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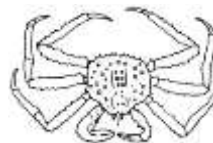
# ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

## DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

### NEWS RELEASE



*Sam Cotten, Commissioner*  
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Phone: (907) 772-5238	(907) 465-4853	Date: March 10, 2015
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#### COMMERCIAL GOLDEN KING CRAB ANNOUNCEMENT EAST CENTRAL AND NORTHERN AREAS CLOSURE DATE

Petersburg . . . The Alaska Department of Fish and Game announced today that the commercial golden king crab fishery in the East Central and Northern Areas will close at 12:00 noon, **Tuesday, March 17, 2015**. These areas are being closed in response to continued declines in indices of relative abundance and recruitment of golden king crab. These declines are 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 seasons when inseason closures were implemented. A detailed justification for the closure of each area is provided below.

#### East Central Area

The established preseason GHL for golden king crab in East Central was 115,000 pounds. Through March 8, 2015, approximately 16,581 pounds have been harvested by 15 vessels. Catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) has averaged 3.9 crab per pot in East Central during the period 2001-2014. The average CPUE this season of 0.9 crab per pot is only 23% of the average for the past 14 seasons and the lowest on record. The amount of golden king crab landed per boat/per day thus far in the current season is approximately 47 pounds per boat/per day which is the lowest on record since logbooks have been used, and well below the 2001-2014 average of 636 pounds per boat/per day.

Port sampling data show the percentage of recruit crab to the harvest in East Central has also declined, from a peak of 54% during the 2008/2009 season to only 22% this season. The average contribution from the recruit portion of the stock for the period 1970-2014 from port sampling data is 36%.

#### Northern Area

The established preseason GHL for golden king crab in the Northern Area was 65,000 pounds. Through March 8, 2015, approximately 3,251 pounds have been harvested by 11 vessels. CPUE has averaged 3.1 crab per pot in Northern during the period 2001-2014. The average CPUE this season of 0.5 crab is only 16% of the average for the past 14 seasons and the lowest on record. The amount of golden king crab

landed per boat/per day thus far in the current season is approximately 15 pounds per boat/per day which is the lowest on record since logbooks have been used, and well below the 2001-2014 average of 248 pounds per boat/per day.

Port sampling data show the percentage of recruit crab to the harvest in Northern has also declined, from a peak of 50% during the 1997/1998 season to only 18% this season. The average contribution from the recruit portion of the stock for the period 1970-2014 from port sampling data is 21%.

The Icy Strait, Mid-Chatham Strait, Lower Chatham Strait, Southern, and North Stephens Passage Areas will remain open until further notice. The department will continue to monitor fishery performance in these remaining areas. Additional management actions may be taken as necessary and the department will provide as much advance notice as possible for future specific area closures. An analysis of harvest ticket/logbook and port sampling data will be conducted in late April for all remaining fishery areas that haven't reached their respective GHLS.

A vessel may leave gear in a stored condition for five days after the closure of a portion of Registration Area A [5 AAC 34.127(2)]. All gear must be removed from the East Central and Northern Areas no later than 12:00 noon, March 22, 2015.

The Emergency Order corresponding with this announcement is EO 1C0515.

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

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