

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



*Sam Cotten, Commissioner
Jeff Regnart, Director*



Contact:
Jim Menard, Area Manager
Joyce Soong, Crab Catch Monitor
Phone: (907) 443-5167
Fax: (907) 443-5893

Nome ADF&G
PO Box 1148
Nome AK 99762
Date Issued: 6/25/2015
Time: 9:30 AM

NORTON SOUND KING CRAB COMMERCIAL FISHERY TO OPEN

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game will open the Norton Sound king crab summer commercial open access and CDQ fisheries on Monday June 29, at 12:00 noon.

The department estimates the red king crab legal male biomass (LMB) midpoint at 4.38 million pounds in Norton Sound, but estimate values range between 2.98 and 5.80 million pounds. By Alaska Board of Fisheries regulation an exploitation rate not to exceed 15% is allowed when the legal male biomass exceeds 3.0 million pounds. However, the Federal Management Plan requires that all sources of fishing-related mortality remain sufficiently below allowable biological catch (ABC) levels set by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. The Council has set the ABC at 577,000 pounds for 2015. The 2015 winter fishery had a record catch of 98,750 pounds and the subsistence catch for 2015 is projected to be within the range of 20,000 to 30,000 pounds. Consequently, due to the high level of uncertainty associated with 2015 RKC abundance estimates plus the winter and subsistence harvests and expected crab mortality the department will apply a precautionary harvest rate of 9% to the midpoint LMB estimate of 4.38 million pounds for the 2015 summer season. Therefore, the summer commercial fishery king crab quota will be 394,600 pounds. Of this amount, 7.5 percent (29,595 pounds) is allocated for the CDQ fishery, with 365,005 pounds set for the open access portion of the fishery.

As in the past two years, onboard observers will be available to collect valuable fishery data at sea. The department greatly appreciates those fishermen willing to take an onboard observer. Starting July 1, if you are interested in taking an onboard observer, who can also help out as a crewmember, please contact our research department at 443-8184 or 443-8185.

Crabbers (including catcher-sellers) are strongly advised to make sure they have a buyer before setting their pots, so as to avoid deadloss and wastage. All deadloss and crabs kept for personal use must be recorded on fish tickets in addition to sold crab.

King crab permit holders will need to register for the fishery in which they are participating and receive pot tags. Crab pot tags must be on the main buoy or trailer buoy if there is more than one buoy per pot. All commercial crab pots must have four escapement rings, with a minimum inside

diameter of four and one-half inches, within one mesh measurement from the bottom of the pot. An exception to the escapement ring requirement is if at least one half of one vertical surface of a square pot, or sloping side-wall surface of a conical or pyramid pot, is composed of not less than six and one-half inch stretched mesh. The escapement mechanism regulation requires crab pots to have an opening 18 inches or greater in length. This opening must be within six inches of the bottom of the pot and must be parallel with it. The opening must be laced, sewn, or secured together by a single length of untreated, 100 percent cotton twine, no larger than 30 thread.

Crabbers are reminded to have their commercial permit and picture ID on hand when fishing. Commercial crab boats must have a Fish & Game vessel license and 2015 Fish & Game triangle on the boat. All helpers on commercial fishing boats are required to have a crewmember license, or a 2015 State of Alaska commercial fishing permit can substitute for a crewmember license.

For any questions regarding fishing please call Fish & Game in Nome at 443-5167 or 1-800-560-2271.

Good Luck and Good Crabbing.