



**NOAA
FISHERIES**

**Office of Law
Enforcement**

Challenges in IUU Crab Investigations The U.S. experience

Murray Bauer,
Special Agent
International Operations Coordinator

September 23, 2017

Key Issues

IUU fishing of Russian crab resources is a widely reported problem that we have known about for approximately 10 years.

In early 2000's, U.S. imports of Russian king crab exceeded the entire Russian harvest quota.

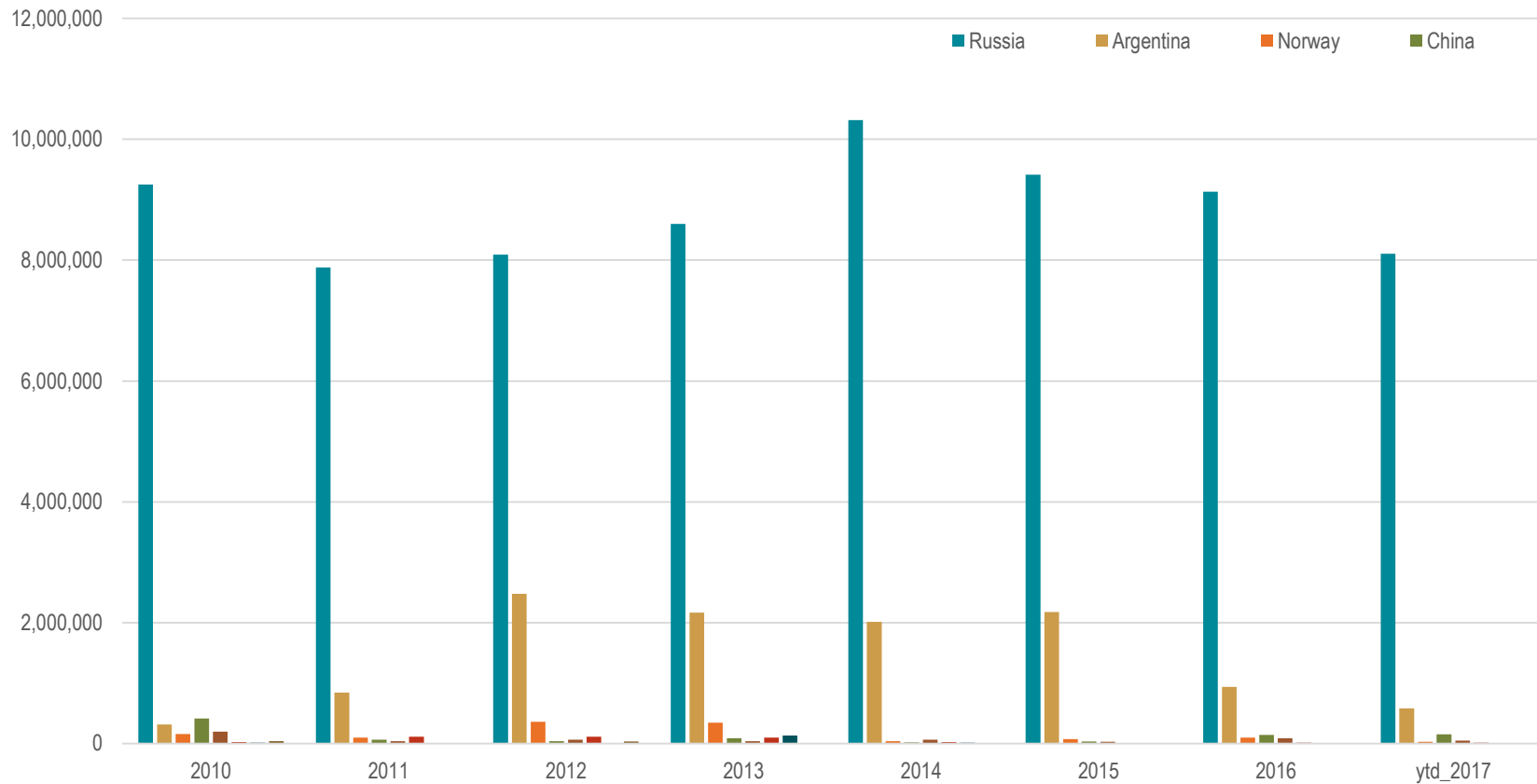
Currently, Russian TAC for King crab is set at 13 million kilos. Imports to U.S. have reached 8 million and are anticipated to reach 11 to 12 million kilos by end of year. However, U.S. is not the only market.

Majority of king crab in U.S. market is Russian origin. Genetic testing found blue king crab labeled as king crab, red king crab and Alaska red king crab (2007).



Removing from the U.S. market deters incentives and helps equalizing the playing field for the U.S. fleet due to market manipulation.

U.S. Imports of King Crab by National Source of Origin – In Kilos



The large volume and diversity of seafood imports creates a challenge to detecting IUU seafood imports.

Catching drops of water from a fire hose!

- Northwest U.S. ports receive \$1 billion in seafood imports annually.
- Blaine, Washington receives the greatest volume of seafood entries at a land port in the western U.S.

“Harbor Seafood’s case”

- Investigation of Russian king crab imports in December 2010.

Investigation

- In late 2010, OLE agents learned of a large quantity of illegal king crab available in Busan, Korea.
- OLE coordinated with U.S. Customs (CBP) to initiate an inspection program at the Port of Seattle.
- Entries are screened and vessel quota was verified with Russian Authorities.
- Direct relationship between OLE and Russian Border Guard was crucial to effecting seizure and to successful prosecution

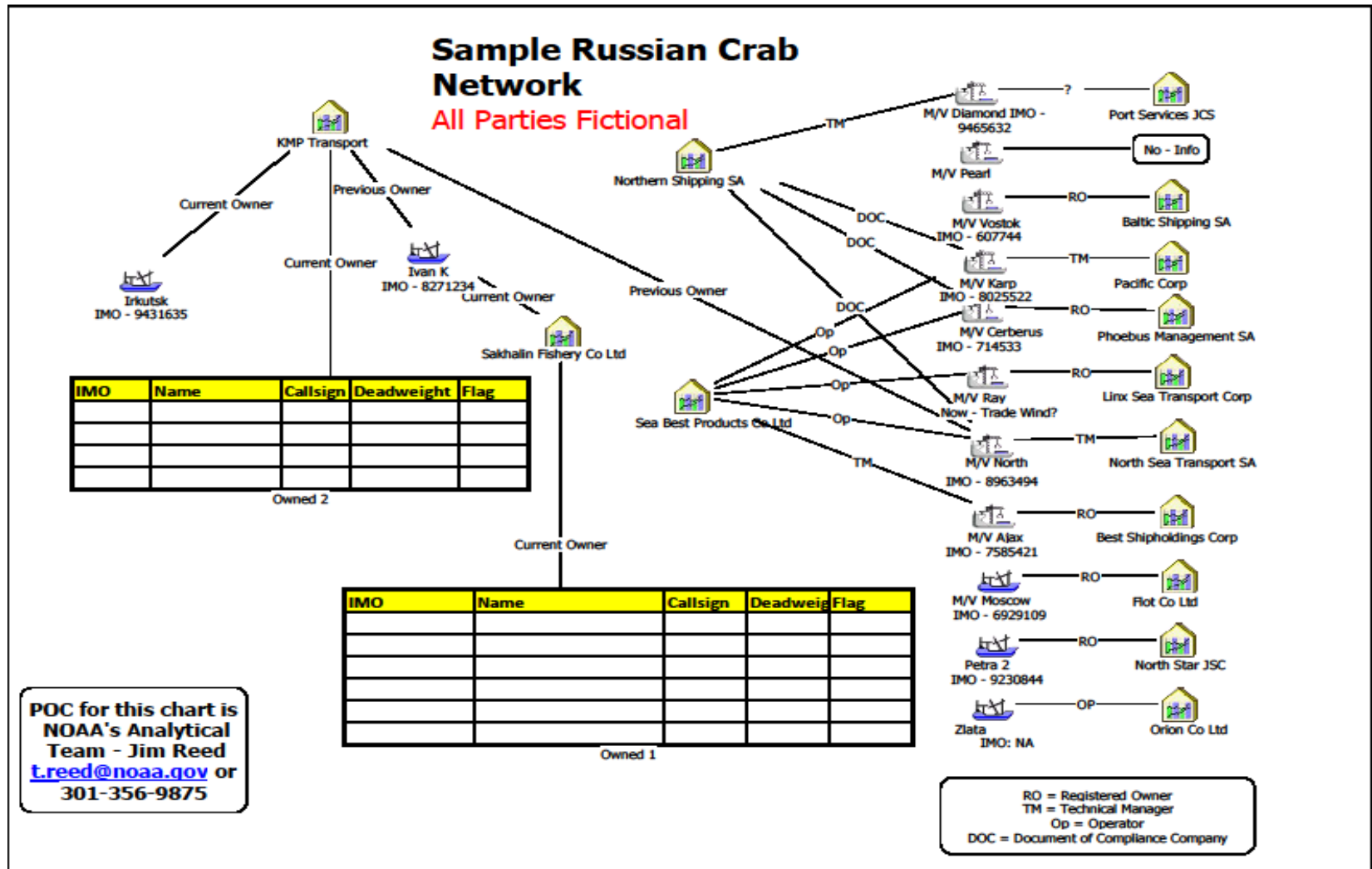
Investigation

- Identified catch as originating from multiple Russian vessels and companies.
- Products routed through trading companies in Japan, Hong Kong and South Korea enroute to the U.S.

112 metric tons valued at \$2.7 million detained for inspection and ultimately seized by NOAA OLE and forfeited to the U.S. Government.

(OLE – NOAA Office of Law Enforcement)

Identifying Ownership and Beneficial Owners



Challenges

- 100% of Russian crab travels through Japan, South Korea or China before coming to the U.S.
- Criminal organizations controlling crab trade operate across multiple countries.
- Critical import data collected by other U.S. agencies (Food and Drug Administration- FDA) was not freely available to NOAA OLE.
- Customs entry data of limited usefulness for screening entries.
- Lack of information about the traders/ processes in Japan, S. Korea and China that are behind the deliveries of IUU products to the U.S.

Impact of OLE Action

- Imports of Russian crab declined by over 40%.
- Russian Authorities opened a parallel investigation against the Russian vessel and company.
- U.S. Customs initiated a crab inspection operation West Coast wide.
- Efforts to form a Russian crab working group within OLE to develop comprehensive strategies to reduce IUU crab shipments to the US.
 - Both internal OLE strategies, and proposals to other U.S. Partner agencies (FDA and CBP).
 - Future coordination and communication with other transit countries needed.

Impacts

- Importers keep much more thorough documentation on their imports and we do not see product listed as being produced in Japan, Korea, or Hong Kong as was a problem in the past when importers did not know or wanted to hide the Russian producer.
- After over 6 years of negotiations / discussions, the U.S. Government finalized an IUU Agreement with Russia that will allow direct NOAA OLE communication and information sharing with our fisheries investigators / enforcement entities in Russia.



Contact Information:

U.S. Dept. of Commerce
NOAA / National Marine Fisheries Service
Office of Law Enforcement, Headquarters
Tel: +1 301- 427-8230

Todd Dubois
Assistant Director
Tel: +1 301-427-8243
todd.dubois@noaa.gov

Murray Bauer, Special Agent
International Operations Coordinator
Tel: +1 301-427-8241
murray.bauer@noaa.gov