

Pacific Choice Sea Food Sails Out of the Harbor

October 29, 2024



Pacific Choice Seafood and its vital ice plant operation has pulled out of the Crescent City Harbor (CCHD). The exit leaves no outlet for commercial ice to ensure fish catch freshness.

The pullout was not unexpected. Owners of the 83 year old family firm blame onerous California Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations over the anhydrous ammonia-based freezing process as the primary reason the company's moving its California operations to its Charleston, Oregon facility. New ice making technology involves non-toxic Carbon Dioxide.

The EPA was tasked with inspecting the ice making machinery; for reasons unknown, the EPA has not conducted these mandated inspections since 2008.

Recently appointed Harbormaster (interim) Mike Rademaker traveled up to Clackamas County to meet with Pacific Choice Seafood management, seeking a temporary agreement to re-open and service the ice plant until the Harbor can find an alternative ice-producing machine with the ability to produce quantities to

service the needs of the local commercial fisherman fleet. At present, fishermen have an 80 ton reserve of ice.

“The need for ice will resume in January when commercial shrimp and crab vessels return to the ocean,” according Harbor Commissioner Rick Shepherd, a commercial fisherman.

Rademaker is seeking interim assistance from the vacated Pacific Sea Foods and/or a temporary waiver, full abeyance (delay of enforcement) or consent agreement from the EPA, while the alternative ice resource can be located and secured.

Senate Pro Tempore Mike McGuire whose District covers Del Norte, plans to meet in Crescent City after the Election, with Harbor, City and County officials to find a viable alternative to addressing the ice challenge.

Harbormaster Rademaker also shared options of seeking a grant from the Coastal Conservancy and the possibility of teaming up with tribal partners, the Tolowa and Yurok Tribes for a joint grant application. Estimates of inspection costs and updating equipment may run about \$200,000.

Pacific Choice Seafood states the primary reason for moving to Oregon versus remaining in California involved the EPA mandate banning the disposal of the ammonia-treated ice within the Crescent City Harbor. Oregon permits the disposal of ammonia-treated ice to be deposited into its harbors, including Brookings Harbor.

The CCHD met last week to discuss options and was scheduled to meet Election Day November 5. That meeting will be rescheduled after the Election. A Special Meeting was scheduled Tuesday, October 29 at 2PM at the Conference Room located on Citizens Dock Road.