Two Optimistic King Crab Announcements this Week

Thursday, 30 May 2013

Jay Barrett/KMXT

There were a couple of announcements with good news for king crab this week.

First came word from Seward that Kodiak red king crab were successfully hatchery raised for the first time. Previous successes have come from red king crab stock from Bristol Bay and the Juneau area.

The Kodiak larvae were reared this spring at the Alutiiq Pride Shellfish Hatchery by UAF grad student Asia Beder and Alaska Sea Grant researcher Jim Swingle, as part of the AKCRABB research program.

About 121,000 Kodiak kings survived to the juvenile stage. They were produced at a density of 50 larvae per liter in six 1,200-litre tanks. The Kodiak king brood stock was provided by Mitch Simeonoff of Akhiok.

The other bit of good news came from out west, where crabbers and scientists have found that golden king crab stock around the Aleutian Islands are not only stable, but thriving.

According to Denby Lloyd, the science advisor to the Aleutian King Crab Research Foundation, the discovery could lead to more fishing opportunity in the future. The deep-water fishery has a 6-million-pound harvest cap.

The research was conducted through the use of 20 crab pots with smaller than normal mesh to retain younger crag instead of letting them escape. The haul was then tracked by state biologists onboard the fishing vessels. The Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation funded the research.

The special pots were used along side regular pots, and according to Lloyd, caught an abundance of recruit and pre-recruit male crab. If the abundance is significantly greater, he said the Aleutian golden king crab catch may soon compete with Bristol Bay red kings in size of the fishery.