 3 too.") -- 27 sec "The EDR, the reporting has just been ... in that department

The Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers currently has over 350 members, and Garcia says he hopes other crabber groups will join as well. ABSC executive director Mark Gleason says independent harvesters need to speak with a unified voice, and the Crab Group merger is "one step closer" to that goal.

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