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## Marine diesel prices at \$5.13 crippling fishing fleet

JOY LANDALUCE

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The high price of fuel is sending commercial fishermen to Congress for relief.

Fishermen circulated a petition that describes soaring fuel prices as “crippling.”

Kathy Hansen, director of the Southeast Alaska Fisherman’s Alliance, said some fishermen report spending 50 to 70 percent of their income on fuel, making it difficult if not impossible to break even.

“As commercial fisherman, we do not have the opportunity to add a fuel surcharge or change the price of our fish — we get what the processors are able to pay us for the price of fish,” Hansen said.

Cordova fisherman Chris Johnson said the fuel costs might change his fishing techniques.

“I might change my program a little. My style of fishing, I might have to adjust,” he said. “Rather than coming in to town to deliver every time, we may have to stay out on the anchor and read books on the closures.”

Fisherman Kent “Curly” Herschleib stated that fishermen are going to have to settle down.

“Running from one area to the next in search of fish is going to be a hit to the financial situation of every fishing boat,” Herschleib said.

Cordova District Fishermen United President Jerry McCune stated that the fuel prices locally are unacceptable.

“Fisherman are going to have to unite and begin a fuel cooperative to compete against the Shoreside monopoly,” McCune said. “I took around the petition that went to Congress, which includes small business and farmers. It was easy to get the signatures needed.”

“This is a community under stress. These high prices will force people out of business,” McCune added. “These inflated fuel prices are a big hurt on the economy of this community.”

Petitions have been forwarded to Alaska’s congressional delegation along with letters of support.

“I will be making a call to the governor’s office, also. We may need an investigation to be started in this community. I see no reason why we are so much higher than other locations in the state,” McCune said.

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