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**United States Cruise Plan for The Gulf of Alaska Project aboard the F/V  
NORTHWEST EXPLORER, July – October 2011**

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## Introduction

Scientists from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory, and the University of Alaska will conduct a survey during summer and Fall 2011 within the southeastern and central Gulf of Alaska (GOA) to provide key ecological data on the pelagic ecosystem, examine oceanographic transport mechanisms, lower trophic level production, and age-0 marine fish and juvenile salmon distribution and condition. Primary objectives of the survey will be to: 1) collect biological information on ecologically important fish species and 2) describe the physical and biological oceanographic conditions of the GOA.

## Survey

A survey of epi-pelagic fish species, zooplankton, ichthyoplankton, and oceanographic measurements will be conducted at stations within the southeastern and central GOA aboard the F/V *Northwest Explorer*. The survey will begin 1 July 2011 in Juneau, Alaska and end on 14 October 2011 in Juneau, Alaska, for a total of 94 sea days (Fig. 1; Table 1).

The cruise will be conducted aboard the F/V *Northwest Explorer*. Fish samples will be collected using a midwater rope trawl. At each station, the net will be towed at or near the surface for 30 minutes at speeds between 3.5 and 5 kts.

All fish species will be counted and standard biological measurements including length and weight will be taken from subsamples of each species. Diets of subsamples of marine fish and juvenile salmon will be collected for laboratory analyses.

Biological and physical oceanographic data will be collected at each trawl station.

**Table 1.** Tentative cruise itinerary for the Gulf of Alaska Project research cruise – F/V *Northwest Explorer*, July 1 to October 14, 2011.

Date	Location/Activity
<b>LEG 1</b>	
July 1	Load Gear (Juneau, AK)
July 2	Depart Juneau, AK; transit to Southeast GOA
July 3-21	Sample Station grid in Southeast GOA (Fig. 1)
July 22-23	Transit Juneau, AK
July 24	Inport Juneau, AK
<b>LEG 2</b>	
July 31	Load Gear (Juneau, AK)
August 1-2	Depart Juneau, AK; transit to central GOA
August 4-22	Sample Station grid in central GOA (Fig. 1)
August 23-26	Transit Juneau, AK

August 27                      Inport Juneau, AK

**LEG 3**

September 3                      Load Gear (Juneau, AK)  
September 4                      Depart Juneau, AK; transit to Southeast GOA  
September 5-24                      Sample Station grid in Southeast GOA (Fig .1)  
September 25-26                      Leg change (Seward, AK)

**LEG 4**

September 27-30                      Sample Station grid in central GOA (Fig. 1)  
October 1-9                      Sample Station grid in central GOA (Fig. 1)  
October 10-13                      Transit Juneau, AK  
October 14                      Inport and offload Juneau, AK

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**Fig. 1.** Proposed survey stations (shown in blue) for the Gulf of Alaska Program research cruise in the southeastern and central GOA, July 1 to October 14, 2011 on board the F/V *Northwest Explorer*.

