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OSP Fish & Wildlife Division Investigation Seizes Over 150 Illegal Crab Pots From Ocean; Two Facing Charges May 19, 2014

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<http://www.flashalertnewswire.net/images/news/2014-05/1002/74405/Valkyrie1.jpg>
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A three-month investigation by Oregon State Police (OSP) Fish & Wildlife Division into illegal crabbing activity conducted by a Garibaldi-based fishing vessel led to the recovery of over 150 illegal crab pots, some of which may be stolen, and pending charges for two men. The investigation is continuing and OSP is planning a public viewing June 9th of seized crab gear with markings not associated with the fishing vessel named "Valkyrie".

OSP Fish & Wildlife Division troopers started the investigation in December 2013 after a mandatory hold inspection noted the "Valkyrie" deployed commercial crab pots in the Pacific Ocean and did not conduct a landing within 14 days as required by law. The "Valkyrie" is owned and supervised by ARON STEINBACH, age 34, from Bay City, and was operated by two different captains. The first captain was THOMAS WHITE, age 30, from Nehalem, and the most recent captain was a 52-year old from Garibaldi man.

In February 2014, OSP Fish & Wildlife troopers contacted STEINBACH and WHITE about violations. Subsequent to the ongoing investigation, STEINBACH was cited for Leaving Gear Set More Than 14 Days Without a Landing and WHITE was cited for No Commercial Fishing License. It also became apparent to troopers that many of the vessel's crab pots had not been worked for long periods of time, causing concern that the gear could be killing, wasting and harming crab, greatly impacting the resource.

Starting May 6, OSP Fish & Wildlife troopers aboard the Department's Patrol Vessel, "Guardian", assisted by United States Coast Guard personnel and resources, began seizing "Valkyrie" commercial crab gear from the ocean near Cape Falcon. Many of the more than 150 seized crab pots had evidence of multiple violations. Several contained biomass in the form of rotten crab or crab parts, indicating crab were being caught by the unchecked gear and the crab were dying and going to waste inside the gear.

On May 12, STEINBACH, who was in the Tillamook County Jail on an unrelated matter, was cited by OSP for the following class A misdemeanor charges:

- * Waste of Commercial Food Fish
- * Commercial Dungeness Crabbing With Inadequate Release Mechanism
- * Leaving Gear Set More Than 14 Days Without a Landing
- * No Buoy Tags
- * No Pot Tags

Each charge may have additional counts resulting from the ongoing investigation. No

charges have been filed at this time on the vessel's most recent captain.

OSP Fish & Wildlife Captain Jeff Samuels thanked the United States Coast Guard and Tillamook County Sheriff's Office for their assistance.

"The Coast Guard's help in providing personnel, vessels, aircraft, and logistical support was invaluable, and the manpower from a Sheriff's Office work crew to off-load the crab pots was much needed," said Samuels.

During the crab pot recovery, crab gear with different markings was found indicating some of the gear may be stolen. OSP Fish & Wildlife Division is scheduling a public viewing of seized crab pots to possibly identify any gear as stolen and facilitate its return to any owners. The viewing is scheduled June 9 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the OSP Tillamook Office located at 5995 Long Prairie Road.

Questions regarding the investigation and scheduled crab gear viewing may be directed to Sergeant Todd Hoodenpyl at (503) 815-3373.

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