

**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES
NEWS RELEASE**



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Norton Sound Commercial & CDQ Red King Crab Fishery Opens February 25

The Crab Planning Team (CPT) recently made recommendations for 2019 Norton Sound red king crab allowable biological catch (ABC) and over fishing limit (OFL) levels, as well as legal male biomass (LMB) estimates. Guideline harvest levels (GHL) are set based on LMB and must be kept sufficiently below the ABC to accommodate all other sources of fishery-related mortality. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) is anticipated to adopt ABC, LMB and OFL amounts for Norton Sound red king crab when they meet.

The department has set a preliminary harvest rate of 6% of the LMB of 2.51 million pounds red king crab fishery yielding a total commercial GHL of 150,600 pounds. This level of commercial harvest allows a buffer of approximately 40,000 pounds, from the ABC of 190,000 pounds, to account for subsistence harvests and incidental mortality of non-target crab discards.

The GHL for the winter commercial red king crab fishery is 8% of the total commercial GHL and is 12,048 pounds and the GHL for the CDQ red king crab fishery is 7.5% and is 11,295 pounds.

The Norton Sound winter commercial and Community Development Quota (CDQ) red king crab fishery will open at noon on February 25. Anyone who wants to participate in either fishery as a permit holder or a crew member must stop subsistence crabbing by noon, February 11.

To qualify to crab in the CDQ fishery, individuals must contact Norton Sound Seafood Products (NSSP) to be placed on their eligibility list and then apply for a CDQ permit from the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission. NSSP plans to start the season only buying from CDQ permit holders.

Before crabbing, permit holders must register with Fish & Game at the Nome office and receive their crab pot tags. Nome area crabbers with any questions about the fishery can call Fish & Game at 443-5167. Village residents can call 1-800-560-2271 to register and have their crab pot tags sent to them via local airlines.

A reminder to crabbers that although the legal size to keep male crabs is 4 and $\frac{3}{4}$ inches, NSSP is only buying crabs that are 5 inches or greater and have all their legs and claws, also crabs with small or stubby legs will not be purchased. Please contact NSSP for more information.

Commercial permit holders need to be in possession of a catcher-seller permit and registered as a catcher-seller at the Nome Fish & Game office before they can sell crab to the public. A catcher-seller permit application can be obtained online or picked up at the Fish & Game office.

Any permit holder that is not registered as a catcher-seller can only sell crab to the buyer. NSSP is the only buyer that has registered for the fishery.