

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No.: 2-TC-6-02-98

Issued at: Anchorage, January 22, 1998

Effective Date: Date: 12:01 a.m.
January 26, 1998

Expiration Date: December 31, 1998
Unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order closes the described waters of Orca Bay and Hinchinbrook Entrance in Prince William Sound to the sport harvest of Tanner crabs until further notice.

REGULATION:

Provisions are therefore added to 5 AAC 55.022 to read:
(shaded areas indicate changes)

(1) 5 AAC 55.022 WATER	SEASON AND BAG LIMIT					SPECIAL PROVISIONS
	King Salmon	Other Salmon	Rainbow/ Cutthroat	Halibut/ Lingcod	Other Fish/ Shellfish	
(15) Orca Inlet and Hinchinbrook Entrance	1A	1B	1F,4D	2G,5H ¹	3I, 6J, K ²	¹ Lingcod can only be landed by hand or with a landing net. ² in that portion of Prince William Sound enclosed by lines from Point Whitshed to Point Bentinck, from Cape Hinchinbrook (60°14' N. lat., 146°39' W. long.) to Seal Rocks (60°10' N. lat., 146°50' W. long.), to Zaikof Point (60° 19' N. lat., 146° 55' W. long.), and from a point at 60° 11' N. lat., 147° 20' W. long. on the northwest side of Montague Island, north to a point at 60° 30' N. lat., 147° 20' W. long. then east to a point at 60° 30' N. lat., 147° 00' W. long., then northeast to Knowles Head (60° 41' N. lat., 146°37' W. long.), the sport fishing Tanner crab season is closed

JUSTIFICATION:

The department's Tanner crab trawl survey indicated that Prince William Sound Tanner crab stocks remain in a depressed condition. Survey estimates from previous years indicated that the abundance of legal male crabs for the Northern and Hinchinbrook Districts decreased from 109,000 in 1993 to 24,864 in 1995. During the same time period, estimates of new shell legal crabs declined from 54,420 in 1993 to 0 in 1995. Data from the 1997 trawl survey indicates that legal male crabs were caught only in the Northern District. The number of legal male Tanner crabs in the Northern District was estimated to be 10,674 of which 1,776 were new shell recruit and 8,898 were of an old shell class.

Estimates of legal crab reflect poor recruitment to the legal segment of the stock and declining numbers of old shell recruit class crabs. These low numbers may be attributable to both weak upcoming prerecruit age classes and skipmolting in the prerecruit-1 and smaller classes.

The waters of Orca Bay and the north Montague area are key production areas for Tanner crab in Prince William Sound. Both areas have historically provided newly mature male and female Tanner crabs.

The PWS commercial Tanner crab fishery has been closed since 1988 and the waters of Orca Bay have been closed to commercial fishing since 1982. The north Montague area has been closed to all harvest of Tanner crabs since 1991. These closures were effected to rebuild the stock and provide protection to juvenile and newly mature crabs. These protective measures are important to the stock rebuilding process. Therefore, in order to maximize protection of both adult and juvenile Tanner crabs in the described waters, sport Tanner crab fishing will be closed for the entire 1998 calendar year.