

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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FISHERY ANNOUNCEMENT

COOK INLET AREA PACIFIC COD FISHERY

STATE-WATERS SEASON CLOSURES TO POT GEAR AND

PARALLEL SEASON OPENS TO POT AND LONGLINE GEAR SEPTEMBER 1

EMERGENCY ORDER 2-GF-H-08-15

The Cook Inlet Area (Area H) state-waters Pacific cod season will close to vessels fishing with pot gear effective 12:00 noon September 1, 2015. The parallel Pacific cod season will open to pot and longline gear at 12:00 noon September 1, 2015. The parallel Pacific cod season is established by emergency order (EO) to coincide with the season dates and gear sectors set by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for the Pacific cod "B" season in the adjacent federal Central Gulf of Alaska Regulatory Area (CGOA). The parallel season will close by EO for each gear type concurrent with federal "B" season closures when gear sector allocations are achieved.

There is a 24-hour delivery time requirement following closure of a groundfish fishery. Vessels participating in the state-waters Pacific cod season for pot gear must deliver all groundfish prior to participating in the parallel Pacific cod season.

Fishermen are reminded: 1) to obtain a Cook Inlet non-exclusive parallel season Pacific cod area registration from ADF&G prior to fishing; 2) of the requirement for fishermen using pot or longline gear in parallel Pacific cod fisheries to have a functioning, activated, NMFS-approved vessel monitoring system (VMS) as described at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ole/ak_faqs.html and; 3) to adhere to the seabird avoidance measures (SAM) required in all longline fisheries for groundfish in state waters except the Cook Inlet District of the Cook Inlet Area under regulation 5 AAC 28.055 and described at <http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/protectedresources/seabirds/guide.htm>.

Regulation 5AAC 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 parallel Pacific cod fishery were set as follows by Emergency Orders 2-GF-H-01-15 and 2-GF-H-03-15 as round weight of bycatch as a percentage of the round weight of the target species:

- (1) may retain 15 percent skate species in aggregate, except that,
 - (A) big skate (*Raja binoculata*) may not be retained after noon February 11, 2015;
- (2) may retain 15 percent shark species in aggregate (includes spiny dogfish);
- (3) may retain 20 percent lingcod after July 1;
- (4) must retain all pollock;
- (5) must retain all rockfish (and thornyhead) and any rockfish in excess of 10 percent in aggregate must be weighed and reported as bycatch overage on an ADF&G fish ticket [5 AAC 28.365(f)], except that;
 - (A) in a directed pelagic shelf rockfish fishery, all rockfish must be retained and all nonpelagic rockfish in excess of 20 percent in aggregate must be weighed and reported as bycatch overage on an ADF&G fish ticket [5 AAC 28.365(g)];
- (6) may retain 20 percent other groundfish in aggregate.

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