

RED SEA CUCUMBER AND GREEN SEA URCHIN  
COMMERCIAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PLANS  
FOR THE REGISTRATION AREA J (WESTWARD REGION), 2002/03

By

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Division of Commercial Fisheries  
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## **AUTHORS**

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## ABSTRACT

The fishery management plan and regulations governing the open-access red sea cucumber *Parastichopus californicus* and green sea urchin *Strongylocentrotus droebachiensis* commercial dive fisheries in Registration Area J (Westward Region) are outlined within this report. Registration Area J encompasses the waters adjacent to communities in Kodiak, Chignik, Sand Point, King Cove, Akutan, and Dutch Harbor. Information on the commercial dive fisheries in the vicinity of Saint George Island in the Pribilof Island is not covered in this report.

This report briefly describes the history of the fisheries, participation and harvest data, guideline harvest levels (GHLs), fishing periods, and additional requirements for participation in these commercial fisheries. This fishery management plan serves as a supplement to the Alaska Statutes (AS) and Alaska Administrative Codes (AAC) found in the 2002/03 Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) Commercial Shellfish Regulations. Contact persons and methods for obtaining fishery data and news releases are provided.

## SEA CUCUMBER FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN

### *Fishery History*

The red sea cucumber *Parastichopus californicus* commercial fishery in Registration Area J (Westward Region) began in the 1991/92 season. Processors recruited divers to gather small amounts of red sea cucumbers in the Kodiak and Chignik Districts to test marketability. Commercial production began in the spring of 1993. The fishery developed under the conditions of a permit authorized by 5 AAC 38.062 PERMITS FOR OCTOPI, SQUID, KOREAN HAIR CRAB, SEA URCHINS, SEA CUCUMBERS, SEA SNAILS, CORAL, AND OTHER MARINE INVERTEBRATES. ADF&G specified dive gear as the only legal gear type and required dive logs to be submitted to ADF&G at the time of landing with the ADF&G copy of the fish ticket. Each diver was required to have a Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) permit card and register with ADF&G prior to participating in the fishery. Harvests were monitored for relative distribution and density; this information would later serve as the basis for establishing initial GHLS. As the commercial effort and harvest levels increased, ADF&G implemented more restrictive management measures to help ensure continued viability of the stock. All fishing districts were closed in fall of 1993 until ADF&G could conduct more extensive research into the biology and distribution of red sea cucumbers throughout Registration Area J.

In 1994, ADF&G reopened the fishery and implemented several management measures to promote conservation of the resource. A seasonal closure from May 1 through September 30 was established to protect the spawning aggregations of red sea cucumbers. Commissioner's permit provisions included a weekly fishing period of five days. In addition, to prevent overharvest, GHLS were established for the Kodiak (200,000 pounds) and Chignik (50,000 pounds) Districts. Sea cucumbers are relatively immobile animals and vulnerable to localized depletion by harvesters using dive gear. In the Kodiak District management section boundaries previously established for Tanner crab fishing were used to delineate management sections for sea cucumbers. This was done to disperse the harvest around Kodiak Island, in hopes of reducing the potential for localized depletion. A GHLS was set for previously fished Kodiak Sections based on historic production and fisheries performance.

Effort in the Chignik and South Peninsula Districts has been minimal, and the potential for localized depletion has been considered low in these areas. Therefore, no additional subdivision of the Chignik and South Peninsula Districts has occurred. Prior to 1994, the South Peninsula District remained open, outside the biological closure period, without an established GHLS to allow for exploratory fishing.

In 1995, ADF&G reopened the Registration Area J to sea cucumber fishing on October 1. The total GHLS for the Kodiak and Chignik Districts was 225,000 pounds with fishing periods reduced to three days per week. The shortened fishing periods were set to allow ADF&G a better opportunity to assess inseason fishery performance and monitor progress towards established harvest levels. GHLS were quickly reached in the sections surrounding Kodiak Island and then closed by emergency order. The Mainland and Chignik Sections received little effort and remained open for the duration of the regulatory season, closing on April 30, 1996.

Since 1995, fishing periods have remained at three days per week. Minor adjustments to preseason section GHGs have occurred based on fishery performance data. Small GHGs have been developed for areas lacking historic harvest data in an effort to allow for commercial explorations and subsequently, evaluation of stock strength through fishery performance.

Historic commercial harvest statistics by year for the Kodiak and Chignik Districts are provided for the years 1991-2001 (Table 1). Harvest in the 2001/02 fishery totaled 152,613 pounds with catch reported from five sections (Table 2).

***Guideline Harvest Levels (GHGs)***

GHGs are determined on an annual basis by department staff consistent with 5 AAC 38.035 CLOSURE OF MISCELLANEOUS SHELLFISH REGISTRATION AREAS AND REOPENING PROCEDURES.

Data from the 1993 fishery on previously unexploited stocks has been used as a relative indication of red sea cucumber distribution and density. Since the establishment of GHGs in 1994, fishery performance has been assessed on a section by section basis using dockside interviews and fishery logbook data. Districts or sections exhibiting a stable or increasing CPUE over time or relatively dense numbers of animals per dive location have retained GHGs that were set at the initial 1994 season level. Minor increases in the GHG for individual sections has also occurred. Sections that have shown recent poor fishery performance, experienced marked decreases in CPUE, or gradual declines in CPUE over multiple seasons had their GHGs reduced from the levels initially established in 1994. The current sections used to delineate sea cucumber registration districts and sections can be found in Figure 1. The GHGs from 1998 through 2001, along with harvest by section, can be found in Figure 2. The 2002/03 GHGs will remain at the same levels established in the two previous fisheries (see table below). Areas lacking historic harvest information of sea cucumbers will be open under a commissioner’s permit with an initial small GHG of 5,000 pounds each. Additional harvest may be allowed in these sections pending evaluation of fishery performance and biological assessment of the initial GHG.

***2002/03 Sea Cucumber Guideline Harvest Levels***

<u>Section or District</u>	<u>GHG (pounds)</u>
<b>Kodiak District</b>	
Northeast Section	5,000
Eastside Section	40,000
Southeast Section	30,000
Southwest Section	20,000
Westside Section	30,000
North Mainland Section	5,000
South Mainland Section	5,000
<u>Semidi Island Section</u>	<u>5,000</u>
<b>Kodiak District total</b>	<b>140,000</b>
Chignik District	25,000
Alaska Peninsula District	5,000
Aleutian Islands District	5,000
<u>Bering Sea District</u>	<u>5,000</u>

### ***Inseason Announcements***

Following each three-day fishing period, all harvest information from fish tickets and logbooks are analyzed. ADF&G will determine the weekly harvest and announce the next fishing period based on the remaining GHL and anticipated effort. All fishery announcements are published in news releases. News releases may be found at the following locations or obtained through the following methods:

- ◆ Available in the shellfish and groundfish management office, ADF&G office building, room 201, 211 Mission Road, Kodiak. ADF&G Dutch Harbor, F.T.S. building 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Airport Beach Road, Dutch Harbor.
- ◆ Distributed to a list of recipients via e-mail.
- ◆ Posted on the ADF&G website at:  
<http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us/region4/shellfish/shelhom4.htm#openings>
- ◆ Inseason closure announcements following the National Weather Service broadcast at 0800 and 1800 hrs on 4125 kHz SSB.
- ◆ Management biologists telephone or FAX processing facilities participating in the fishery each fishing period; these processors typically inform the fleet and post the releases in conspicuous places in their operational offices.
- ◆ Recorded on the commercial fisheries information message telephone at (907) 486-4559.

Individuals wishing to be placed on the distribution list or to request information on the latest news release should contact ADF&G in Kodiak at (907) 486-1840. Additional fisheries resource contacts are provided in Appendix A.

### ***Legal Gear***

Hand picking with assistance by dive gear is specified as the only legal gear under the conditions of the commissioner's permit issued for the taking of sea cucumbers in Registration Area J. There are no prohibitions on saturation diving or use of mixed gases to achieve greater dive depths in Registration Area J.

### ***Registration***

Prior to engaging in the commercial harvest of sea cucumbers in Registration Area J, all divers must obtain a Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) interim use permit and register with an ADF&G office within Registration Area J (statewide sea cucumber, excluding southeast Alaska a Q11B card). The Registration Area J sea cucumber fisheries are nonexclusive. Divers may only be registered for one dive species at a time in Registration Area J. To register for green sea urchins, divers must first void their existing sea cucumber registration *at an ADF&G office* and register *for urchins* before resuming fishing.

### ***Onboard Observers***

Onboard observers are not required under the commissioner's permit. However, ADF&G reserves the right to include observers as a stipulation of the commissioner's permit for operation. Vessels may be asked to carry ADF&G observers on a voluntary basis for the purposes of at sea-data collection. Divers and dive tenders are asked to allow ADF&G dockside sampling staff access to their catch and to answer a few confidential questions about fishing location, effort, and trip dates.

### ***Landing Requirements***

Fish tickets are required of processors, buyers, and fishermen as described in 5 AAC 39.130 REPORTS REQUIRED OF PROCESSORS, BUYERS, FISHERMEN, AND OPERATORS OF CERTAIN COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSELS; TRANSPORTING REQUIREMENTS. A completed dive/harvest logbook is also required for all sea cucumber fishing activities as stipulated in the commissioner's permit. Completed logbook pages are required to be submitted to ADF&G or the processor at the time the fishticket is completed and signed at the processing facility. Latitude and longitude positions of dive locations are required to be recorded in the 2002/03 dive logbooks. A copy of the 2002/03 dive logbook can be found in Appendix B.

### ***Fishery Management Plan***

The sea cucumber fishery is managed via the terms of a commissioner's permit 5 AAC 38.062 PERMITS FOR OCTOPI, SQUID, KOREAN HAIR CRAB, SEA URCHINS, SEA CUCUMBERS, SEA SNAILS, CORAL, AND OTHER MARINE INVERTEBRATES. The commissioner's permit may:

- ◆ Stipulate location and duration of harvest
- ◆ Limit gear and other methods of harvesting
- ◆ Require periodic and/or annual reporting
- ◆ Require application to be submitted prior to permit issuance
- ◆ Be denied or invalidated if terms of the permit have been violated or harvest operations jeopardize the sustained viability of the resource

The commercial fishery will be managed inseason. The first three-day opening will begin on Thursday, October 3 at 12:01 AM and remain open until Saturday, October 5 at 11:59 PM. This is a change from the traditional October 1 opening to facilitate management. This change was implemented to allow the department adequate time to analyze harvest data from fishtickets and logbooks after each three-day fishing period. ADF&G will determine how much, if any harvest remains to be taken from section or district GHLS. After each harvest period, harvest rate, historical harvest patterns exhibited by the fleet, number of divers participating, and to some extent, weather forecast will be evaluated to determine how long each section will reopen in the next fishing period. Efforts will be made to allow participants the opportunity to harvest, without exceeding, the entire GHLS for sections and districts. However, should ADF&G have concerns

about the stock strength or localized depletion, sections or districts may be closed prior to reaching the established GHL.

A biological closure period from May 1 to September 30 has been established for red sea cucumbers to protect spawning aggregates. Under no circumstances will commercial fishing be allowed to extend beyond April 30, regardless of GHL remaining.

## **GREEN SEA URCHIN FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN**

### ***Fishery History***

The green sea urchin *Strongylocentrotus droebachiensis* commercial fishery in Registration Area J began in 1980 when a small harvest occurred in the Kodiak District to test marketability. Interest in commercial harvest of green sea urchins in Kodiak remained low until 1985 when a small-scale fishery occurred. In 1986, the harvest increased with more divers participating. Peak catch occurred in 1988 when 190,500 pounds were harvested. In recent years, the Kodiak harvest has been minimal, with very few divers participating. Green sea urchins are typically shipped live to Japan and Korea for processing. The occurrence of red sea urchins *S. franciscanus*, the principal species harvested in Southeastern Alaska, has been documented within Registration Area J. However, sufficient quantities of red sea urchins to support a commercial fishery have not been located.

The fishing season in Registration Area J was established by the BOF as October 1 to January 31. While marketable roe may be available after January, the potential is high for increased sorting and handling mortality of unmarketable sea urchins. ADF&G in Dutch Harbor has issued special exploratory permits during the summer and early fall for the eastern Aleutians to check the quality of roe, but divers found little marketable product during these periods.

A table of historic harvest of green sea urchins in the Kodiak District can be found in Table 3. Complete information on the historical harvest of green sea urchins in Registration Area J is available in ADF&G Regional Information Report series. The sections used to delineate sea urchin registration districts and sections can be found in Figure 1.

### ***Guideline Harvest Levels (GHLs)***

Market conditions and availability of processors has led the sporadic nature of green sea urchin harvest in Registration Area J. The inconsistency of effort and subsequent harvest has made inferences on abundance, distribution, and recruitment difficult. Stock assessment surveys of green sea urchins have not been conducted in Registration Area J and, given current departmental budgetary constraints, are unlikely in the near future. Because of the lack of data regarding the green sea urchin populations in the region, ADF&G has established small GHLs which allow for further exploration and development of the commercial sea urchin fishery. Boundary lines established for Tanner crab and sea cucumber fisheries are used to delineate management sections for urchin fishing and are designed to distribute effort throughout the registration area.

Sections with a history of commercial harvest have GHGs set not to exceed 10,000 pounds of green sea urchins. Those are the Northeast, Eastside, Southeast, Southwest, and Westside Sections of the Kodiak District. Sections with no historic harvest information have GHGs set not to exceed 5,000 pounds of green sea urchins. These are the North Mainland, South Mainland, Semidi Sections of the Kodiak District and the Chignik, Alaska Peninsula, Aleutian Islands, and Bering Sea Districts. Additional harvest may be allowed in these data-poor sections if fishery performance demonstrates an available surplus. Revisions to the commissioner's permit may occur should harvest beyond the established GHGs be allowed.

***2002/03 Green Sea Urchin Guideline Harvest Levels***

<b><u>Section or District</u></b>	<b><u>GHG (pounds)</u></b>
Northeast Section	10,000
Eastside Section	10,000
Southeast Section	10,000
Southwest Section	10,000
Westside Section	10,000
North Mainland Section	5,000
South Mainland Section	5,000
Semidi Island Section	5,000
<b>Kodiak District Total</b>	<b>65,000</b>
Chignik District	5,000
Alaska Peninsula District	5,000
Aleutian Islands District	5,000
Bering Sea District	5,000
<i>--Bering Sea District excludes Saint George Island--</i>	

***Inseason Announcements***

All management activities concerning the commercial fishery are published in news releases. They may be found at the following locations or obtained through the following methods:

- ◆ Available in the shellfish and groundfish management offices, ADF&G office building 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, 211 Mission Road, Kodiak. ADF&G Dutch Harbor, F.T.S. building 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Airport Beach Road, Dutch Harbor.
- ◆ Distributed to a list of recipients via e-mail.
- ◆ Posted on the ADF&G website at:  
<http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us/region4/shellfish/shelhom4.htm#openings>
- ◆ Inseason closure announcements following the National Weather Service broadcasts at 0800 and 1800 hrs on 4125 kHz SSB.
- ◆ Management biologists also telephone or FAX processing facilities participating in the fishery after each fishing period; these processors typically inform the fleet and post the releases in conspicuous places in their operational offices.
- ◆ Recorded on the commercial fisheries information message telephone at (907) 486-4559.

Individuals wishing to be placed on the distribution list or to request information on the latest news release should contact the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Kodiak at (907) 486-1840. Additional fisheries resource contacts are provided in Appendix A.

### ***Legal Gear***

Dive gear and hand picking are specified as the only legal gear specified under the conditions of the commissioner's permit for the taking of green sea urchins in Registration Area J. There are no prohibitions on saturation diving or use of mixed gases to achieve greater dive depths in Registration Area J. The use of 4-foot rakes to assist divers in the harvest of urchins is also permitted.

### ***Registration***

Prior to engaging in the commercial harvest of green sea urchins in Registration Area J, all divers must obtain a Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) interim use permit and register with an ADF&G office within Registration Area J (statewide sea urchin, excluding southeast Alaska a U11B card). The Registration Area J (Westward Region) sea urchin fisheries are nonexclusive. There are no preregistration requirements for the green sea urchin fishery in Registration Area J. Divers may only be registered for one dive species at a time in Registration Area J. To register for green sea urchins, divers must first void their existing sea cucumber registration *at an ADF&G office* and register *for urchins before resuming* fishing.

### ***Onboard Observers***

Onboard observers are not required under the commissioner's permit. However, ADF&G reserves the right to include observers as a stipulation of the commissioner's permit for operation. Vessels may be periodically asked to carry an ADF&G observer on a voluntary basis for the purposes of at-sea data collection. Divers and dive tenders are asked to allow ADF&G dockside sampling staff access to their catch and to answer a few confidential questions about fishing location, effort, and trip dates.

### ***Landing Requirements***

Fish tickets are required of processors, buyers, and fishermen as described in 5 AAC 39.130 REPORTS REQUIRED OF PROCESSORS, BUYERS, FISHERMEN, AND OPERATORS OF CERTAIN COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSELS; TRANSPORTING REQUIREMENTS. A completed dive/harvest logbook is required for all sea urchin fishing activities as stipulated in the commissioner's permit. Completed logbook pages are required to be submitted to ADF&G or the processor at the time the fishticket is completed and signed at the processing facility. Latitude and longitude positions of dive locations are required to be recorded in the 2002/03 dive logbooks. A copy of the 2002/03 dive logbook can be found in Appendix B.

### ***Fishery Management Plan***

The sea urchin fishery is managed under the authority of a commissioner's permit 5 AAC 38.062 PERMITS FOR OCTOPI, SQUID, KOREAN HAIR CRAB, SEA URCHINS, SEA CUCUMBERS, SEA SNAILS, CORAL, AND OTHER MARINE INVERTEBRATES. The commissioner's permit may:

- ◆ Stipulate location and duration of harvest
- ◆ Limit gear and other methods of harvesting
- ◆ Require periodic and/or annual reporting
- ◆ Require application to be submitted prior to permit issuance
- ◆ Be denied or invalidated if terms of the permit have been violated or harvest operations jeopardize the sustained viability of the resource

ADF&G will monitor the fishery inseason using fishtickets, logbook data, and dockside interviews to determine fishery performance. Conditions of the permits issued will be structured to allow ADF&G to gather additional information on green sea urchin stocks. CPUE will be compared to historical averages, when possible, to ensure that indications of localized depletion or decreases in stock size are not occurring. If indications from commercial fishery data suggests that harm may occur if harvest is allowed to continue, ADF&G may close sections or districts prior to attaining the established GHLs.

A closure period of February 1 through September 30 has been established by the BOF to ensure optimal roe content occurs in green sea urchins during commercial fisheries. ADF&G has not established a minimum test diameter size limit, however industry has required divers to deliver animals of 2 to 2.5 inches in diameter. ADF&G would consider harvest of animals smaller than 53 mm (approximately 2.25") unacceptable as animals smaller than this size are often immature.

Table 1. Commercial harvest statistics of red sea cucumbers in the Kodiak and Chignik Districts, 1991-2001.

Year	Number of Dive Permits	Number of Landings	Pounds Harvested	Average Price Per Pound (Dollars)
1991		Confidential		
1992		Confidential		
1993	50	487	564,516	0.93
1994	86	269	413,576	1.20
1995	21	60	145,092	1.25
1996	31	93	162,451	1.25
1997	26	65	132,337	1.16
1998	16	55	142,313	1.20
1999	19	36	116,134	1.20
2000	20	56	116,152	1.50
2001	18	73	152,613	1.25

Table 2. Red sea cucumber commercial harvest by area, Kodiak and Chignik Districts, 2001/02.

Area		Guideline Harvest Level	Pounds Harvested
Chignik District	Chignik	25,000	0
Kodiak District	Northeast Section	5,000	4,642
	Eastside Section	40,000	43,750
	Southeast Section	30,000	47,046
	Southwest Section	20,000	17,658
	Westside Section	30,000	39,517
	North Mainland Section	5,000	0
	South Mainland Section	5,000	0
	Semidi Island Section	5,000	0
Totals		165,000	152,613

Table 3. Historic harvest of green sea urchins in the Kodiak District, 1980-2001.

Year	Number of Permits	Number of Landings	Pounds Harvested (Live Weight)	Average Price Per Pound
1980		Confidential		
1985		Confidential		
1986		Confidential		
1987	16	78	104,139	0.69
1988	28	260	190,509	0.80
1989	29	81	44,862	0.82
1990	25	83	84,004	0.84
1991	6	24	29,947	0.92
1992	9	22	Confidential <sup>a</sup>	Confidential <sup>a</sup>
1993	12	40	Confidential <sup>a</sup>	Confidential <sup>a</sup>
1994	9	32	Confidential <sup>a</sup>	Confidential <sup>a</sup>
1995	8	50	38,437	1.34
1996	7	31	36,147	1.10
1997-2001 <sup>b</sup>	11	21	23,758	1.01

<sup>a</sup> Harvest and price information confidential because less than one processor participated.

<sup>b</sup> Years combined because less than three divers and/or processors participated.

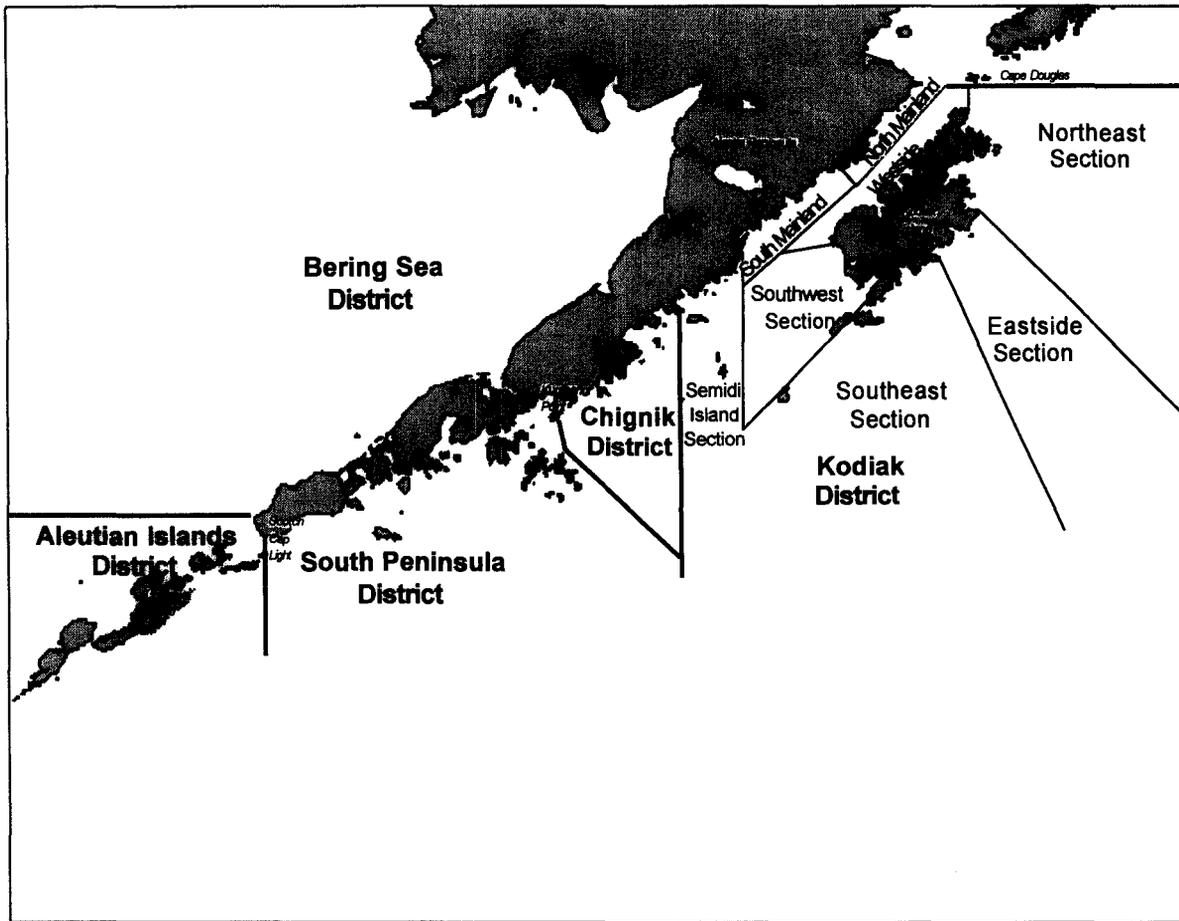


Figure 1. Fishing sections and districts for the 2002/03 Registration Area J (Westward Region) commercial sea cucumber and sea urchin fisheries.

Note--The Tanner crab management districts utilized for sea cucumbers are described in regulation 5 AAC 35.505 DESCRIPTION OF REGISTRATION AREA J DISTRICTS.

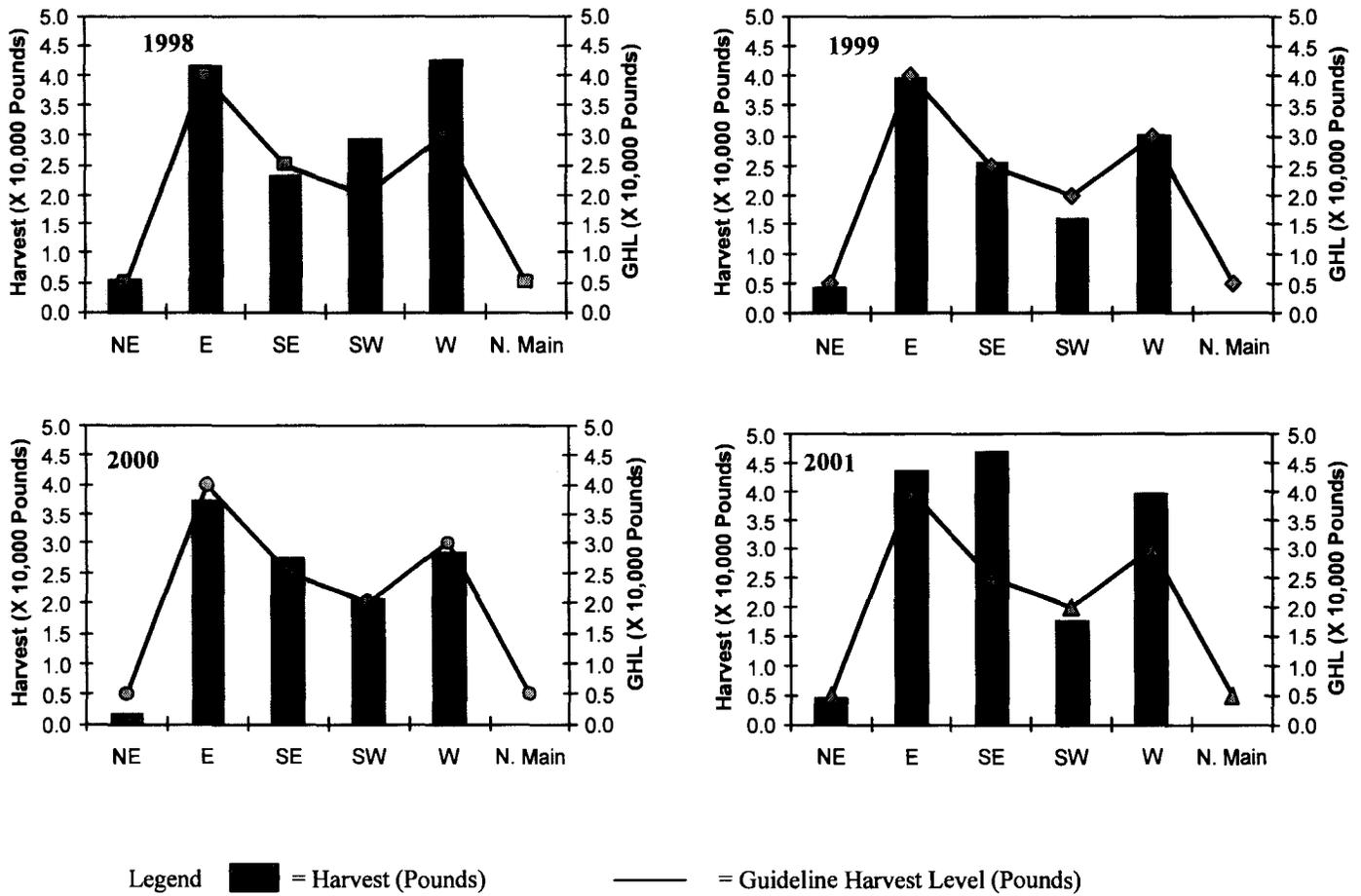


Figure 2. Kodiak District sea cucumber harvests and guideline harvest levels (GHLs) by section, 1998-2001.

**APPENDIX**

Appendix A. Listing of contact persons, by agency and location.

**Alaska Department of Fish and Game**

**web site: <http://www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us/region4/finfish/grndfish/grndhom4.htm>**

**Kodiak office**

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Dave Jackson      Kodiak, Chignik, Alaska Peninsula Areas shellfish/groundfish biologist      dave\_jackson@fishgame.state.ak.us  
Mike Ruccio      Kodiak, Chignik, Ak. Pen. Assistant Areas shellfish/groundfish biologist      mike\_ruccio@fishgame.state.ak.us  
Kally Spalinger      Kodiak, Chignik, Alaska Peninsula Staff biologist      kally\_spalinger@fishgame.state.ak.us

**Dutch Harbor office**

*Mail address:* P. O. Box 920587 Dutch Harbor, Alaska 99692      *physical address:* F.T.S. building, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Airport Beach Road, Dutch Harbor.      Phone: (907) 581-1239  
FAX: (907) 581-1572

Forrest Bowers      Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Area biologist      forrest\_bowers@fishgame.state.ak.us

**Division of Fish and Wildlife Protection**

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**National Marine Fisheries Service ..**

**web site: <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/>**

**Kodiak office-management**

*Mail address:* P. O. Box 1638 Kodiak, Alaska 99615      *physical address:* 301 Research Court Near Island, Kodiak      Phone: (907) 481-1780  
FAX : (907) 481-1701

Tom Pearson      Gulf of Alaska management biologist      Tom.Pearson@noaa.gov

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*Mail address:* 1211 Gibson Cove Rd. Kodiak, Alaska 99615      *Physical address:* Gibson Cove Complex Gibson Cove, Kodiak      Phone: (907) 486-3298  
FAX: (907) 486-6868

Special Agent Ken Hansen Fisheries law enforcement agent      Kenneth.Hansen@noaa.gov



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