

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



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**SAINT MATTHEW ISLAND SECTION BLUE KING CRAB
SEASON OPENS OCTOBER 15
TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH ANNOUNCED**

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) have completed analysis of 2014 NMFS trawl survey results for Saint Matthew Island Section blue king crab. Area-swept and model survey estimates indicate the mature male biomass is above the harvest strategy threshold for fishery opening. The 2014/15 Saint Matthew Island Section blue king crab fishery will open 12:00 noon October 15, 2014 and remain open through February 1, 2015.

The federal acceptable biological catch (ABC) for this stock is 750,000 pounds of total male blue king crab mortality. To account for projected bycatch mortality and to avoid exceeding the ABC, the 2014/15 Saint Matthew Island Section blue king crab total allowable catch (TAC) is 655,000 pounds, apportioned as follows:

Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ)	589,500 pounds
Community Development Quota (CDQ)	65,500 pounds
Total	655,000 pounds

Fishermen are reminded that all state waters surrounding Saint Matthew, Hall, and Pinnacle Islands are closed to commercial fishing.

A valid United States Coast Guard (USCG) Commercial Fisheries Vessel Safety Decal is required before a vessel registration may be issued. Vessels must also have an activated vessel monitoring system (VMS) approved by NMFS. The operator of a vessel participating in IFQ or CDQ crab fisheries must notify the USCG at least 24 hours prior to departing port when carrying crab pot gear. USCG can be contacted at: (907) 581-3466 or (907) 359-1575 (after hours).

At the time of registration, all pots onboard the vessel and in wet storage must be in compliance with current Saint Matthew Island Section blue king crab fishing regulations. **In March 2014, the Alaska Board of Fisheries repealed Saint Matthew Island Section blue king crab pot limit and buoy tag regulations and adopted regulations allowing vessel operators to register up to 10 groundfish pots.** Vessel operators may register gear operation cooperatives. A vessel operator may transport crab pot gear to the fishing grounds for another vessel operator; however, the registered vessel operator of the crab pot gear has seven days to be active in the registration area where the gear is deployed. A vessel operator may make a one-time transfer of all pot gear to another vessel operator at the completion of fishing operations.

Preseason gear inspections will be available beginning Thursday, October 9, 2014 in Dutch Harbor, Friday, October 11 in King Cove, and Sunday, October 12 in Akutan. Vessel registration will begin at noon on Sunday, October 12, 2014. An individual holding a current Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) Bering Sea king crab interim use permit card (K91Q or K09Q) must be present during registration. Vessel operators may participate concurrently in IFQ and CDQ fisheries, but a separate registration and CFEC permit card are required for each fishery.

Vessel operators must notify ADF&G within 72 hours of completing fishing operations in a registration area or when departing the registration area with gear in long-term storage or transferred to another vessel. Unbaited gear with doors open may be stored for up to 14 days outside of designated storage areas after fishing is completed. Pots must be removed from the water or placed in long-term storage if left unattended in a registration area for more than 14 days. A vessel operator's registration will be invalidated after 14 days of inactivity in a registration area.

For questions regarding issuance of quota share and IFQ/IPQ, contact NOAA Fisheries RAM Division at 1-800-304-4846 (option #2). For questions regarding federal Crab Rationalization Program regulations, contact NOAA Fisheries Sustainable Fisheries Division at (907) 586-7228 or the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement in Kodiak at (907) 486-3298 or Dutch Harbor at (907) 581-2061.

For further information contact ADF&G Dutch Harbor at (907) 581-1239, or ADF&G Kodiak at (907) 486-1840.

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