



UNITED FISHERMEN OF ALASKA

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Fishermen falling through the cracks in health care & insurance

United Fishermen of Alaska (UFA), a trade association representing 36 Alaska commercial fishing organizations, released a study today that shows that many Alaska commercial fishermen fall through the cracks when it comes to access to health care and health insurance coverage – but would likely have lower than expected health care costs were health care services and insurance more available.

The group found that Alaska fishing permit holders are almost four times more likely than other Alaskans to live in a community without a hospital and are less likely to carry health insurance – especially in rural areas where alternate employment opportunities with medical benefits are not available. In these same areas, transportation to medical services adds to the burden.

However, UFA staff research and analysis indicates that Alaska fishermen, with a diet rich in seafood and regular exercise coupled with levels of tobacco use and obesity that appear to be significantly lower than the general population, health care needs would be lower than average.

The study also indicates that health insurance options for fishermen are limited and vary by location. Those who are residents of Alaska are further challenged because the state overall is served by far fewer private insurance companies offering individual or small business medical insurance than other states and has the highest health care costs in the nation.

“Lack of health insurance is a significant barrier to entry for the next generation of commercial fishermen. As the fleet continues to ‘gray’, there is ultimately a threat to domestic seafood harvest and communities that depend on fishing businesses,” said UFA President Joe Childers.

“UFA will continue to seek opportunities for additional research to define the issues, and funding to address the problem of access to health care and health insurance for all Alaska fishermen.”

For the complete UFA health care paper see <http://www.ufa-fish.org/doc/healthcare2007.pdf>.

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Alaska Crab Coalition • Alaska Draggers Association • Alaska Independent Tendermen's Association • Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association
Alaska Shellfish Association • Alaska Trollers Association • Armstrong Keta • At-sea Processors Association • Bristol Bay Reserve
Cape Barnabas Inc. • Concerned Area "M" Fishermen • Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association • Cordova District Fishermen United
Crab Group of Independent Harvesters • Douglas Island Pink and Chum • Fishing Vessel Owners Association • Groundfish Forum
Kenai Peninsula Fishermen's Association • Kodiak Regional Aquaculture Association • North Pacific Fisheries Association
Northern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association • Petersburg Vessel Owners Association • Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation
Purse Seine Vessel Owner Association • Seafood Producers Cooperative • Sitka Herring Association • Southeast Alaska Fisherman's Alliance
Southeast Alaska Regional Dive Fisheries Association • Southeast Alaska Seiners Association • Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association
United Catcher Boats • United Cook Inlet Drift Association • United Salmon Association • United Southeast Alaska Gillnetters
Valdez Fisheries Development Association • Western Gulf of Alaska Fishermen