

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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2015/16 Alaska Weathervane Scallop Guideline Harvest Levels

The commercial weathervane scallop fishery in Exclusive Economic Zone (3-200 nmi) of Alaska is jointly managed by the State of Alaska and the federal government under the *Fishery Management Plan for the Scallop Fishery off Alaska* (FMP). The FMP was developed by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under provisions of the *Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act* (MSA). Most aspects of scallop fishery management in federal waters are delegated to the State of Alaska. However, the MSA mandates all FMP fisheries be managed under annual catch limits (ACL) that account for all sources of mortality to ensure overfishing does not occur. The 2015/16 season scallop GHGs established by Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) comply with federal ACL requirements.

Weathervane scallop fisheries in the Yakutat, Kodiak, Alaska Peninsula, Dutch Harbor, and Bristol Bay-Bering Sea Registration areas will open on July 1, 2015. Guideline harvest levels (GHL) for the 2015/16 scallop season, and crab bycatch limits are listed below.

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Registration Area	Guideline Harvest Level (Pounds of Shucked Meat)	Crab Bycatch Limit (Number of Crab)	
		Tanner Crab	King Crab
Yakutat			
Area D	120,000	NA	NA
District 16	25,000	NA	NA
Prince William Sound	<i>Closed for 2015/16 Season</i>		
Cook Inlet	<i>To be Announced</i>		
Kodiak			
Northeast District	55,000	93,929	25
Shelikof District	75,000	19,107	50
Southwest District ¹	25,000	12,000	50
Semidi District ¹	<i>Exploratory Area (by Commissioner Permit)</i>		
Alaska Peninsula			
160° to 161° W. long.	7,500	<i>Monitored Inseason</i>	
Unimak Bight ¹	15,000	12,000	50
Dutch Harbor			
Bering Sea Waters	5,000	5,000	10
Pacific Ocean Waters	5,000	5,000	10
Bering Sea	7,500	260,000	500

¹ Commissioner permit required to harvest scallops in the Southwest/Semidi districts and Unimak Bight.

NA = Not Applicable.

Yakutat

The Yakutat District GHL will remain 120,000 pounds of shucked meat. The decrease in catch per unit effort (CPUE) in the Yakutat District during the 2014/15 season is concerning, as are the changes in shell height and age ranges. However, the trend of CPUE over the last four years is up, and the 2013/14 season was the first season over the long term average in six seasons. In addition there is no evidence of a lack of smaller scallops available to recruit into the fishery in the coming year. However, if CPUE and to a lesser extent shell height and age continue to decrease the GHL may be adjusted prior to the start of the 2016/17 season. A minimum fishery performance standard of 34.9 pounds of shucked meats per dredge hour is in place in the Yakutat District. If the cumulative CPUE drops below this level once at least 50% of the GHL has been taken then the fishery will be closed prior to reaching the GHL.

The District 16 GHL will remain 25,000 pounds of shucked meat. The sharp drop in all measures of CPUE in the District 16 fishery in the 2014/15 season is quite concerning. However, this drop occurred after four seasons of increasing CPUE. District 16 also has a history of sharp declines and increases in CPUE, and highly variable harvest levels can make inter-annual variation more difficult to compare. This combined with fleet reports of poor meat quality curtailing further exploration and harvest, and no appreciable concern about future recruitment combine to make maintaining the current GHL the most reasonable course of action.

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However, if the CPUE continues to drop in the 2015/16 season GHL decreases will be implemented for the 2016/17 season. If CPUE during the 2015/16 fishing season does not show substantial improvement District 16 will be closed prior to reaching the GHL.

Kodiak

During the 2015/16 weathervane scallop season in the Kodiak, Alaska Peninsula, and Dutch Harbor areas, ADF&G will assess inseason fishery performance as measured by CPUE and monitor crab bycatch. Poor fishery performance or excessive crab bycatch may result in area, or partial area closures prior to achieving the full GHL.

The Northeast District-wide scallop GHL will remain at 55,000 pounds of shucked meat.

Based on recent declining trends in fishery CPUE, the 2015/16 Shelikof District scallop GHL will be 75,000 pounds of shucked scallop meat. Harvest will be capped at 70,000 pounds of shucked meat east of 154° W. long. Harvest in the remainder of the district west of 154° W. long. will be capped at 5,000 pounds of shucked meat.

The Southwest District will open to exploratory scallop fishing under the provisions of a commissioner permit (5 AAC 38.420 (b)(1)) with a harvest limit of 25,000 pounds of shucked meat. Participating vessels are encouraged to distribute effort to delineate scallop beds.

Alaska Peninsula

Two areas in the Alaska Peninsula Area will open for the 2015/16 season. Pacific Ocean waters from 3-200 nautical miles off shore between 160° W. long. and 161° W. long. will open with a GHL of 7,500 pounds of shucked scallop meat. Pacific Ocean waters from 3-200 nautical miles off shore of Unimak Bight (west of a line extending south from Cape Pankof at 163° 03.70' W. long. and east of line extending south from Scotch Cap Light at 164° 44.72' W. long.) will open to exploratory scallop fishing under the authority of a commissioner permit. Harvest in Unimak Bight will be capped at 15,000 pounds of shucked meat.

Dutch Harbor

The Dutch Harbor Area will open with a GHL of 5,000 pounds of shucked meat available in Pacific Ocean waters and a GHL of 5,000 pounds of shucked meat in Bering Sea waters.

Bristol Bay-Bering Sea

The Bristol Bay-Bering Sea Registration Area will open with a GHL of 7,500 pounds of shucked scallop meat.

For additional information contact ADF&G in Kodiak (907-486-1840), Douglas (907-465-6393), Dutch Harbor (907-581-1239), Homer (907-235-8191) or Cordova (907-424-3212).