



Advisory Announcement

For Immediate Release: December 18, 2020

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Prince William Sound Area
2020 Pacific Cod State-Waters Pot and Jig Seasons Close December 31
2021 Parallel Pacific Cod Seasons Open January 1
Emergency Order # 2-GF-E-03-21

The Prince William Sound Area (PWS) state-waters Pacific cod seasons for pot and jig gear will close at midnight December 31. The parallel Pacific cod season will immediately open to vessels using pot, jig, and longline gear January 1, 2021. Fishermen are reminded that all fish must be landed within 24 hours following the closure of the 2020 state-waters season and prior to participating in the 2021 parallel season. Parallel Pacific cod seasons are established via emergency order (EO) to coincide with the season dates and gear types set by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for the initial Pacific cod season in the adjacent federal Central Gulf of Alaska Regulatory Area (CGOA). The PWS parallel Pacific cod season for jig and pot gear will close by EO to coincide with their respective closures in the CGOA. The PWS parallel season closure for longline gear will coincide with the federal closure of the less than 50 foot hook-and-line (<50' HAL) gear sector in the CGOA.

Fishermen are reminded: 1) to obtain a PWS parallel Pacific cod season registration from Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) prior to fishing; 2) of the requirement for fishermen using pot or longline gear in parallel Pacific cod fisheries to have a functioning, activated, NMFS-approved vessel monitoring system (VMS) as described at <https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/cwm> and; 3) to adhere to federal seabird avoidance measures (SAM) as required in all longline fisheries for groundfish in the Outside District of PWS. Additional information on SAM may be found: <https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/pr/seabird-avoidance-gear>.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ADF&G encourages the public to ask questions by phone. Registrations may also be completed by fax or e-mail. Contact the Homer office with groundfish regulatory and registration questions (907-235-8191). Registrations are also available in ADF&G offices in Homer, Cordova, Anchorage, Soldotna, and Kodiak if registration must be completed in person.

NMFS continues to prosecute the North Pacific Groundfish and Halibut Observer Program. Vessel operators participating in parallel groundfish fisheries are encouraged to become familiar with this federal program. Information on the observer program can be found at <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/observers/> or by contacting the NMFS Sustainable Fisheries Division in Juneau at (907) 586-7228.

Regulation 5 AAC 28.250 closes certain waters in PWS to groundfish pot gear. The boundaries of the PWS pot closure area are shown in Figure 1.

Directed fishing for all groundfish species is closed in waters within 3 nautical miles of two Steller sea lion rookeries within PWS and certain waters are closed to fishing with groundfish pot gear (Figure 1; 5 AAC 28.250(a)). For specific regulatory language regarding Steller sea lion protection areas contact NMFS in Kodiak at (907) 481-1780 or consult the NMFS website at <https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/sslpm>.

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Bycatch limits by species or species aggregate for PWS are set by Emergency Order 2-GF-E-01-21 and may be found in the Central Region Groundfish Fisheries Outlook news release.

COVID-19

Under Alaska's Health Orders 5, 6, and 8, commercial fishing is an Essential Business and is part of Alaska's Essential Services and Critical Infrastructure. Commercial fishermen should ensure that all travel and other activities in support of commercial fishing operations follow protocols in Alaska COVID-19 Health Orders. COVID-19 Health Orders may be found here: <https://covid19.alaska.gov/health-order/>.

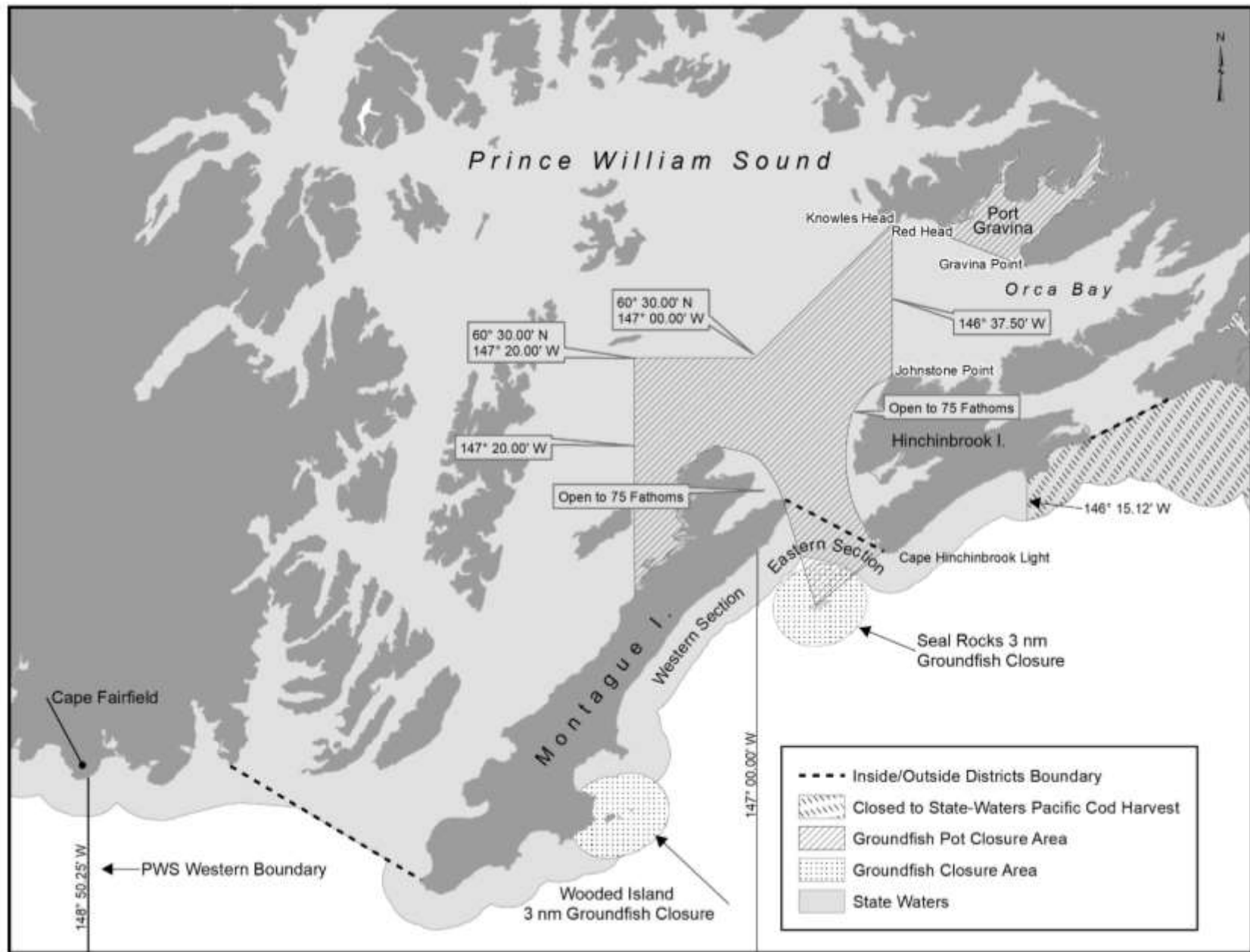


Figure 1. Prince William Sound Area closures to groundfish pot gear, groundfish fishing, and to the state-waters Pacific cod season.

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