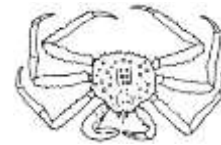

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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Petersburg Area Office
P.O. Box 667
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Date: June 26, 2014
Time: 3:30 p.m.

COMMERCIAL GOLDEN KING CRAB ANNOUNCEMENT MID-CHATHAM STRAIT AREA CLOSURE DATE

Petersburg . . . The Alaska Department of Fish and Game announced today that the commercial golden king crab fishery in the Mid-Chatham Strait Area will close at 12:00 noon, **Thursday, July 10, 2014**. This area is being closed in response to a continued decline in indices of relative abundance and recruitment of golden king crab. This decline is similar to the time period of the early to mid-1990s when the department routinely closed fishing areas before harvests reached preseason guideline harvest levels (GHL). While the fishery dependent data used to manage golden king crab since 2000 is more robust due to the inception of the logbook program, port sampling and harvest ticket data prior to 2000 were also used to assess current catch rates and recruit crab composition. The data, specifically catch per unit effort (CPUE) and percentage of recruit crab in the harvest for the current fishing season are similar to past years when inseason closures were implemented. A detailed justification for the closure is provided below.

The established preseason GHL for golden king crab in Mid-Chatham Strait was 110,000 pounds. Through June 18, 2014, approximately 42,000 pounds has been harvested by four vessels. The CPUE has been in decline for five consecutive seasons. The CPUE has averaged 3.8 crab per pot in Mid-Chatham Strait during the period 2000-2013. The average CPUE this season of 2.3 crab per pot is only 61% of the average for the past 14 seasons and matches the 2002/2003 season for the lowest CPUE since the 1996/1997 season.

The previous season, 2012/2013, in Mid-Chatham Strait was 282 days, the longest season in Mid-Chatham Strait in the past 14 seasons. Percentage of harvest taken through June 19 last season in Mid-Chatham Strait was 59% of the 110,000 pound GHL. This season, the estimated harvest through June 19 is 41% of the 110,000 pound GHL, suggesting the GHL is not attainable.

Port sampling data show the percentage of recruit crab to the harvest in Mid-Chatham Strait has also declined, from a peak of 60% during the 2004/2005 season to only 26% this season. The average contribution from the recruit portion of the stock for the period 1986-2014 from port sampling data is 35%. Historically, periods of low percentage of recruit crab in the harvest have preceded periods of low harvest. From 1988-1991, percentage of recruit crab in port sampling data averaged 21%. This was followed by a six year period of record low harvests averaging 27,000 pounds annually.

This action will bring the 2013/2014 golden king crab fishery in Registration Area A to a close. Golden king crab management areas and their associated 2013/2014 GHLS, harvest to date, and closure date are listed below:

<i>Management Area</i>	<i>GHL, pounds</i>	<i>Harvest, pounds*</i>	<i>Percentage of GHL taken*</i>	<i>Announced closure date</i>
East Central	200,000	81,375	41%	April 25
Northern	105,000	39,802	38%	April 25
Icy Strait	20,000	19,583	98%	May 12
Southern	22,000	19,636	89%	May 24
Lower Chatham Strait	28,000	23,376	83%	July 9
North Stephens Passage	10,000	7,644	76%	July 9
Mid-Chatham Strait	110,000	42,213	38%	July 10

* Preliminary harvest and percentage of GHL taken based on harvest ticket and logbook data through June 18, 2014.

A vessel may leave gear in a stored condition for seven days after the closure of Registration Area A [5 AAC 34.127(1)]. All gear must be removed from the Mid-Chatham Strait Area no later than 12:00 noon, Thursday, July 17, 2014.

The Emergency Order corresponding with this announcement is EO 1C1714.

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

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ADF&G	225-5195	772-3801	874-3822	747-6688	465-4250	766-2830	784-3255
AWT	225-5111	772-3983	874-3215	747-3254	465-4000	766-2533	784-3255