

1998
NORTON SOUND DISTRICT
SHELLFISH REPORT
to the
Alaska Board of Fisheries

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Regional Information Report* No. 3A99-02

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Division of Commercial Fisheries
333 Raspberry Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99518-1599

January 1999

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INTRODUCTION

Norton Sound

The Norton Sound Section of the Northern Bering Sea District consists of all waters in Registration Area Q that are north of the latitude of Cape Romanzof, east of 168 west longitude, and south of the latitude of Cape Prince of Wales (Figures 1 and 2). A large vessel summer commercial red king crab (*Paralithodes camtschatica*) fishery existed in the Norton Sound Section from 1977 through 1992 (Appendix Table 2). No summer commercial fishery occurred in 1991 due to a lack of staff necessary to manage the fishery. The budget had been cut the previous winter. In 1992, the large vessel summer commercial fishery resumed. Regulation changes adopted during the March 1993 Board of Fisheries meeting changed the character of the fishing fleet to that of a small boat fleet. A superexclusive designation went into effect for the Norton Sound commercial crab fishery June 27, 1994. A vessel registered for the Norton Sound crab fishery may not be used to take king crab in any other registration area during that registration year. A vessel moratorium was put into place prior to the 1996 season with the intention to create a license limitation in the near future.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) conducted a trawl survey to examine the abundance of Norton Sound red king crab in late August 1991 (Appendix Table 5). The results of that survey as compared to the 6 previous trawl surveys show a gradual trend of increasing abundance since the low recorded in 1982. The 1991 survey estimated the total biomass of legal king crab (red king crab with carapace ≥ 4.75 inches) to be 3.4 million pounds present in the open commercial fishing area. The 1991 survey was the last survey conducted by the NMFS. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) conducted a trawl survey to examine the abundance of Norton Sound red king crab from August 7 - 18, 1996. The estimated abundance of legal male was 534,446 red king crab with a biomass of approximately 1.6 million pounds (Appendix Table 5). This population estimate showed a 40% decline in the legal biomass of king crab since 1991. The results from the 1996 trawl survey prompted the fishery managers to reduce the harvest rate in the commercial fishery to five percent of the legal biomass and set the guideline harvest at 80,000 pounds. This is a significant reduction from the previous exploitation rate of ten percent and guideline harvest level of 340,000 pounds.

St. Lawrence Island

The St. Lawrence Island Section lies immediately west and north of the Norton Sound Section. Because the Bering Sea crab fleet bases in Dutch Harbor, the St. Lawrence Island Section has been managed by ADF&G's Westward Region's Dutch Harbor office, until recently. The only reported commercial catches to date in the St. Lawrence Island Section were made in 1983 when 52,557 pounds of blue king crab were delivered from 13 landings; in 1989 when 3,603 pounds of red king crab and 984 pounds of blue king crab were delivered from 8 landings; in 1992 when 53 pounds of blue crab were landed; and in 1995 when 7,913 pounds were delivered from three landings.

In 1983, the commercial crab fleet concentrated near the southeast shore of St. Lawrence Island. The following year a regulation proposal to close the waters within 10 miles of all inhabited islands within the section was adopted in an attempt to protect stocks targeted by local fishermen and reduce impacts on marine mammal subsistence harvests during the winter. During the 1989 season, three fishing vessels prospecting in that section found relatively few blue king crab near rocks and shoals still open to commercial fishing, but red king crab were discovered in low densities near Kivalina, the northern

boundary of the section. The villagers of Little Diomed Island have also traded and sold winter caught blue king crab with residents of Nome and other villages for years. The Department has not been able to obtain an accurate estimate of the magnitude of this trade. The remoteness of this village is also a factor contributing to the lack of catch records. Current regulation allows the commercial harvest and sale of king crab near shore during the winter. The Board provided the same provisions in the regulation as are in effect for Norton Sound to allow a commercial winter fishery. However, local residents of St. Lawrence Island have decided not to export any of their winter catch for commercial sale.

COMMERCIAL FISHERY

Norton Sound Summer Commercial Fishery

The 1998 summer commercial red king crab fishery opened at 12 noon, July 1 in the Norton Sound Section. The first fishers registered July 7, and the first delivery was not made until July 16. The fishery was closed by regulation at 12 noon, September 3. A total of 11 fishing vessels and 13 fishers were registered for the summer commercial crab season. Ten fishers were registered as catcher/sellers. No large vessels participated in the 1998 summer season. No floating crab processors or catcher/processors operated in Norton Sound during the 1998 summer fishery, therefore no independent observers were placed on board commercial vessels. There was one company set up to purchase and process crab in Nome. A group of fishers acted as catcher/sellers and coordinated flying live crab to a buyer in Anchorage.

Included in the total harvest data were fourteen landings made by 8 fishermen registered as catcher sellers. The Lower Yukon crab fleet lost their live crab market in Anchorage on the day they pulled their pots for the final time. Fishers tried to sell most of their crab locally and also gave away crab to organizations in Nome. They brought approximately 600 crab back out to sea in an attempt to release them. These crab have been included in the total pounds of deadloss because it is unknown if they survived.

One ADF&G fishery biologist was stationed in Nome to monitor the fishery and sample legal crab delivered to buyers in Nome. This was the only person dedicated to collecting essential biological and management data, which is necessary in determining the magnitude and location of the commercial harvest and tracking the status of the stock. The observer also provides the means to enforce size and sex restriction regulations that protect the resource.

Public concern for declining nearshore catches and the apparent shift in crab distribution caused managers to announce their intent not to relax the nearshore closure line as their practice had been in recent years. As a result of crab distribution and the proximity to the closure line, most vessels traveled to the entrance of Golovin Bay to fish, but only one vessel chose to operate from the port of Golovin. No samples were collected from that vessel.

Catch reporting logs were kept by buyers and by skippers of catcher vessels for each statistical area fished. Buyers verbal reports were relayed daily by 9:00 a.m. to the ADF&G office in Nome. Fish tickets were due in to the ADF&G office on Friday of each week throughout the duration of the fishery. Vessel reports from fishermen and Catcher/Seller fish tickets were required every Monday for the duration of the fishery. Compliance with reporting requirements was good. Daily catch statistics can be found in Table 1 and Figure 3

Of the eight vessels which made deliveries in the 1998 season two registered from Norton Sound, five from the Yukon Delta and one was Alaskan but from outside the section. Norton Sound fishers caught one percent of the total harvest, Yukon Delta fishers caught 90% of the harvest and the remaining nine percent was harvested by other Alaskan residents.

Board of Fisheries regulations specific to Norton Sound Section are:

- 1) 5AAC 34.915, which directs the Department to manage the Norton Sound summer king crab fishery for a harvest of one half the exploitation rate determined under 5AAC 34.080.
- 2) 5AAC 34.935, which established a closed area with a defined boundary approximating 15 miles from the beach in the Norton Sound section, to protect a long established winter subsistence fishery.
- 3) 5AAC 34.925 (i) and (j), requiring pot tags and limiting vessels of 125 feet in length or less to 40 pots each and larger vessels are limited to 50 pots.
- 4) 5AAC 34.906, designates the Norton Sound Section to be a superexclusive registration area.

Statistical Summary

The total commercial catch was 10,661 crab (Table 1). A total of 29,684 pounds were harvested. This includes approximately 2,059 pounds of deadloss and 1,985 pounds of crab given away or kept for personal use. This is by far the smallest harvest since the small boat fishery began in 1993. Harvests were affected by poor price, and extreme weather conditions. Eight vessels made 50 deliveries, and 11 permit holders fished. Average weight for commercially caught crab was 2.78 lb./crab. A total of 360 pots were registered and 1,639 pot pulls were recorded during the fishery. The average price/pound was \$1.47. The fishery value was approximately \$41,000. This does not include deadloss and crab given away or kept for personal use. Daily catch statistics can be found in Table 1 and Figure 3.

Fish ticket reports document that 6 statistical areas were fished (Table 2, Figure 6). Statistical area 636401 had the highest catch with 10,771 pounds taken or approximately 36.3% of the entire harvest. The second highest catch came from statistical area 626401 which was 8,065 lbs. or 27.2% of the harvest. The overall CPUE for the 1998 fishery was 6.5 crab/pot (Table 1). Statistical area 626401 had the highest CPUE with 9.6 crab/pot (Table 2).

Statistical area 656401 had the largest average weight of 2.94 pounds per crab according to fish ticket data (Table 2). Overall average weight per crab for the 1998 season was 2.78 pounds. This compares to the combined average weight of 2.94 pounds of the previous five years.

Commercial Catch Sampling

Carapace length measurements and shell age were collected from 1,055 male red king crab throughout the duration of the 1998 summer fishery. Sampling was accomplished as the boats delivered their catch. Carapace age was classified as new (11 months old) or old (at least 23 months old) (Table 3, Figure 4). Overall mean carapace length of the legal male red king crab sampled was 116.9 mm (Table 3). Male crab with new shell carapaces made up 61.1% of the total legal male king crab sampled, and

old shell crab made up 38.9% of the sample (Table 3, Figure 4). Recruit crab made up 31.8% of all legal male crab sampled (Table 3). Postrecruit crab made up 68.2% of the legal crab sampled.

Recruit king crab made up 32% of the harvested stock sampled during the 1998 commercial season (Table 3). Total post recruits made up 68% of the harvested stock sampled. This high level of recruitment has not been observed since the mid-1980s when the population was recovering from a period of intense harvest (Appendix Table 4).

No sublegal male or female king crab information was collected from commercial vessels during the 1998 summer commercial king crab fishery. The small size of the vessels and the opportunistic excursion schedule made onboard sampling unfeasible.

Tagged Crab

Three male crab with tags were returned to the ADF&G office during the 1998 commercial fishery (Table 4). Information from 2 of these returned crab was useful. The crab with tag number NX3182 was tagged March 16, 1995 and grew 27 mm. The crab with tag number NX3940 was tagged April 1, 1996 and grew 30 mm. The average growth per molt was 14.3 mm.

Enforcement

The Fish and Wildlife Protection officer was unable to patrol the fishery. No cases were filed during 1998.

Norton Sound Winter Commercial Fishery

Regulation allows a winter commercial fishery in the Norton Sound Section from November 15 through May 15, the fishery typically takes place near Nome. The winter commercial fishery is required to take place from the ice, not from vessels. During the winter of 1997-1998, five commercial fishermen reported selling a total of 984 red king crab (Appendix Table 7). The villages east of Nome reported only limited harvests of crab. Ice conditions were generally unfavorable throughout Norton Sound, although the sea ice near Elim was fairly stable. Poor catch rates at Nome and unstable ice to the east kept king crab fishing to some of the lowest levels in recent years.

The harvest is divided between local residents who buy crab directly from the fishermen and other non-local markets such as Anchorage. Crab are sold in Nome for an average of eight dollars per crab, roughly \$3.57 per pound. The 1997-1998 winter catch of 2,349 pounds was estimated to be worth about 8,386 dollars.

The winter crab fishermen generally use crab pots but some use handlines to "prospect". Deploying pots through sea ice is laborious, but hand lines can be dropped through a large ice auger hole in a short period of time. The other advantage of hand lines is that during periods of favorable weather hand lines may be deployed from new, less stable ice without the risk of losing more expensive crab pots. Most fishermen consider commercial crabbing a sideline and hold other jobs. Usually, two or three of the winter crab fishermen sell the majority of the crab. Because the volume of crab involved is low, no processor has found it profitable to operate locally. The crab sold locally are all sold fresh as are those shipped to Anchorage or other non local markets. During the mid-winter months, fishermen find it difficult keeping

the crab from freezing. Many Nome residents prefer to buy frozen crab since they are able to extract the meat prior to cooking. Fresh frozen crab are easily marketed in Nome, but are not accepted in Anchorage markets.

SUBSISTENCE FISHERY

Red king crab are utilized by Norton Sound residents mainly during the winter. Fishing occurs through cracks or holes cut in the ice with the use of handlines and pots. In order to document trends in the subsistence harvest, the Board of Fisheries enacted a regulation in 1977 requiring subsistence fishermen in Norton Sound to obtain a permit prior to fishing and to record daily effort and catches on these permits (Appendix Table 6).

The first year subsistence permits were required had the highest number of permits issued to date and a relatively high harvest rate were recorded. The fishery declined sharply the following year and remained at very depressed levels throughout the 1981-82 season. The lack of success in the winter crab fishery during some past years has been attributed to a declining crab population caused by the removal of crab in the summer commercial fishery together with low recruitment, low effort due to poor ice conditions, and changes in the nearshore winter distribution of crab. All these factors probably had some effect on the success of the winter fishery in varying degrees. During the 1978-79 winter fishery, the king crab population was still in relatively high abundance. Despite this relatively large population, winter catches were the poorest on record indicating that the major factors limiting winter catches were probably poor ice conditions and the distribution of crab. During the winter of 1981-82, poor winter catches could more reasonably be attributed to a declining crab population since the crab population was at a much lower level. Subsistence fishing success during the winters of 1982-83 through 1986-87 had improved due to a rebuilding of the population and increased use of more efficient gear (pots instead of handlines). Unstable ice conditions and record snowfalls adversely effected the 1987-88, 1988-89, and 1992-93 catches. During years of stable ice conditions, approximately 100 fishermen have averaged 100 crab each.

The 1997-1998 season was beset with poor ice conditions. Early in the winter season the sea ice to the west of Nome went out, taking the pot already deployed with it. Of the 73 permits returned, 64 reported fishing. Fifty-eight fishers reported using pots, 8 reported using handlines, and 1 reported using a combination of the two gears. Permit data indicates the subsistence harvest consisted of 8,611 male crab and 11 female crab. Those fishers reported harvesting 45% of the male crab they caught and 1% of the females caught.

STOCK STATUS / RESEARCH

There has been a change in the character of the summer commercial fishery since 1993 due to regulation changes affecting pot limits, opening dates and a regulation making Norton Sound a superexclusive registration area. The quality and quantity of data collected since the 1993 summer crab fishery has differed greatly from previous years due to the nature of the small vessel fishery. No floating processor or catcher processor took part in the 1997 fishery, therefore no independent observers were onboard commercial vessels.

The ADF&G fishery monitor did not have the opportunity to make observations on small catcher vessels during the 1998 fishery. No information was collected on observed pot lifts, sublegal male and female length frequencies, and catch rates of legal and sublegal crab during the commercial fishery. However, sampling of the commercial catch did occur on some deliveries made in Nome. This is

important to ensure size limits are being enforced, and to assist management biologists to determine recruitment and health of the crab population.

In 1976, when monitoring of the Norton Sound king crab population first began, the population was mainly composed of prerecruit and recruit crab. The initial population assessment survey by the NMFS estimated the legal male king crab population at 8.1 million pounds (Appendix Table 5). The legal male crab population peaked in 1978 at an estimated 11 million pounds. During the 4 years following 1978, recruitment into the legal male crab population was very low. Subsequent NMFS surveys in 1979 and 1982 documented a population of predominantly postrecruit crab, and estimated the population had declined to 2.6 million pounds by 1982. Beginning in 1981, sublegal crab abundance began to increase, and by 1983 recruitment into the legal male population also began to increase. No assessment work was conducted in 1983 or 1984. However, samples of the commercial catches indicated a significant increase of recruit crab into the legal male population; from a historic low of 10% in 1981 to 59% in 1984.

In 1985, both NMFS and ADF&G conducted population assessment surveys in Norton Sound (Appendix Table 5). After the commercial fishery in 1985, NMFS conducted a population assessment survey using trawl gear over a slightly larger area than that surveyed by the Department. Male king crab sampled in NMFS trawls were in the process of or had just molted with the result being that their estimate of 3.4 million pounds of legal male king crab included some recruitment. Adjusting this estimate for molting, and including the summer commercial harvest, an estimated three million pounds were present prior to the 1985 August fishery. Both surveys documented relatively substantial numbers of recruit crab and a healthy percentage of prerecruit crab.

During September of 1988 NMFS conducted a fifth population assessment with trawl gear. They sampled an area roughly the same size as in 1985, but increased sampling frequency in the proposed mineral lease area near Nome. The timing of the study, which occurred during the male molt, was almost a month earlier than similar surveys in the past. Nearly all the 1988 catch was in pre-molt condition. NMFS estimated 3.0 million pounds of legal male and 1.0 million pounds of prerecruit-one male red king crab; totaling 4.0 million pounds. Annual mortality was estimated at approximately 20% or 0.8 million pounds. Ignoring growth and the winter harvests, the population prior to the 1989 summer fishery would have been 3.2 million pounds, very close to the 1985 trawl estimate of 3.4 million pounds.

NMFS conducted a sixth trawl survey of Norton Sound during late August 1991 with a reduced number of tows. Each station had only a single sampling tow, as compared to each station having both a day and night tows during previous surveys. This reduction in sampling had the effect of introducing more variability into the estimate. The legal crab biomass in the summer fishing area was estimated to be 3,400,000 pounds and the total Norton Sound legal biomass was estimated to be 4,009,000 pounds. Since the survey occurred prior to the molt, a mortality of 10% was assumed for the year following the estimate. With no summer or winter fishery data to compare with the survey results, a conservative biomass of 3,400,000 pounds was used as the basis for the 1992-96 harvest guideline. The Norton Sound red king crab population was thought to be stable with harvest set near 10%.

NMFS has discontinued their trawl surveys of Norton Sound. The Department was able to utilize recently appropriated money for a trawl survey during August of 1996. The methodology used was very similar to that used by NMFS in previous surveys. The legal biomass was estimate to be 1,600,000 pounds. This is a significant decline from the previous survey. The Department decided that the population was far below its carrying capacity and was closely approaching the threshold below which a commercial harvest should not occur. There are indications that the sublegal portion of the population is relatively strong in comparison to the legal portion. It was decided that the exploitation rate would be reduced to five percent

of the legal biomass. This reduced harvest rate and the expected strong recruitment will allow for a rapid recovery if the legal biomass.

FUTURE INVESTIGATIONS

The trawl survey that occurred during the summer of 1996 in Norton Sound was made possible by a budget increment passed by the legislature. This is to be a regularly scheduled survey rotating between districts. Both funding for a sustained winter research program and a triennial trawl survey to evaluate Norton Sound crab populations were provided for in that legislation. A winter pot survey is planned during February, March, and April 1999 and the next trawl survey to generate a population estimate is planned for late summer 1999.

OUTLOOK FOR 1998

The outlook for 1999 is not yet complete. The guideline harvest is likely be to the same as the 1997 and 1998 seasons; however, the winter pot survey will be used to check the projections generated from the trawl survey and the Norton Sound crab population model.

Table 1. Daily catch (using fish ticket data) for the commercial king crab harvest, Norton Sound Section, Eastern Bering Sea, July 1 - September 3, 1998.a, b

Date	Permits	Landings	Number of Crab	Lbs of Crab Harvested	Cumulative Total (lbs)	No. of Pots Pulled	Average Weight	CPUE
16-Jul	2	2	441	1,162	1,162	80	2.63	5.5
17-Jul	1	1	222	577	1,739	40	2.60	5.6
18-Jul	5	5	736	2,074	3,813	119	2.82	6.2
19-Jul	0	0	0	0	3,813	0	0.00	0.0
20-Jul	4	4	729	2,016	5,829	152	2.77	4.8
21-Jul	0	0	0	0	5,829	0	0.00	0.0
22-Jul	3	3	578	1,521	7,350	116	2.63	5.0
23-Jul	2	2	477	1,345	8,695	80	2.82	6.0
24-Jul	2	2	281	739	8,695	65	4.79	4.3
25-Jul				0	9,434			
26-Jul				0	9,434			
27-Jul	4	4	905	2,593	12,027	145	2.87	6.2
28-Jul				0	12,027			
29-Jul				0	12,027			
30-Jul				0	12,027			
31-Jul	2	2	543	1,606	13,633	73	2.96	7.4
1-Aug	2	2	530	1,535	15,168	64	2.90	8.3
2-Aug				0	15,168			
3-Aug	1	0	75	216	15,384	24	2.88	3.1
4-Aug				0	15,384			
5-Aug	4	4	1,362	3,826	19,210	126	2.81	10.8
6-Aug	2	2	170	368	19,578	60	2.16	2.8
7-Aug				0	19,578			
8-Aug				0	19,578			
9-Aug	2	2	265	711	20,289	69	2.68	3.8
10-Aug	3	3	720	1,966	22,255	92	2.73	7.8
11-Aug	1	1	70	212	22,467	35	3.03	2.0
12-Aug				0	22,467			
13-Aug				0	22,467			
14-Aug				0	22,467			
15-Aug				0	22,467			
16-Aug				0	22,467			
17-Aug				0	22,467			
18-Aug				0	22,467			
19-Aug				0	22,467			
20-Aug				0	22,467			
21-Aug				0	22,467			
22-Aug				0	22,467			
23-Aug				0	22,467			
24-Aug				0	22,467			
25-Aug				0	22,467			
26-Aug	4	5	1,615	4,362	26,829	146	2.70	11.3
27-Aug	2	2	563	1,711	28,540	73	3.04	7.7
28-Aug				0	28,540			
29-Aug	1	2	333	1,009	29,549	40	3.03	8.3
30-Aug				0	29,549			
31-Aug				0	29,549			
1-Sep				0	29,549			
2-Sep				0	29,549			
3-Sep	1	2	45	135	29,684	40	3.00	1.1
Totals:	11	50	10,661	29,684		1,639	2.78	6.5

^a First Delivery was not made until July 16, 1998.

^b Includes 787 crab not sold due to deadloss.

Table 2. Red king crab summer commercial harvest (from fish ticket reports) by statistical area for Norton Sound Section, Eastern Bering Sea, July 1 - September 3, 1998.

Statistical Area	Number	Pounds	Pots Pulled	CPUE	Average Weight (Lbs.)	Percent of Pots Pulled in Stat. Area (%)	Percent Harvest in Stat. Area (%)
626401	2,825	8,065	293	9.6	2.85	17.9	27.2
636330	928	2,449	182	5.1	2.64	11.1	8.3
636401	3,799	10,771	452	8.4	2.84	27.6	36.3
646401	1,164	3,194	263	4.4	2.74	16.0	10.8
656330	1,562	4,078	370	4.2	2.61	22.6	13.7
656401	383	1,127	79	4.8	2.94	4.8	3.8
Total:	10,661	29,684	1,639	6.5	2.78		

Table 3. Carapace length measurement summary of sampled legal male red king crab captured during the commercial king crab harvest, Norton Sound Section, Eastern Bering Sea, July 1 - September 3, 1998.

Carapace Length (mm)	New shell			Old shell			Total		
	No.	Ave Length Calc.	%	No.	Ave Length Calc.	%	No.	Ave Length Calc.	%
95	1	0.1	0.1%	0	0.0	0.0%	1	0.1	0.1%
96	0	0.0	0.0%	0	0.0	0.0%	0	0.0	0.0%
97	1	0.2	0.1%	1	0.2	0.1%	2	0.2	0.2%
98	2	0.3	0.2%	1	0.2	0.1%	3	0.3	0.3%
99	3	0.5	0.3%	1	0.2	0.1%	4	0.4	0.4%
100	0	0.0	0.0%	4	1.0	0.4%	4	0.4	0.4%
101	8	1.3	0.8%	1	0.2	0.1%	9	0.9	0.9%
102	10	1.6	0.9%	9	2.2	0.9%	19	1.8	1.8%
103	5	0.8	0.5%	6	1.5	0.6%	11	1.1	1.0%
104	13	2.1	1.2%	7	1.8	0.7%	20	2.0	1.9%
105	14	2.3	1.3%	15	3.8	1.4%	29	2.9	2.7%
106	11	1.8	1.0%	10	2.6	0.9%	21	2.1	2.0%
107	26	4.3	2.5%	6	1.6	0.6%	32	3.2	3.0%
108	17	2.8	1.6%	15	4.0	1.4%	32	3.3	3.0%
109	23	3.9	2.2%	17	4.5	1.6%	40	4.1	3.8%
110	31	5.3	2.9%	12	3.2	1.1%	43	4.5	4.1%
111	30	5.2	2.8%	12	3.2	1.1%	42	4.4	4.0%
112	37	6.4	3.5%	17	4.6	1.6%	54	5.7	5.1%
113	44	7.7	4.2%	7	1.9	0.7%	51	5.5	4.8%
114	29	5.1	2.7%	17	4.7	1.6%	46	5.0	4.4%
115	31	5.5	2.9%	22	6.2	2.1%	53	5.8	5.0%
116	22	4.0	2.1%	21	5.9	2.0%	43	4.7	4.1%
117	38	6.9	3.6%	18	5.1	1.7%	56	6.2	5.3%
118	25	4.6	2.4%	7	2.0	0.7%	32	3.6	3.0%
119	24	4.4	2.3%	14	4.1	1.3%	38	4.3	3.6%
120	31	5.8	2.9%	19	5.6	1.8%	50	5.7	4.7%
121	26	4.9	2.5%	11	3.2	1.0%	37	4.2	3.5%
122	21	4.0	2.0%	9	2.7	0.9%	30	3.5	2.8%
123	9	1.7	0.9%	13	3.9	1.2%	22	2.6	2.1%
124	17	3.3	1.6%	8	2.4	0.8%	25	2.9	2.4%
125	13	2.5	1.2%	13	4.0	1.2%	26	3.1	2.5%
126	13	2.5	1.2%	9	2.8	0.9%	22	2.6	2.1%
127	6	1.2	0.6%	14	4.3	1.3%	20	2.4	1.9%
128	7	1.4	0.7%	4	1.2	0.4%	11	1.3	1.0%
129	11	2.2	1.0%	13	4.1	1.2%	24	2.9	2.3%
130	4	0.8	0.4%	8	2.5	0.8%	12	1.5	1.1%
131	3	0.6	0.3%	6	1.9	0.6%	9	1.1	0.9%
132	10	2.0	0.9%	6	1.9	0.6%	16	2.0	1.5%
133	1	0.2	0.1%	5	1.6	0.5%	6	0.8	0.6%
134	4	0.8	0.4%	4	1.3	0.4%	8	1.0	0.8%
135	2	0.4	0.2%	1	0.3	0.1%	3	0.4	0.3%
136	3	0.6	0.3%	8	2.7	0.8%	11	1.4	1.0%
137	4	0.8	0.4%	2	0.7	0.2%	6	0.8	0.6%
138	3	0.6	0.3%	0	0.0	0.0%	3	0.4	0.3%
139	3	0.6	0.3%	5	1.7	0.5%	8	1.1	0.8%
140	3	0.7	0.3%	2	0.7	0.2%	5	0.7	0.5%
141	2	0.4	0.2%	3	1.0	0.3%	5	0.7	0.5%
142	2	0.4	0.2%	1	0.3	0.1%	3	0.4	0.3%
143	2	0.4	0.2%	3	1.0	0.3%	5	0.7	0.5%
144	0	0.0	0.0%	3	1.1	0.3%	3	0.4	0.3%
145	0	0.0	0.0%	0	0.0	0.0%	0	0.0	0.0%
146	0	0.0	0.0%	0	0.0	0.0%	0	0.0	0.0%
147	0	0.0	0.0%	0	0.0	0.0%	0	0.0	0.0%
148	0	0.0	0.0%	0	0.0	0.0%	0	0.0	0.0%
149	0	0.0	0.0%	0	0.0	0.0%	0	0.0	0.0%
150	0	0.0	0.0%	0	0.0	0.0%	0	0.0	0.0%
Total No.	645		61.1%	410		38.9%	1,055		100.0%
Mean		116.1			118.1			116.9	
Total legals			1,055						
Total Recruits			336						
Percent			31.8%						
Total Post Recruits			719						
Percent			68.2%						

Table 4. Red king crab tag information recovered during the Norton Sound commercial red king crab harvest, July 1 - September 3, 1998.

Tag Number	Capture Date	Stat. Area of Capture	Carapace Length (mm)	Shell Age	Tagging Date	Tagging Location ^b	Carapace Length (mm)	Shell Age	Growth (mm)	No. of Molts ^a	Skip Molts	Average Growth per Molt (mm)
NX3182	6/15/98	656403	111	old	3/16/95	W6	84	N	27	2	1	13.5
NX1410	unknown				7/14/85		123	N				
NX3940	7/27/98	636330	111	old	4/1/96	W5	81	N	30	2	0	15.0
												14.3

^a Crab growth of 12 mm (+/- 5mm) per year is thought to be the average growth in one molting period.

^b B1= Bluff area, 45 miles east of Nome.

B4=Bluff area, 50 miles east of Nome.

E3=7.9 miles east of Nome.

E4=9.5 miles east of Nome.

N3=1.34 miles south of Nome.

W4=2.8 miles west of Nome.

W5=11.49 miles west of Nome.

Figure 1. King crab fishing districts and sections of Statistical Area Q.

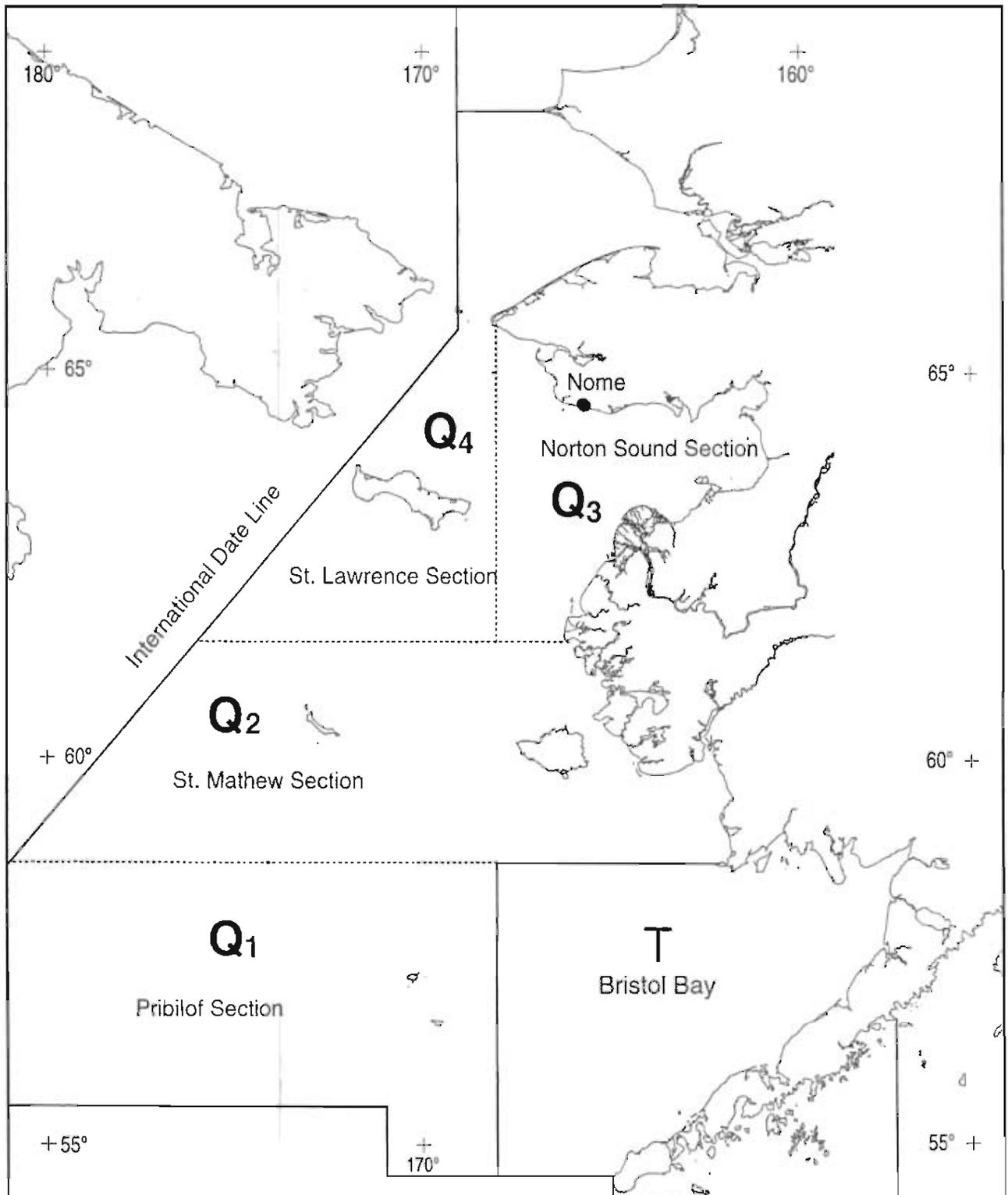
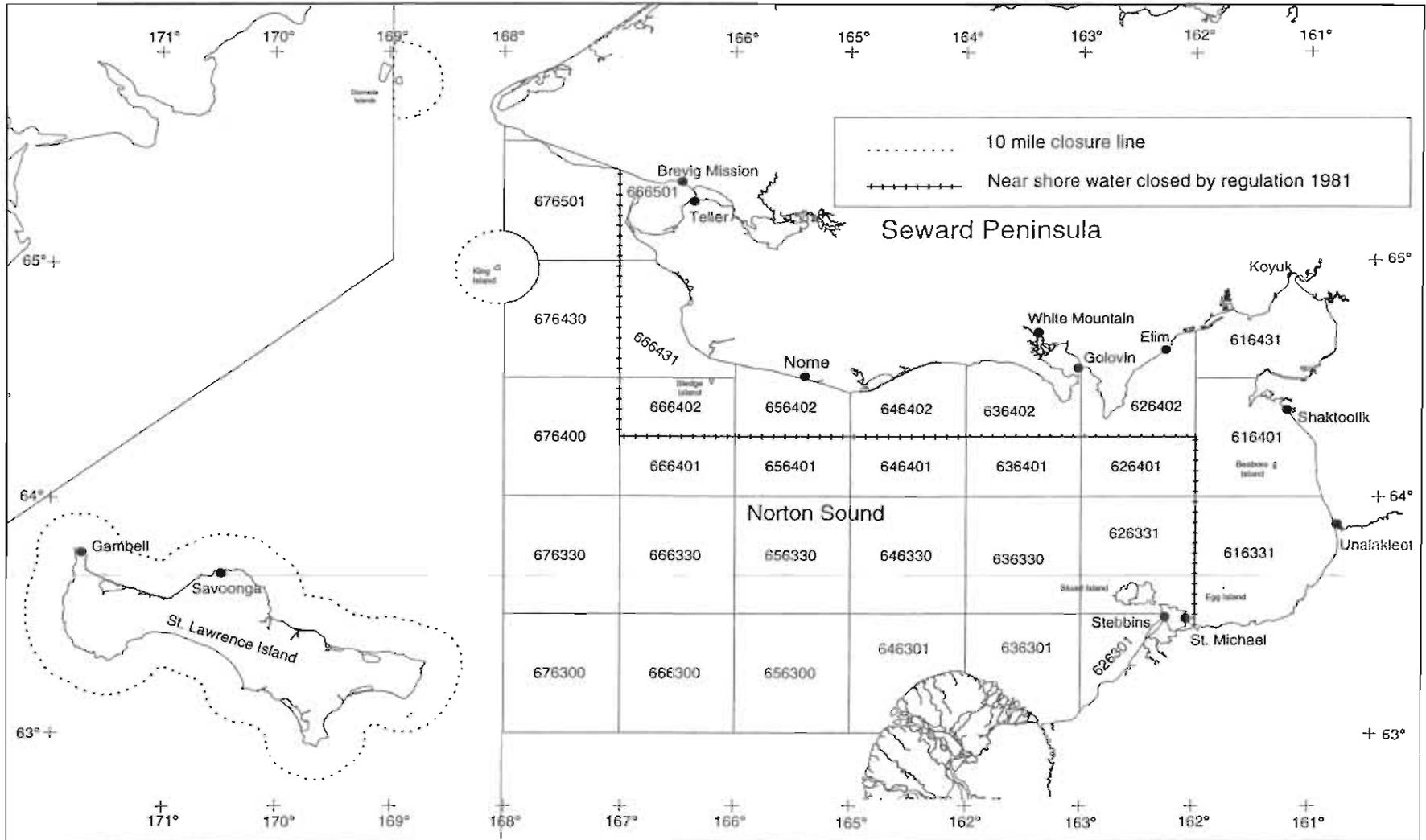


Figure 2. Norton Sound red king crab statistical areas.



1998 Norton Sound Red King Crab

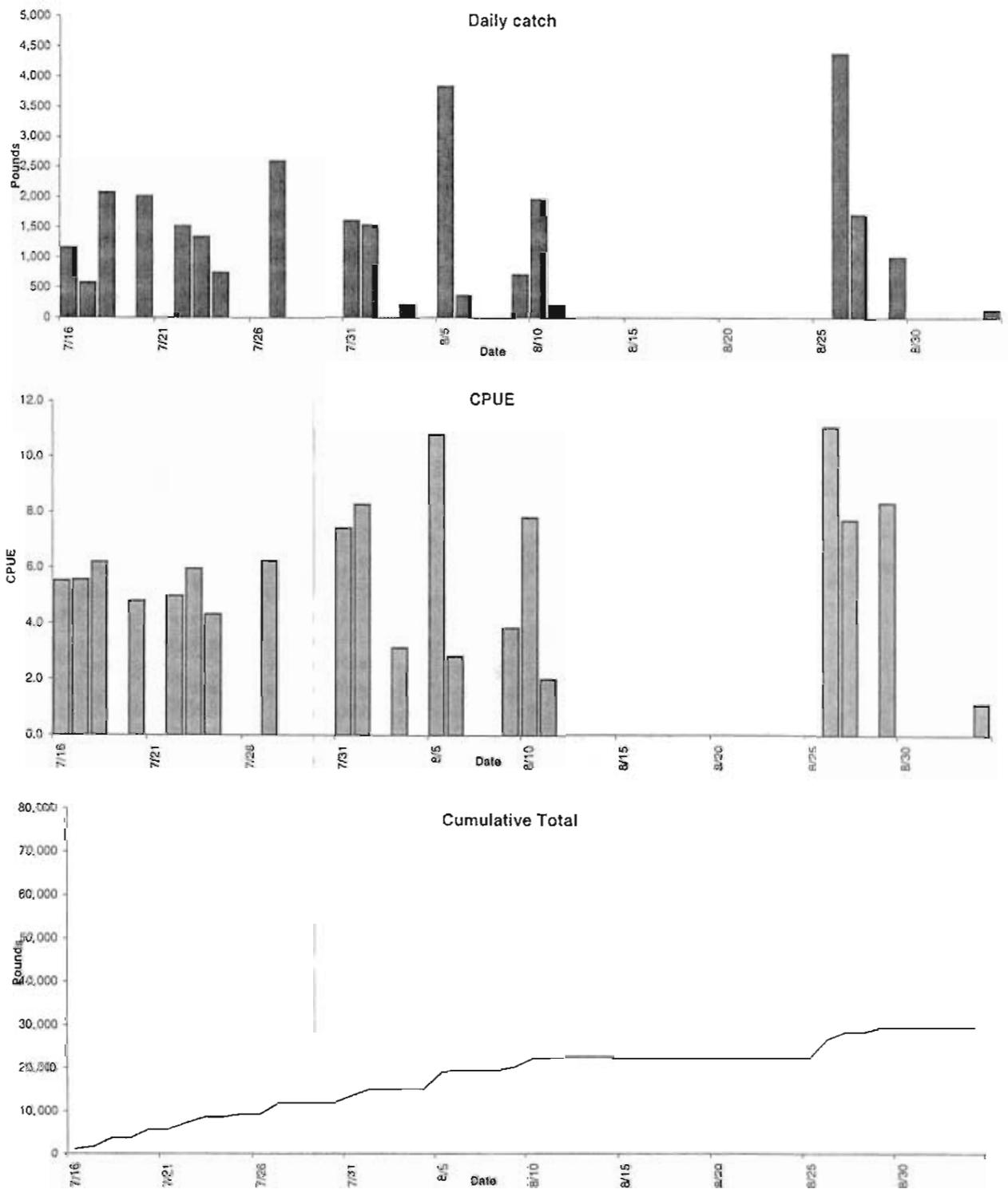


Figure 3. Daily catch, daily CPUE, and cumulative daily catch, Norton Sound summer commercial red king crab fishery, July 1 - September 3, 1998 .

Legal Male Red King Crab

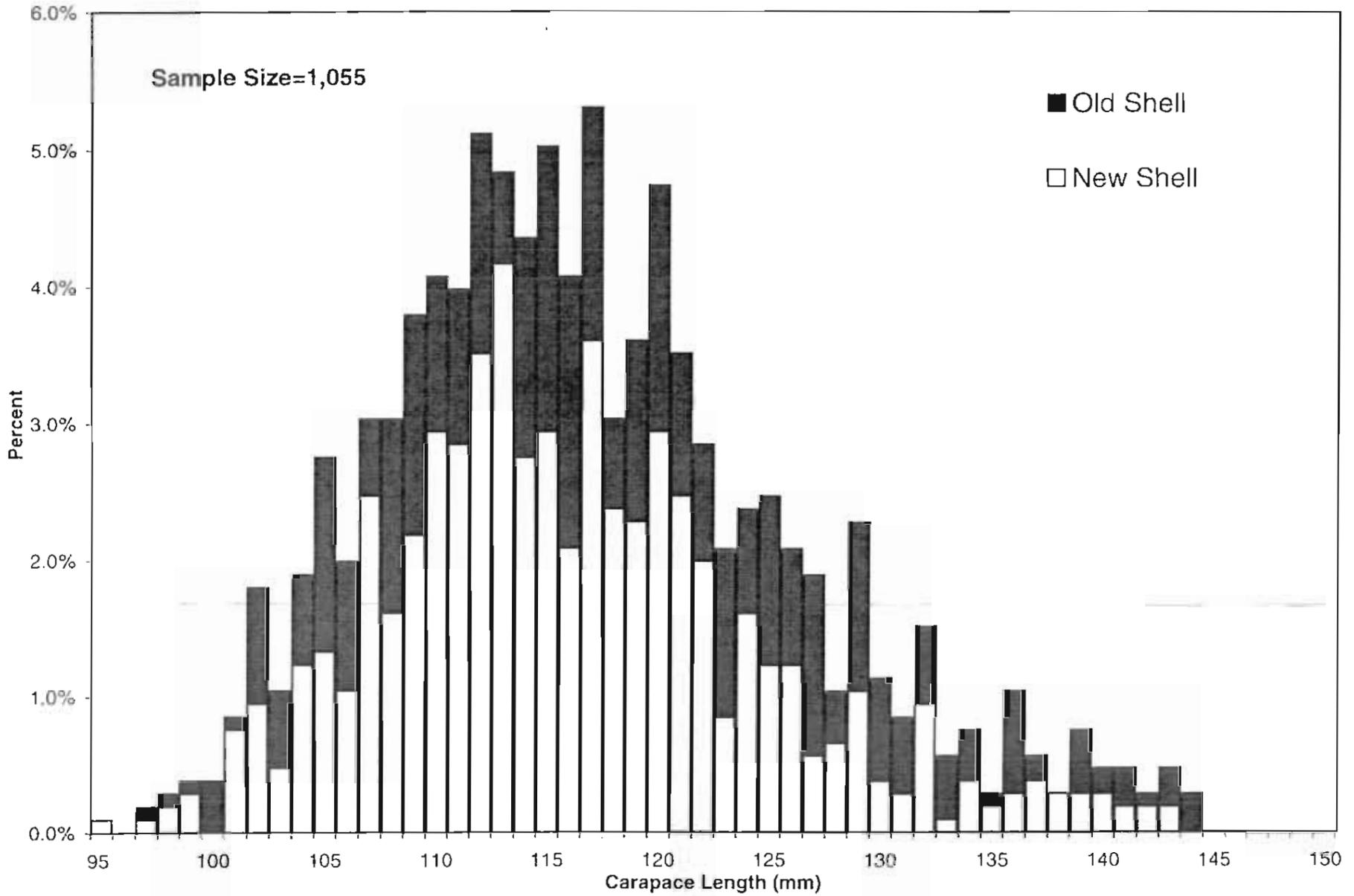


Figure 4. Length frequency distribution of new and old carapace age condition of legal male red king crab, Norton Sound summer commercial king crab fishery, July 1 - September 3, 1998.

Recent Norton Sound Red King Crab Harvest

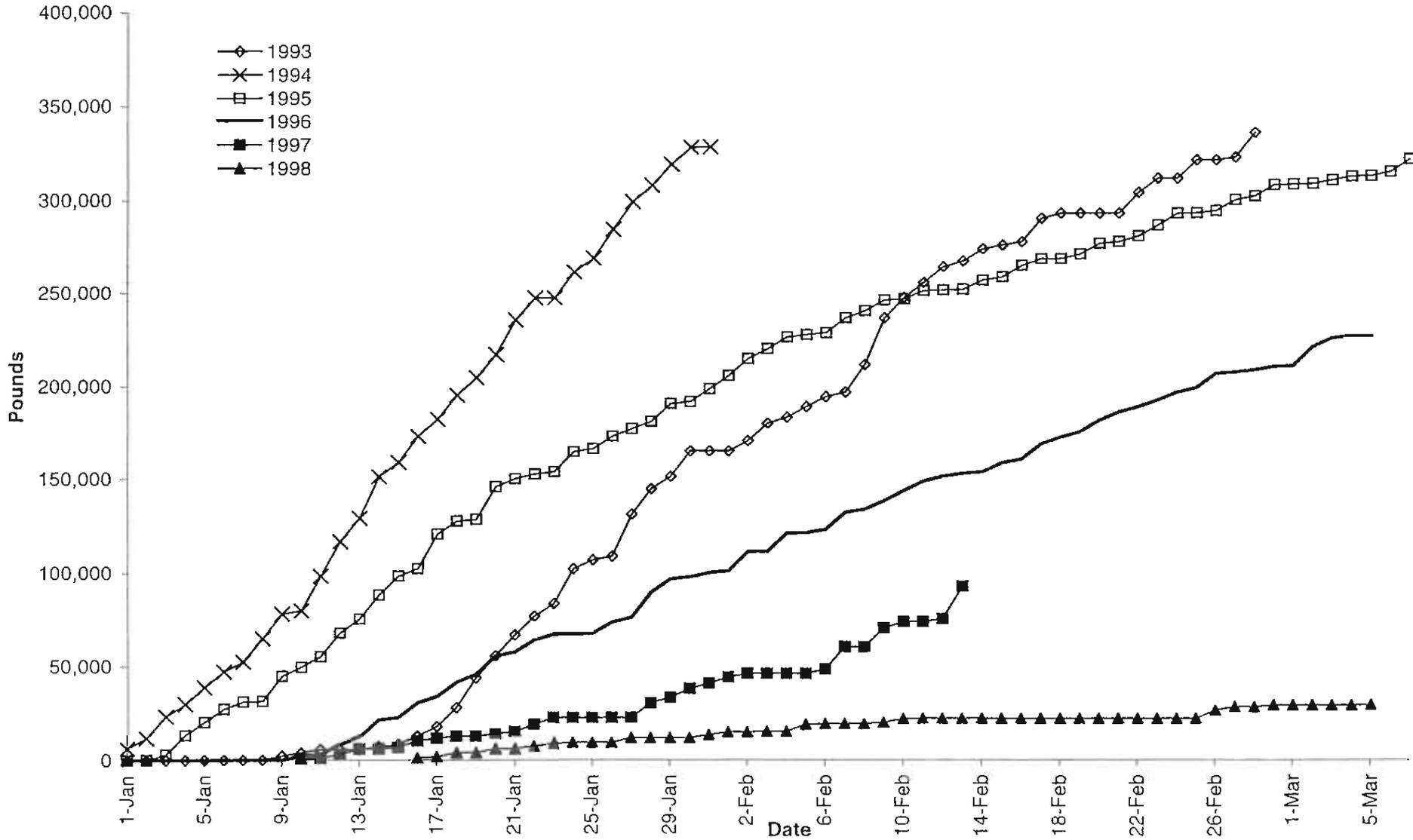


Figure 5. Recent Norton Sound summer commercial red king crab harvest, 1993 - 1998. (The 1993 - 1996 harvest guideline was 340,000 lbs. The 1997 & 1998 harvest guideline was 80,000 lbs.)

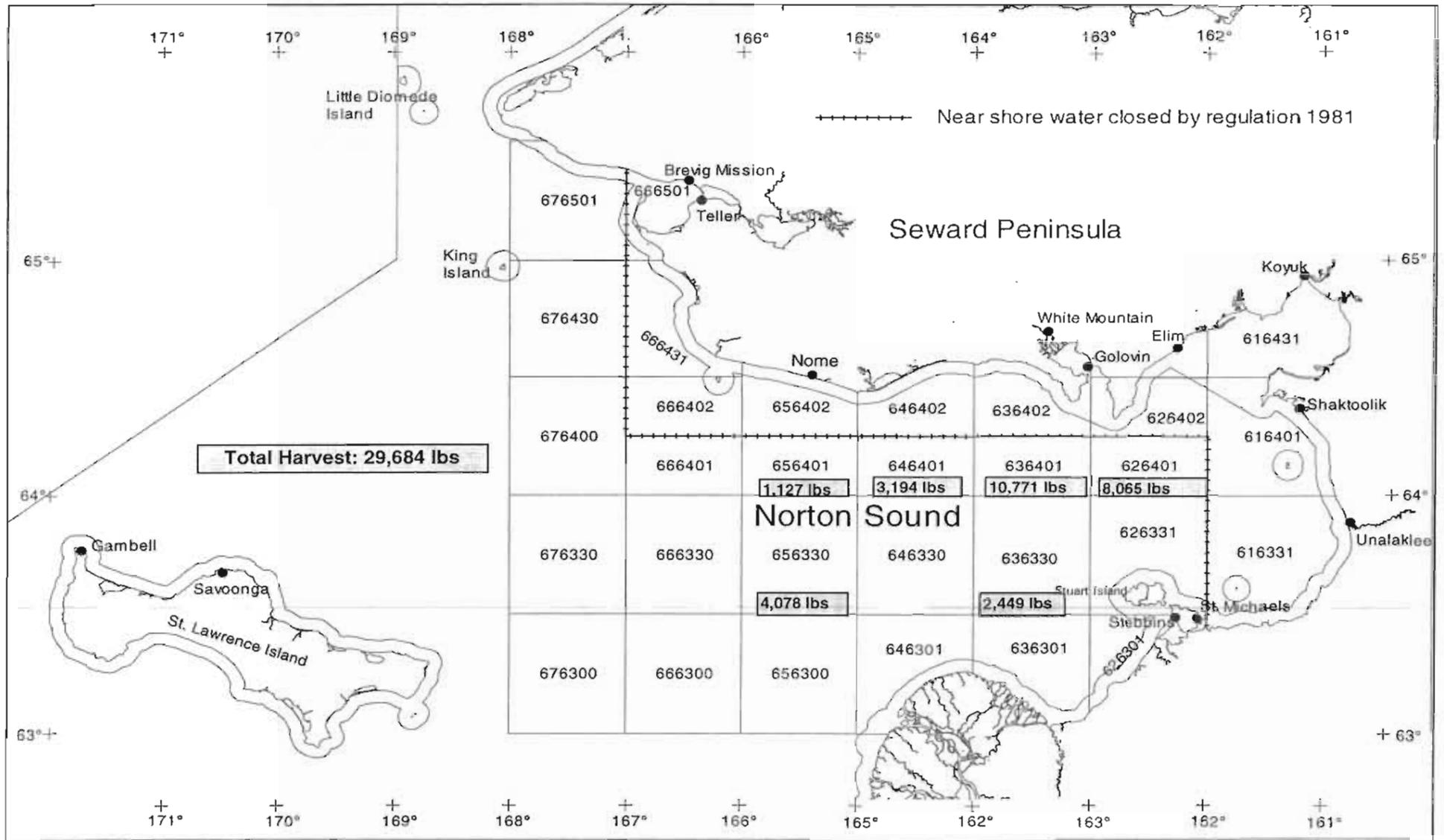


Figure 6. 1998 Norton Sound summer commercial red king crab harvest by statistical area.

Appendix Table 1. Historic commercial harvest of red king crab from Norton Sound Section, Eastern Bering Sea, by statistical areas, 1977-1998 (catch in pounds). ^a

Statistical Area	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996 ^b	1997	1998	Totals	
616331	7,893																48					7,941	
616401																		35				35	
626331	40,020					22													61			40,103	
626401	31,572			4,830	399													18,971	45,045	18,066	8,065	126,948	
626402	38,995																					38,995	
636330																			4,560	3,838	2,449	10,847	
636401				12,398	61,823	32,246	5,880	41	891				22,030		1,159	1,373	8,087	24,329	70,677	59,206	10,771	310,911	
636402																	1,754	3,466					5,220
646301																		4,628	13,888				18,516
646330					4,716								5,212					1,493	2,894	314			14,629
646401			155,972		1,319	17,532										1,963	37,222	105,045	22,834	1,052	3,194	346,133	
646402	80,969					748										730	143,511	66,821				292,779	
656300			161,699		15,174																		176,873
656330			323,518	72,735	395,662	3,983	24,246	83,479	7,632		79,006	36,129	1,757		4,814	265		19,745	15,446	4,661	4,078	1,077,156	
656401			138,011	121,147	253,387	60,480	11,422	183,119	246,200		194,408	165,644	100,956		171	53,119	105,341	29,566	32,289	9,985	4,035	1,710,407	
656402	306,302	90,187	288,869	918	3,098	2,832											193,079	106,053	44,000				1,167,701
666230		55,490			77																		55,567
666300		162,795	60,816	84,874	9,167	95		4,534												25,519			347,800
666330		353,016	505,050	367,446	141,513	8,990	1,192		389	70,615	2,963	13,020	1,275	27,185	4,305	31,758		730				1,529,447	
666401		179,212	486,947	205,400	381,510	79,580	325,045	116,254	5,341	408,848	50,744	21,895	115,257	162,263	10,632	746	396		3,001	1,816		2,554,887	
666402	12,036	515,778	534,938	183,581		17,585			32,992							535	1,221						1,298,666
666431			146,029															1,124					147,153
676300		13,238		126,231															546				140,015
676330		51,304	81,798	6,762	18,734																		158,598
676400		667,130	33,856	274	92,026	1,315	247		32					3,212					9,775				807,867
676430		3,811	12,309		373	3,513			1,171														21,177
676501					36																		36
686330			1,860																				1,860
Totals	517,787	2,091,961	2,931,672	1,186,596	1,379,014	228,921	368,032	387,427	427,011	479,463	327,121	336,688	246,487	192,831	74,029	335,790	327,858	322,676	224,231	92,988	29,684	12,378,583	

^a No commercial fishery occurred in 1991.

^b Does not include approximately 2,490 lbs not reported on fish tickets.

Appendix Table 2. Historic summer commercial red king crab annual harvest, Norton Sound Section, Eastern Bering Sea, 1977 - 1998.

Year	Number of Vessels	Number of Permits	Number of Landings	Number of Crab	Harvest (lbs) ^{a,b}	Number of Pot Lifts	CPUE	Percent Old Shell	Average Weight (lbs)	Avg. Legal Mean Length (mm)
1977	7	7	13	195,877	0.52	5,457	36	^d	2.7	113.4
1978	8	8	54	660,829	2.09	10,817	64	^d	3.0	118.9
1979	34	34	76	970,962	2.93	34,773	28	^d	3.0	119.8
1980	9	9	50	329,778	1.19	11,199	29	^d	3.6	125.8
1981	36	36	108	376,313	1.38	33,745	11	^d	3.7	128.5
1982	11	11	33	63,949	0.23	11,230	6	^d	3.6	125.4
1983	23	23	26	132,205	0.37	11,195	12	^d	2.8	115.2
1984	8	8	21	139,759	0.39	9,706	14	^d	2.8	112.5
1985	6	6	72	146,669	0.43	13,209	11	^d	2.9	115.8
1986	3	3	^d	162,438	0.48	4,284	38	^d	2.9	115.9
1987	9	9	^d	103,338	0.33	10,258	10	13	3.2	121.7
1988	2	2	^d	76,148	0.24	2,350	32	26	3.1	119.0
1989	10	10	^d	79,116	0.25	5,149	15	29	3.1	119.8
1990	4	4	^d	59,132	0.19	3,172	19	17	3.1	121.1
1991 ^c										
1992	27	27	^d	24,902	0.07	5,746	4	29	3.0	119.7
1993	14	20	208	115,913	0.33	7,063	16	10	2.9	119.1
1994	34	52	407	108,824	0.32	11,729	9	71	3.0	118.8
1995	48	81	665	105,967	0.32	18,782	5.6	21	3.0	118.2
1996	41	50	264	74,752	0.22	10,453	7.1	36	3.0	117.1
1997	13	15	100	32,606	0.09	2,982	10.9	14	2.8	115.7
1998	8	11	50	10,661	0.03	1,639	6.5	39	2.8	116.9

^a Deadloss included in total.

^b Millions of pounds.

^c No summer commercial fishery.

^d Information not available.

Appendix Table 3. Historic summer commercial red king crab fishery economic performance, Norton Sound Section, Bering Sea, 1977 - 1998.

Year	Guideline Harvest Level (lbs) ^b	Legal Male Pop. Est.(lbs) ^b	Commercial Harvest (lbs) ^{a,b}	Number of			Number of Pots		Exvessel Price/lb	Fishery Value (millions \$)	Season Length	
				Vessels	Permits	Landings	Registered	Pulls			Days	Dates
1977	^d	10.0	0.52	7	7	13	^d	5,457	0.75	0.229	60	^d
1978	3.00	11.0	2.09	8	8	54	^d	10,817	0.95	1.897	60	6/7-8/15
1979	3.00	5.4	2.93	34	34	76	^d	34,773	0.75	1.878	16	7/15-7/31
1980	1.00	6.6	1.19	9	9	50	^j	11,199	0.75	0.890	16	7/15-7/31
1981	2.50	4.7	1.38	36	36	108	^j	33,745	0.85	1.172	38	7/15-8/22
1982	0.50	1.3	0.23	11	11	33	^d	11,230	2.00	0.405	23	8/9-9/1
1983	0.30	2.1	0.37	23	23	26	3,583	11,195	1.50	0.537	3.8	8/1-8/5
1984	0.40	2.7	0.39	8	8	21	1,245	9,706	1.02	0.395	13.6	8/1-8/15
1985	0.45	2.4	0.43	6	6	72	1,116	13,209	1.00	0.427	21.7	8/1-8/23
1986	0.42	2.8	0.48	3	3	^d	578	4,284	1.25	0.600	13	8/1-8/25 ^e
1987	0.40	2.2	0.33	9	9	^d	1,430	10,258	1.50	0.491	11	8/1-8/12
1988	0.20	3.2	0.24	2	2	^d	360	2,350	^d	^d	9.9	8/1-8/11
1989	0.20	3.2	0.25	10	10	^d	2,555	5,149	3.00	0.739	3	8/1-8/4
1990	0.20	3.2	0.19	4	4	^d	1,388	3,172	^d	^d	4	8/1-8/5
1991 ^c	0.34	3.4										
1992	0.34	3.4	0.07	27	27	^d	2,635	5,746	1.75	0.130	2	8/1-8/3
1993	0.34	3.4	0.33	14	20	208	560	7,063	1.28	0.430	52	7/1-8/28 ^f
1994	0.34	3.4	0.32	34	52	407	1,360	11,729	2.02	0.646	31	7/1-7/31
1995	0.34	3.4	0.32	48	81	665	1,900	18,782	2.87	0.926	67	7/1-9/5
1996	0.34	3.4	0.22	41	50	264	1,640	10,453	2.29	0.519	57	7/1-9/3 ^g
1997	0.08	1.6	0.09	13	15	100	520	2,982	1.98	0.184	44	7/1-8/13 ^h
1998	0.08	1.6	0.03	8	11	50	360	1,639	1.47	0.041	65	7/1-9/3 ⁱ

^a Deadloss included in total.

^b Millions of pounds.

^c No summer commercial fishery.

^d Information not available.

^e Fishing actually began 8/12.

^f Fishing actually began 7/8.

^g Fishing began 7/9 due to fishermen's strike.

^h First delivery was made 7/10.

ⁱ First delivery was made 7/16.

Appendix Table 4. A comparison of the proportion of recruit and postrecruit king crab sampled from summer commercial harvest, Norton Sound Section, Eastern Bering Sea, 1983 - 1998.

Year	Summer Commercial	
	Recruits (%)	Postrecruits (%)
1983	55	45
1984	59	41
1985	45	55
1986	48	52
1987	22	78
1988	25	75
1989	23	77
1990	21	79
1991 ^a		
1992	28	72
1993	31	69
1994	14	86
1995	36	64
1996	30	70
1997	49	51
1998	32	68

^a No data collected in summer 1991 due to closed fishery.

Appendix Table 5. The results of the population assessment surveys conducted for red king crab in Norton Sound since 1976.

Year	Date	Research Agency	Gear	Population Abundance Estimates		
				Pre-2 Males ^b	Pre-1 Males ^b	Legal Males ^a
1976	9/2 - 9/5, 9/16 - 10/7	NMFS	Trawl	321,781	838,570	1,447,459
1979 ^c	7/26 - 8/5	NMFS	Trawl			684,662
1980 ^d	7/4 - 7/14	ADF&G	Pots			1,900,000
1981	6/28 - 7/14	ADF&G	Pots			1,285,195
1982	7/6 - 7/20	ADF&G	Pots			353,273
1982	9/5 - 9/11	NMFS	Trawl	295,497	819,309	610,174
1985	7/1 - 7/14	ADF&G	Pots			907,579
1985	9/16 - 10/1	NMFS	Trawl	463,022	739,968	966,566
1988	8/16 - 8/30	NMFS	Trawl	561,945	513,087	909,948
1991	8/22 - 8/30	NMFS	Trawl	287,389	347,155	1,181,496
1996	9/7 - 9/18	ADF&G	Trawl	449,505	354,071	534,446

^a Legal male red king crab were defined as at least 105 mm in carapace length for the 1996 ADF&G trawl survey and all NMFS trawl surveys except the 1979 survey which defined legal males as at least 100 mm in carapace length. ADF&G pot surveys defined legal males as at least 121 mm in carapace width.

^b Pre-2 males were defined as 76-89 mm in carapace length and pre-1 males were defined as 90-104 mm in carapace length.

^c Population estimates are valid for the date of the survey (i.e., either before or after the summer commercial fishery).

^d The 1980 pot survey estimate has been revised from the original estimate of 13.4 million pounds which was thought inaccurate due to an under-reporting of recovered tagged crab.

^e Pre-2 male and pre-1 male data is unavailable for the 1979 NMFS trawl survey.

Appendix Table 6. Winter commercial and subsistence red king crab harvests, Norton Sound, Bering Sea, 1978-1998.

COMMERCIAL			SUBSISTENCE						
Year ^a	Number of Fishermen	# Crab Harvested	Winter ^b	Permits Issued	Permits Returned	Permits Fished	Total Crab Captured ^c	Total Crab Harvested ^d	Average Harvest/fm
1978	37	9,625	1977 -78	290	206	149	^e	12,506	84
1979	1	221	1978 -79	48	43	38	^e	224	6
1980	1	22	1979 -80	22	14	9	^e	213	24
1981	0	0	1980 -81	51	39	23	^e	360	16
1982	1	17	1981 -82	101	76	54	^e	1,288	24
1983	5	549	1982 -83	172	106	85	^e	10,432	123
1984	8	856	1983 -84	222	183	143	15,923	11,220	78
1985	9	1,168	1984 -85	203	166	132	10,757	8,377	63
1986	5	2,168	1985 -86	136	133	107	10,751	7,052	66
1987	7	1,040	1986 -87	138	134	98	7,406	5,772	59
1988	10	425	1987 -88	71	58	40	3,573	2,724	68
1989	5	403	1988 -89	139	115	94	7,945	6,126	65
1990	13	3,626	1989 -90	136	118	107	16,635	12,152	114
1991	11	3,800	1990 -91	119	104	79	9,295	7,366	93
1992	13	7,478	1991 -92	158	149	105	15,051	11,736	112
1993	8	1,788	1992 -93	88	79	37	1,193	1,097	30
1994	25	5,753	1993 -94	118	95	71	4,894	4,113	58
1995	42	7,538	1994 -95	166	131	97	7,777	5,426	56
1996	9	1,778	1995 -96	84	44	35	2,936	1,679	48
1997	2	83	1996 -97	38	22	13	1,617	745	57
1998	5	984	1997 -98	94	73	64	20,327	8,622	135

^a Prior to 1985 the winter commercial fishery occurred from January 1 thru April 30; as of March 1985, the winter commercial season was open by regulation from November 15 thru May 15.

^b The winter subsistence fishery occurs during months of two calendar years (as early as December, thru May).

^c The number of crab actually caught; some crab may have been released.

^d The number of crab "Harvested" is the number of crab caught and kept.

^e Data unavailable.