Kodiak Researchers Seek Whale Avoidance Data

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

This summer researchers from the University of Alaska Marine Advisory Program across the state will be working with salmon fishermen on identifying ways to help keep whales out of fishing nets. Kate Wynn says she and Bree Witteveen have already had a couple of sessions with Kodiak fishermen.

Tune into Talk of the Rock Tuesday afternoon at 12:30 to hear the whole interview about the whale avoidance study.

-- (Whales 1 37 sec "And here in Kodiak ... involve field work coming up.")

Wynn and Witteveen will be tracking whales on the fishing grounds, and talking with fishermen on what techniques they use to keep the big mammals, mostly humpbacks, out of their gear. Noise-makers have been a popular option in the past, but things like seal-bombs going off in the water could harm the whales' sensitive hearing. Wynn says the secret is finding just the right balance:

-- (Whales 2 51 sec "We're trying to find ... and still be effective.")

Wynn said fishermen have given her some good ideas, already.

-- (Whales 3 46 sec "There have been some novel ... into those a little more.")

Witteveen says there are not a lot of humpback whales getting entangled in Kodiak waters - maybe one every other year or so - but, she says the chance of an encounter increases every year as the whales continue their recovery from commercial whaling:

-- (Whales 4 20 sec "So it seems the ... for a large mammal like that.")

Log books are available for fishermen who would like to keep track of their encounters with whales, even if there was no entanglement. Wynn said information about who the fishermen are is not collected. You can find Wynn and Witteveen at the Fish

Tech Center on Near Island.