

Young Fishermen's Summit Returns to Anchorage

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Many professions offer networking opportunities of some sort and the fishing industry is no exception. Come December Alaska's fishermen will gather in Anchorage for the Alaska Young Fishermen's Summit, a three day leadership training.

Torie Baker is with the Alaska Sea Grant Marine Advisory program and said while the summit's goal is to educate the next generation of fishermen in the state, the age of its participants doesn't really matter.

"It's really folks that are in the business. Probably have had a permit or an operation in their name say for at least five years, five six years. They're in the front end of their fishing careers. We also have many, many deckhands that come, whether they're in their 20s, 30s, or early 40s. You know just depending on what configuration and how you're involved in the industry really determines what your level of interest and how valuable this would be for you."

Baker said the summit will focus on four main areas of the fishing industry.

"The business of fishing, the actual nuts and bolts of running your fishing business. Seafood marketing, where Alaska seafood of all shapes and sizes fits not only into the international scene but how is sort of the new issues around marketing coming to bare and affecting the future. The third area that we look at and we do a lot of intensive work with this is familiarizing newer fishermen with what are the different regulatory processes and fisheries management processes here in the state."

Sunny Rice is also with the marine advisory program and is based out of Petersburg. She said this year's conference will be the 5th one in about seven years. The first one was held in Anchorage in 2007 and began at the request of some fishermen.

"I was approached here in Petersburg by some people with concerns about the next generation of commercial fishermen and how are we going to get them into the industry. Things have changed and quota is expensive and permits are expensive and we want to keep fishing permits in Alaska and we want to keep access to those resources in our communities and sort of thought about that how to tackle that from the education end. So we came at it both did some work from the retiring generation to help them think about how they might transfer their fishing business within the community, you know

maybe over a longer time through mentoring. And then thinking about what the needs were for young fishermen entering in. And so that's sort of where the Young Fisherman's Summit came about.

Rice said three of the summits were held in Anchorage, but the most recent one was in Juneau. This year it will return to Anchorage so it can piggy back off of other fish-related happenings in the area.

"In Juneau we were able to coincide with the legislature, this time we're coinciding with both the North Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting and a Board of Fish meeting. So one evening during the summit every time we have a reception where we invite all of the industry people to come meet the young fishermen. That's a great chance for our participants to talk to decision makers and our decision makers to hopefully see what's coming up and hear what the issues are for the next generation coming in. It's nice to have our meeting in conjunction with big meetings like that because then lots of fish people are already going to be in Anchorage."

While the Juneau meeting was convenient for many Southeast fishermen, Rice said they also decided to move this year's back to Anchorage so folks in Kodiak and out west wouldn't have to travel as far.

The summit will run December 10 through the 12 and costs \$100 to register. Rice said there are limited travel funds available for folks traveling from out of town. Those interested using some of those funds can apply online at marinadvisory.org/ayfs. That's also where you can find more information about the summit and register as a participant.