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Advisory Announcement

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Cook Inlet Area

Pacific Cod Parallel Season Closes to Pot Gear

Pacific Cod State-Waters Season Opens to Pot Gear

Emergency Order # 2-GF-H-03-21

The Cook Inlet Area Pacific cod **parallel season will close to vessels using pot gear at 12:00 noon on January 22**. This coincides with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) closure of the Pacific cod pot gear sector in the federal Central Gulf of Alaska Area (CGOA). The parallel season will remain open to vessels using jig and longline gear.

There is a 24-hour delivery time requirement following closure of a groundfish fishery. All fish harvested in the parallel season must be landed prior to participating in the state-waters season.

Groundfish pot storage provisions (5 AAC 28.332) allow groundfish pot gear to be stored in state waters for up to five days following the closure of a groundfish season to pot gear provided all bait and bait containers are removed and all doors are secured open at the time of closure. After the five-day period has elapsed, no groundfish pot storage is permitted in state waters.

The Cook Inlet Area Pacific cod **state-waters season will open to vessels using pot gear at 12:00 noon on January 23**. In accordance with the Cook Inlet Pacific Cod Management Plan (5 AAC 28.367), the state-waters season for pot gear shall open 24 hours following the closure of the initial federal season in the CGOA for pot gear.

The guideline harvest level (GHL) for the Cook Inlet Area Pacific cod state-waters season is 1,128,987 lb, with 85% or 959,639 lb allocated to vessels using pot gear and 15% or 169,348 lb allocated to vessels using jig gear. In addition, only 25% of the GHL or 282,247 lb may be harvested by vessels using pot gear that are greater than 58 feet in length.

Area registration for the state-waters season is exclusive, no more than 60 groundfish pots may be operated from a vessel, and each pot must display a buoy identification tag. A vessel may not participate in a Pacific cod state-waters season and any other Pacific cod season at the same time.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) encourages the public to ask questions by phone. Registrations may also be completed by fax or e-mail; buoy tags may also be mailed. Contact the Homer office with groundfish regulatory and registration questions (907-235-8191). Registrations and buoy tags may also be obtained through ADF&G offices in Homer, Cordova, Anchorage, Soldotna, and Kodiak or by appointment in Seward (contact Homer ADF&G office) if registration must be completed in person.

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Steller Sea Lion Rookery closures: ADF&G has closed fishing in waters adjacent to two sea lion rookeries in the Cook Inlet Area. Sugarloaf Island (in the Barren Islands) and Outer (Pye) Island are closed to directed Pacific cod fishing with pot gear within 10 nautical miles of the specified locations and closed to vessel transit within three nautical miles. Contact ADF&G in Homer, NMFS in Kodiak (ph: 481-1780), or consult the NMFS website at: <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/rr/tables/tab15.pdf> for exact locations of these closure areas.

Pot fishing closure areas: Some areas are closed by regulation 5 AAC 28.350 to fishing with groundfish pot gear (Figure 1). Check the regulation book or contact Homer ADF&G prior to fishing. Regulation 5 AAC 28.350 (b) closes certain waters on the west side of Cook Inlet and within Kachemak Bay to groundfish pot gear (Figure 1).

Two rookeries within the Cook Inlet Area, Outer (Pye) Island and Sugarloaf Island remain closed to fishing with pot or longline gear during a parallel Pacific cod season to protect Steller sea lions (Figure 2). Waters within three nautical miles (nmi) of these locations are closed to vessel transit and waters within 10 nmi of these locations are closed to fishing with fixed gear via emergency order. Contact NMFS in Kodiak at ph: (907) 481-1780 or consult the NMFS website at <https://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/fisheries/sslpm>.

Bycatch limits by species or species aggregate for the Cook Inlet Area are set by Emergency Order 2-GF-H-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/>.

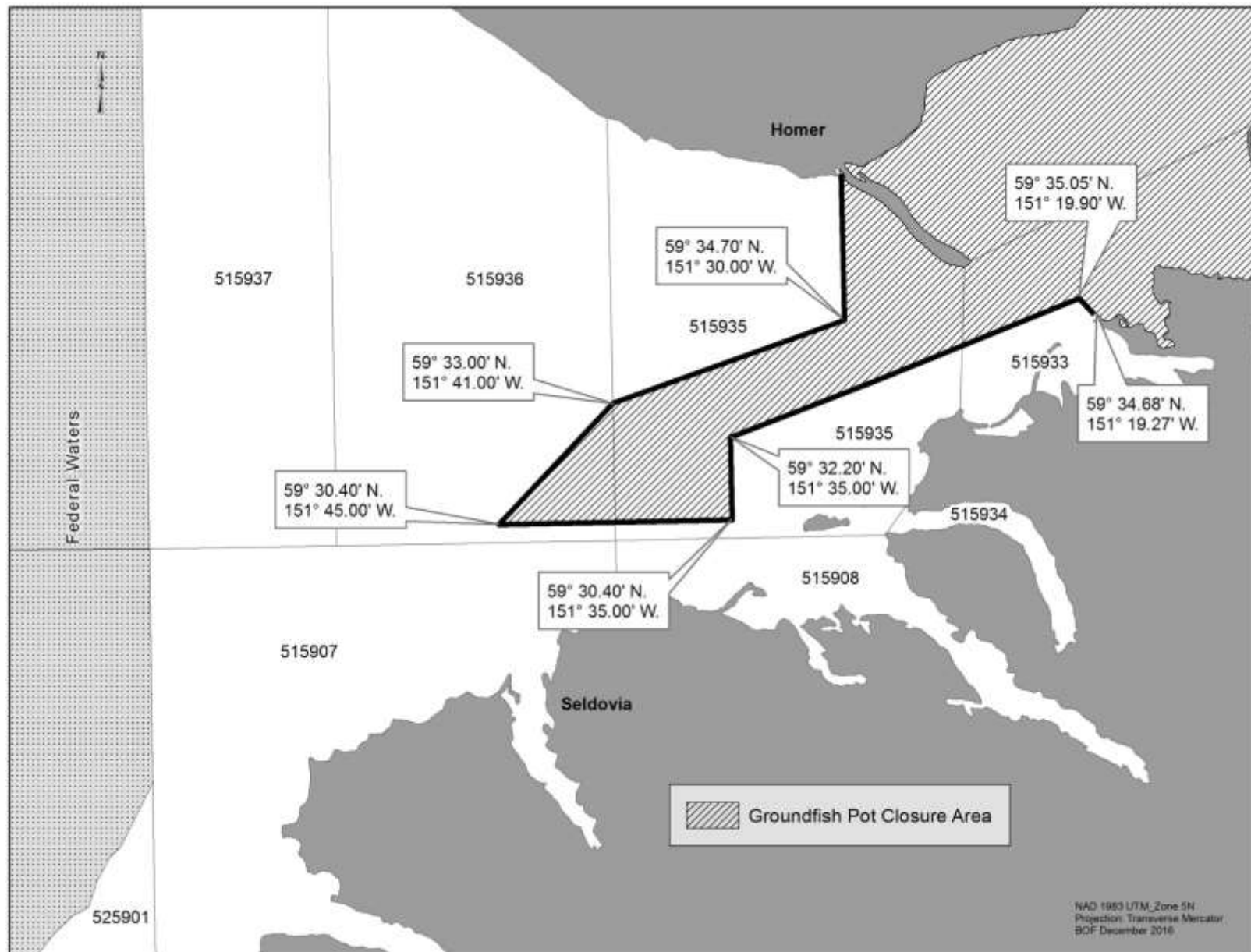


Figure 1. Kachemak Bay groundfish pot closure area with boundary coordinates and statistical areas.

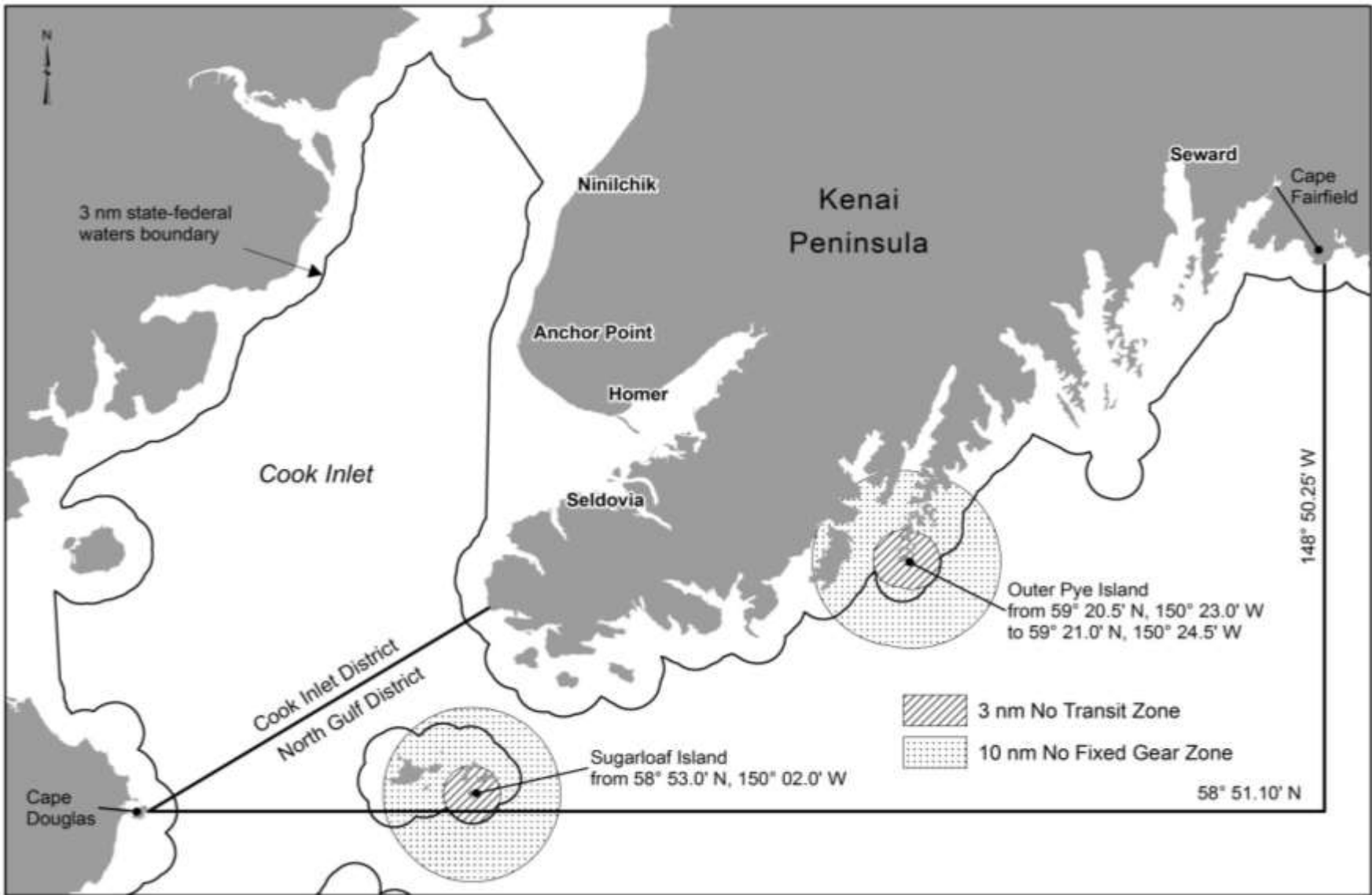


Figure 2. Vessel no-transit and fixed gear Pacific cod fishing closure zones around Steller sea lion rookeries within the Cook Inlet Area.

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