

Division of Commercial Fisheries
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Advisory Announcement
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Norton Sound 2020 Winter Commercial Crab Fishery To Open On February 29

The winter commercial crab fishery will open at noon on February 29. At present there is no registered buyer for the commercial crab season. Because there is no buyer, any participating commercial crab permit holders will need to have their own market and outlet for their catch through other legal means like a catcher-seller permit or other direct marketing program. All crabbers must contact the Nome Fish & Game office to register for catcher-seller or other direct marketing permits before they can sell crab to the public.

Catcher-seller permit forms can be picked at the Nome Fish & Game office or can be obtained online at www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/license/fishing.pdfs/1100-539.pdf

Commercial crab permit holders must register at the Fish & Game office in Nome and receive crab pot tags before crabbing. Village residents can call 1-800-560-2271 to register and crab pot tags will be sent via local airlines.

Those assisting in the commercial fishery must be in possession of a commercial crewmember license or a 2020 State of Alaska commercial fishery permit for any fishery can substitute. Crewmember licenses are available at the Nome Fish & Game office or can be bought online at www.adfg.alaska.gov/Store/

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) recently set the 2020 Norton Sound red king crab legal male biomass (LMB) estimate, allowable biological catch (ABC) and overfishing limit (OFL) level. 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 department has set a preliminary harvest rate of 7% of the LMB of 2.43 million pounds yielding a total commercial GHL of 170,100 pounds. This level of commercial harvest allows a buffer of approximately 31,000 pounds, from the ABC of 201,000 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 13,608 pounds. Crab pots in the winter commercial crab fishery must be set through the ice.

Regulations require those intending to participate in the commercial crab fishery to stop subsistence crabbing two weeks before the season start date. Therefore, anyone intending to participate in the commercial fishery as a permit holder or crewmember must stop subsistence crabbing by noon on February 15.

The cold weather this year has resulted in thicker ice but as always caution is advised.

Good Luck, Good Crabbing and Be Safe Out There.