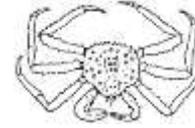

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



Cora Campbell, Commissioner
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SOUTHEAST ALASKA RED AND BLUE KING CRAB COMMERCIAL FISHERY CLOSURE ANNOUNCEMENT

Petersburg. . . The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) announced today that the Southeast Alaska (Registration Area A) commercial red king crab fishery will not open during the 2012/2013 fishing season.

The Southeast Alaska Red King Crab Management Plan [5 AAC 34.113] directs the department to manage the Southeast Alaska red king crab fishery in accordance with the Alaska Board of Fisheries' "Policy on King and Tanner Crab Resource Management". The department shall close the fishery if the department's estimate of available harvest is below the minimum threshold of 200,000 lbs. of legal male red king crabs. The estimate of available harvest, based on 2012 stock assessment survey results is approximately 15,600 lbs., well below the minimum threshold.

Regionally, the biomass of mature male red king crab has been declining since 2001 and is currently at its lowest level in twenty-two years. Five of eight survey areas exhibited poor stock health in this year's stock assessment survey. The biomass estimates for legal and mature male red king crab for the Southeast Region are 0.7 million lbs. and 0.9 million lbs. respectively for the 2012/2013 season. This is a 36% reduction in mature crab from the prior year. These legal and mature biomass estimates have been adjusted based on mark/recapture assessments for seven areas in total, three of which (Peril Strait, Port Frederick, and Seymour Canal) were not available last year. Generally, the 2012 stock assessment survey showed much lower levels of prerecruit and recruit CPUEs for all surveyed areas than was exhibited in the previous year's survey, providing much smaller mature and legal biomass estimates.

Survey and Analysis

Areas surveyed include Pybus Bay, Gambier Bay, Seymour Canal, Peril Strait, the Juneau area, Lynn Sisters, Excursion Inlet, Port Frederick, and Holkham Bay. The estimate of available harvest was determined through a catch-survey analysis (CSA) for all surveyed bays with the exception of Holkham Bay, where the CSA model does not currently allow for a biomass estimate to be produced. The CSA incorporates department stock assessment survey data from 2012 and prior years, commercial harvest in 2011 and prior years, and port sampling data obtained during landings of commercial harvest.

The 2012 stock assessment survey employed a re-stratified sample design. Re-stratification of all survey areas was begun in 2005 to reduce variance in estimates of population size. This was accomplished by adjusting sampling intensity within substrata to correspond with variation in survey catch along with other factors such as bathymetry and input on crab distribution from the commercial fleet. Re-stratification

has resulted in reductions in variance around survey catch per unit effort and population estimates, and a reduction in the number of survey pots with a catch of zero crab.

North Pacific Research Board (NPRB) Red King Crab Project

In 2009, the department initiated a collaborative study with the commercial crab industry to ground truth department pot survey-based biomass estimates using mark/recapture techniques. The department received both NPRB funding and a legislative increment to support this effort. Pybus Bay, Gambier Bay, and Excursion Inlet were surveyed in 2010, and Seymour Canal, Peril Strait, and Port Frederick were completed in 2011. Holkham Bay is the last of the eight survey areas slated for study. Fishermen are advised that the department will continue to work collaboratively with industry to complete the mark/recapture project and continue improvements to red king crab stock assessment in Southeast Alaska.

Additional information may be found in regulation 5 AAC 34.113. SOUTHEAST ALASKA RED KING CRAB MANAGEMENT PLAN on page 97 of the 2012-2014 Commercial King and Tanner Crab Fishing Regulations booklet available in area offices, or online at: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/fishregulations/pdfs/commercial/KingTannerCrab-2012-2014.pdf>

The Emergency Order corresponding with this announcement is EO 1C1712.

News releases web site: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>.

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