

# Oregon Pink Shrimp



© Pacific Media Productions of Newport, Oregon



DATE CERTIFIED 6 December 2007

SPECIES Oregon pink shrimp  
(*Pandalus jordani*)

FISHING METHOD Otter trawl

COUNTRY United States

LOCATION



The Pacific Ocean off the states of Oregon, Washington and California, on the west coast of the US

FISHERY TONNAGE 11,570 tonnes  
(landed 2008)

"I'M TIRED OF being attacked by groups that wouldn't know sustainability if it bit them in the butt," says Brad Pettinger, Director of the Oregon Trawl Commission – a state agency representing fishermen, processors and distributors that operates under the umbrella of the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

### Demonstrating sustainable management

Like most fisheries that trawl for shrimp, this one had been dogged in the past by criticism relating to bycatch of fish and damage to the seabed by bottom trawling gear. Pettinger knew the reality in Oregon was otherwise, due to the progressive nature of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODF&W) that manages the shrimp fishery to a high environmental standard.

"That is why we went for MSC certification," Pettinger says, "to differentiate ourselves from others. In today's world, when the government says a fishery is well managed, it doesn't mean as much as it used to. When you have an independent, outside party like the MSC coming in and saying it, that is of huge value. The certification offers a guarantee – to NGOs, to the public, to retailers, to the officials and politicians who control our livelihoods from afar – that a fishery is managed to the highest standards in the world."

For a number of years, the ODF&W had worked with the fleet on perfecting a bycatch reduction device (BRD) (a grid fitted at the entrance of the net to avoid larger fish being caught) suitable for shrimp trawlers that are double-rigged – towing two nets, not one, from booms extending on both sides of the vessel. "On a double-rigger, you sometimes run for a while with the gear on top of the water," says Pettinger, "and the Nordmore grate [the traditional, square grid inside a shrimp trawl that directs fish upwards and out of the net] would spin badly and foul the net. Through a lot of trial and error, we developed a round grate that solved the spinning problem."

Mandatory since 2002, BRDs have significantly reduced bycatch of species such as hake, sole and rockfish. Studies

have shown that a BRD with 32mm bar spacing reduces bycatch to less than six per cent, while one with 19mm spacing reduces it further to just two per cent. Use of the device, the MSC certifiers concluded, makes "the Oregon pink shrimp fishery ... one of the cleanest shrimp fisheries in the world" in terms of bycatch.

### Improving knowledge for better management

To achieve MSC certification, some adjustments were needed. "We added a few things to our logbooks," says Pettinger, "to get more information about discards of small shrimp – which is something we didn't have before." Fortunately, the condition coincided with the ODF&W's plan to re-order logbooks the following year, so columns for new data were simply added.

The same serendipity occurred with a second condition, requiring the fishery to complete, within two years of certification, a study that would provide better understanding of the impacts of shrimp trawling on seabed ecosystems. While these were considered to be low, the aim was to map a scenario for how the ecosystem might recover if there were found to be significant impacts. In fact, the ODF&W had in the planning stages an ROV study (using unmanned submersibles) of benthic impacts inside and outside an area closed to bottom trawlers.

"It was moving forward," Pettinger says, "but I think the certification helped. It gave the Department an easier buy-in, to say 'We'd like to do this'. I think the MSC gives leverage to individuals to get things done, it brings a sense of momentum to projects that government agencies and others may be looking at already. If they're not, you prod them and wade in where you can to get things accomplished."

More than anything, certification has brought a sense of optimism about the future. "It gives an assurance that we will be in business next year," Pettinger says, "because third-party certification is a fact of life now. Shoppers don't just want vegetables, they want organically certified vegetables. Everyone is looking for something extra, and that is what the MSC provides. We're all in."



“ Certification of the Oregon’s pink shrimp trawl fishery is a huge achievement. The MSC is an internationally recognized organization with very high scientific standards for approving the certification of a wild fishery. Certainly, this certification will help our pink shrimp fishermen maintain existing market access and gain access to new markets ”

Katy Coba, Director of the Oregon Department of Agriculture



© Pacific Media Productions of Newport, Oregon,  
© Oregon Trawl Commission