

Commercial Fishing has a long tradition in Homer

by Don Lane

Homer's commercial fishing industry has origins well before Alaska statehood, back when Seldovia provided a base for thriving herring and salmon fisheries. Tons of herring and salmon were harvested in Kachemak Bay during 1940's and 50's with the wide use of fish traps. With Alaska statehood, fish traps and their large corporate owners became a thing of the past, and the harvest of Kachemak Bay's bounty became an opportunity for local individuals and families. With construction of a modern harbor and road connection to Anchorage, the bulk of the commercial fleet grew in Homer, and advances in fishing technology in the past few decades have enabled Homer fishermen to extend their successful harvest to many areas of the state. It is common to see boats from the Bering Sea to as far south as San Francisco. Many of the fishermen on those boats are great-grandsons and daughters of those first Homer fishermen who recognized the opportunity left by the void of the fish traps and huge corporate beach seines of early Alaska.

The commercial fishing support industry is a year-round staple for Homer's economy, as boats and crews return to replenish and rebuild for the next season. New Homer-built commercial vessels are launched every year, and the constant demand for the latest technology and upgrades keeps a full range of top quality maritime craftsmen working. Over 500 commercial boats are based out of Homer, with a combined investment value of over \$250 million and contributing over \$60 million annually to the local economy.

Our fishing families also know what is fresh, where to get it, and the best way to cook it or not. Secrets of the best smoked salmon or black cod are highly guarded, and it's a welcome holiday greeting that contains a prized seafood treat not found on your grocer's shelf. And you can always tell when that special boat has landed with fresh product for sale -- just follow the lineup down the dock, and don't be late!

Our commercial fishing fleet is truly a part of Homer's tradition and its future.