

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



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NORTON SOUND RED KING CRAB COMMERCIAL FISHERY TO OPEN

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game will open the Norton Sound red king crab summer commercial open access fishery and the CDQ red king crab fishery on Friday June 29, at 12:00 noon.

The department estimates a legal male red king crab biomass of 3.21 million pounds in Norton Sound. By Alaska Board of Fisheries regulation an exploitation rate not to exceed 15% is allowed when the legal male biomass exceeds 3.0 million pounds. The department has set the exploitation rate at 14.5% for the 2012 summer season. Therefore, the summer commercial fishery red king crab quota will be 465,450 pounds. Of this amount, 7.5 percent (34,910 pounds) is allocated for the CDQ fishery, with 430,540 pounds set for the open access portion of the fishery.

Crabbers (including catcher-sellers) are strongly advised to make sure they have a buyer before setting their pots, so as to avoid deadloss and wastage. All deadloss and crabs kept for personal use must be recorded on fish tickets in addition to sold crab. At this time, Aquatech is the only buyer in the open access fishery. Norton Sound Seafood Products will not be buying crab from either the CDQ or open access fishery until July 2.

King crab permit holders will need to register for the fishery in which they are participating and receive pot tags. Crab pot tags must be on the main buoy or trailer buoy if there is more than one buoy per pot. All commercial crab pots must have four escapement rings, with a minimum inside diameter of four and one-half inches, within one mesh measurement from the bottom of the pot. An exception to the escapement ring requirement is if at least one half of one vertical surface of a square pot, or sloping side-wall surface of a conical or pyramid pot, is composed of not less than six and one-half inch stretched mesh. The escapement mechanism regulation requires crab pots to have an opening 18 inches or greater in length. This opening must be within six inches of the bottom of the pot and must be parallel with it. The opening must be laced, sewn, or secured together by a single length of untreated, 100 percent cotton twine, no larger than 30 thread.

Crabbers are reminded to have their commercial permit and picture ID on hand when fishing. Commercial crab boats must have a Fish & Game vessel license and 2012 Fish & Game triangle on the boat. All helpers on commercial fishing boats are required to have a crewmember license, or a State of Alaska commercial fishing permit can substitute for a crewmember license.

For any questions regarding fishing please call Fish & Game in Nome at 443-5167 or 1-800-560-2271. Good luck and good crabbing.