

important concept because young of the year for one fisheries or another are present in the water column throughout the year (Figure 16). Spilled oil could also affect recruitment indirectly by impacting lower trophic levels; i.e., fish food.

Summary

In summary, there are three main points. First, some form of oil or its refined products is spilled frequently in Alaska. There are a lot of small boats associated with the fishing industry that should not be out in the kind of weather they quite often find themselves in. But the fishermen, especially those of us in the Gulf Coast region and Bristol Bay (lease sale 92), are concerned about "The Big One." Given the high frequency of tankers into Port Valdez, the increasing age and size of that tanker fleet, and the inability to quickly contain and clean-up an oil spill in open water of Alaska, fishermen feel that we are playing a game of Russian roulette.

Second when, not if, "The Big One" does occur and much or all of the income from a fishing season is lost, compensation for processors, support industries and local communities will be difficult if not impossible to obtain. Fishermen, the Coast Guard, and State agencies do in general have greater legal protection and recourse. However, the process is extremely slow. While the Coast Guard and State agencies may have the resources to weather the inevitable legal delays, Alaskan fishermen—engaged in seasonal efforts that occur only once a year—will be faced with an immediate economic crisis.

Last, there are several major studies underway regarding the economic impact of the fishing industry throughout Alaska. When these studies are released, it will be possible to more accurately estimate economic impact resulting from a decreased fish harvest.

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