

SALMON GILLNETTERS

Salmon gillnetters supply all five species of Pacific salmon to markets in Washington and across the nation. Fishing is permitted only for short seasons in the summer and fall. Various salmon runs are targeted in coastal bays and rivers, in Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

A gillnet is set with its meshes hanging in the water to form a diamond-like pattern that is difficult for fish to see. The nets have a floating cork line and a weighted lead line that sinks, lowering the net to a suitable depth. While swimming, salmon become entangled in the net's diamond-shaped mesh, quite often by the gills. The mesh size is regulated to allow smaller or larger fish to escape and only targeted species and sizes to be caught.

Onboard gear can be arranged in several ways. Some boats, called sternpickers, have a stern-mounted reel and roller for setting and hauling nets over the rear end. Other boats, called

bowpickers, have a bow roller for bringing in the nets over the front end. There are also small skiffs that deploy the net over the stern or bow and store the net on deck or in boxes. Vessels are usually between 20 and 40 feet long.

The gillnet is made up of lightweight netting and is played out by the reel (via hydraulic drives) or by hand and then allowed to drift with the tide. It can measure up to 300 fathoms (1,800 feet) in length and 90 meshes (about 38 feet) in depth. Fishermen adapt the net length and type of gear to meet local conditions. The fish are picked out of the net as the vessel's crew pulls the net back onboard.

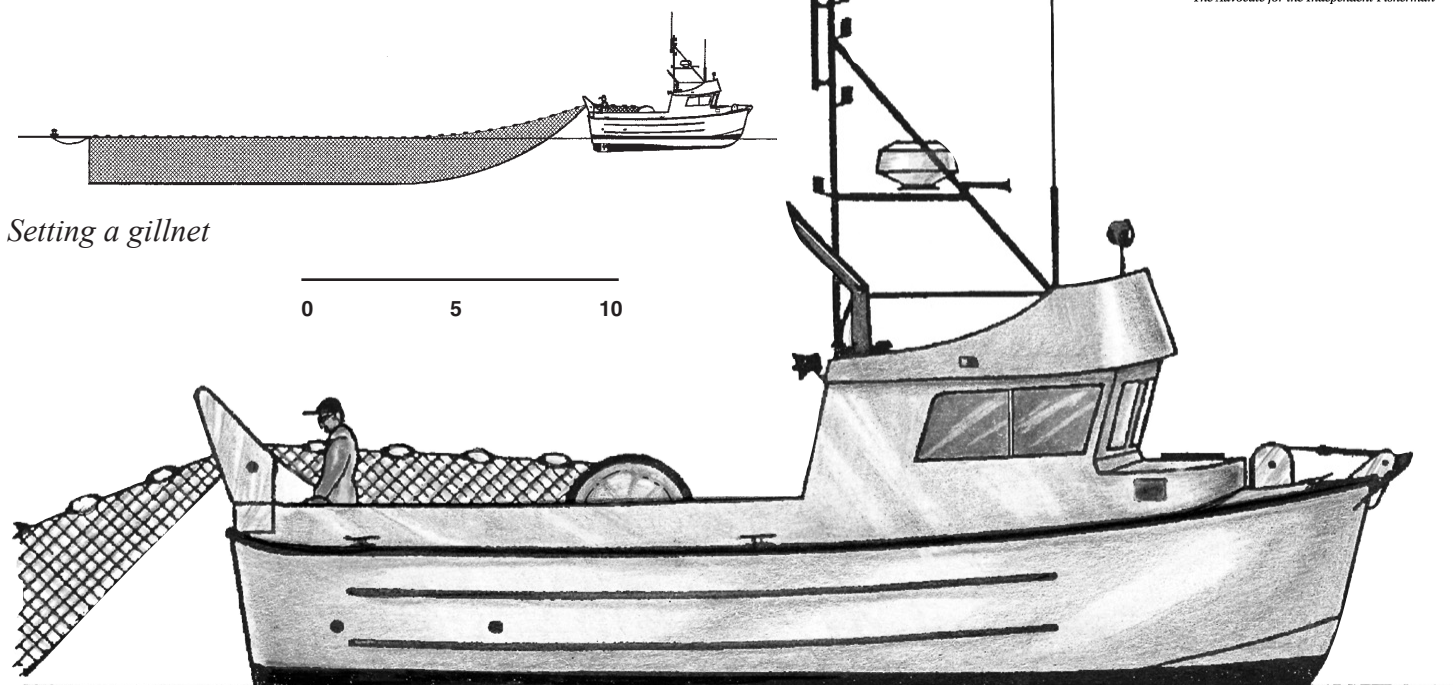
Washington Sea Grant Program offers classes and workshops, supports research on salmon biology and ocean conditions and produces technical reports and instructional videos to help salmon fishermen improve their operations while using environmentally sound methods to acquire, process and market their catches. For more information on Washington Sea Grant Program, visit the WSGP Web site, wsg.washington.edu or call 206.543.6600.

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Setting a gillnet