

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



Cora Campbell, Commissioner
Jeff Regnart, Director



Contact:
Jan Rumble, Areas Groundfish Management Biologist
Elisa Russ, Assistant Area Management Biologist

Homer Area Office
3298 Douglas Place
Homer, Alaska 99603

Phone: (907) 235-8191
Fax: (907) 235-2448

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FISHERY ANNOUNCEMENT

COOK INLET AREA PACIFIC COD FISHERY

PARALLEL SEASON CLOSES TO POT GEAR AND

STATE-WATERS SEASON OPENS TO POT GEAR

POT LIMITS REMOVED AND REGISTRATION DESIGNATED NONEXCLUSIVE

EMERGENCY ORDER # 2-GF-H-10-14

The Cook Inlet Area (Area H) parallel Pacific cod season will close to vessels fishing with pot gear effective 12:00 noon November 10. This coincides with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) closure of the Pacific cod pot gear sector "B" season in the federal Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA) area. The parallel Pacific cod seasons for jig and longline gear in state waters will remain open until closed by emergency order.

The Cook Inlet state-waters Pacific cod season will open to pot gear effective 12:00 noon November 10, 2014. Also effective 12:00 noon November 10, 2014, the remaining guideline harvest level (GHL) of approximately 1.4 million pounds is made available to pot gear, groundfish pot limits are removed, and the Cook Inlet Area is designated as a nonexclusive registration area for the remainder of the 2014 Cook Inlet state-waters Pacific cod season. The Cook Inlet Pacific Cod Management Plan (5 AAC 28.367) allows any GHL remaining after September 1, and following the closure of a parallel fishery, to be made available to all legal gear types with no vessel size restrictions, and also, after October 30, allows gear limits to be removed and registration to be designated as nonexclusive in order to facilitate achievement of the GHL. The GHL for the Pacific cod state-waters season was set at 4.4 million pounds and approximately 3.0 million pounds has been harvested to date, leaving 1.4 million pounds available for harvest by vessels fishing with pot gear.

All vessel operators must possess an area registration, which is now designated nonexclusive. Area registrations may be obtained from ADF&G offices in Homer, Soldotna, Anchorage, and Cordova. Fishermen must possess a 2014 miscellaneous saltwater finfish interim use permit card in order to register.

Fishermen are reminded that there is a 24-hour delivery time requirement following closure of a groundfish fishery. Vessels must deliver all harvest from the parallel season prior to participating in the state-waters season.

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Regulation 5 AAC 28.350 (b) closes certain waters to groundfish pot gear along the west side of Cook Inlet and within Kachemak Bay. To protect Steller sea lions, waters adjacent to two rookeries within the Cook Inlet Area, Sugarloaf Island and Outer Pye Island, remain closed to fishing for Pacific cod with pot or longline gear. Vessel transit is closed within 3 nautical miles (nmi) of these locations and fishing within 10 nmi of these locations is closed. For more information, consult the NMFS website at <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/regs/679b22.pdf>.

Bycatch limits by species or species aggregate for the Cook Inlet Management Area are set by Emergency Order 2-GF-H-01-14, which established a 20% bycatch allowance of Pacific cod to other directed groundfish and halibut fisheries. Retention of big skate (*Raja binoculata*) was closed on February 6, 2014 for the remainder of the year by Emergency Order 2-GF-H-03-14. Bycatch limits for the directed Pacific cod fishery are set as follows as round weight of bycatch as percentage of the round weight of the target species:

- (1) may retain 15 percent skate species in aggregate except;
 - (A) big skate (*Raja binoculata*) may not be retained after 12:00 noon February 6, 2014;
- (2) may retain 15 percent shark species in aggregate (includes spiny dogfish);
- (3) must retain all pollock;
- (4) must retain all rockfish (and thornyhead) as required by 5 AAC 28.365 and any rockfish in excess of 10 percent in aggregate must be weighed and reported as bycatch overage on an ADF&G fish ticket;
 - (A) no rockfish landing or combination of landings may exceed the 5-day trip limit of 4,000 pounds in the North Gulf District or 1,000 pounds in the Cook Inlet District;
- (5) may retain 20 percent other groundfish in aggregate;
- (6) may not retain lingcod prior to July 1; after July 1 may retain 20 percent lingcod.

For additional information, contact ADF&G in Homer, at 907-235-8191.

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