
ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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SOUTHEAST ALASKA PERSONAL USE RED AND BLUE KING CRAB FISHERY ANNOUNCEMENT

Petersburg...The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) announced the following updated information regarding the 2015/2016 Southeast Alaska personal use red king crab fishery outside of Section 11-A:

- **Seymour Canal, Gambier Bay, Pybus Bay, Peril Strait, Excursion Inlet, and Lynn Sisters will remain closed to personal use fishing.**
- **Port Frederick and Holkham Bay, now managed as non-surveyed areas will reopen to personal use fishing effective 12:01 a.m., October 1, 2015.**
- **All areas open to personal use red and blue king crab fishing outside of Sections 12-B, 15-B, and 15-C will continue to have a reduced daily bag and possession limit of one red or blue king crab as prescribed in regulation when the regionwide harvestable biomass of mature red and blue king crab is below 200,000 pounds [5 AAC 77.664(a)(1)].**
- **All areas open to personal use red and blue king crab fishing in Sections 12-B, 15-B, and 15-C will continue to have a daily bag and possession limit of one red or blue king crab as prescribed in regulation when the regionwide harvestable biomass of mature red and blue king crab is below 200,000 pounds [5 AAC 77.664(b)].**

2015 Survey and Fishery Information

All red and blue king crab fisheries are closed in Southeast Alaska by regulation from April 1 through June 30 annually. From July 1 through March 31, open fishing periods for the personal use fisheries may be established by emergency order. The department conducts annual red king crab surveys in seven areas throughout Southeast Alaska. Those areas include: the Juneau Area in Section 11-A, Lynn Sisters, Excursion Inlet, Pybus Bay, Gambier Bay, Seymour Canal, and Peril Strait. Port Frederick and Holkham Bay were dropped as survey areas in 2015 due to budget constraints. The surveys generally begin in late June and conclude in early August and data from the most recent surveys are used to manage commercial and personal use red king crab fisheries. Because the department has detailed information for each of the surveyed areas it is possible to manage those areas as distinct fishery units. The remaining waters of Southeast Alaska outside the areas surveyed are referred to as "non-surveyed" areas. In general, management decisions in the non-surveyed areas are made based on trends observed in the surveyed areas.

The 2015 red king crab stock assessment survey was still underway on July 1, 2015, therefore decisions regarding the July 1, 2015 opening of the personal use red and blue king crab fisheries outside of Section 11-A were based on 2014 red king crab stock assessment survey results. Currently all surveyed areas are closed to personal use fishing. All areas open to personal use red and blue king crab fishing, outside of Sections 11-A, 12-B, 15-B, and 15-C currently have a daily bag and possession limit of one red or blue king crab. All areas open to personal use red and blue king crab fishing in Sections 12-B, 15-B, and 15-C also currently have a daily bag and possession limit of one red or blue king crab. Now that the 2015 survey and accompanying data analysis are complete, new information is available to manage the fishery.

Based on 2015 survey results:

- Regionwide harvestable biomass of mature red and blue king crab is well below 200,000 pounds.
- Regionally, the biomass estimate did increase from last season, but is still at historically low levels.
- Of the seven survey areas, five had increases in legal biomass and four had increases in mature biomass, while the others decreased or remained constant since last season.
- Stock health in Seymour Canal, Peril Strait, and Excursion Inlet remains poor in 2015 and these three areas will be kept closed. All three areas exhibit CPUE of all size/sex classes of crab significantly below their long-term averages and historically low biomass estimates.
- Stock health in Pybus Bay and Gambier Bay has improved. Both of these areas have seen short-term increases in pre-recruit and recruit class CPUE and modest increases in mature and legal biomass estimates. However, all male crab CPUEs are below long-term averages in both areas and unadjusted legal biomass estimates from the CSA are below historical averages. Since significant improvements to legal biomass remain to be seen, these two areas will remain closed to fishing.
- Stock health in Lynn Sisters has improved slightly, but there are indications that stock health remains a concern in Lynn Sisters. The legal male abundance from the CSA is at a twenty-three year low. All sex/size classes are below their long-term averages. Since significant improvements to legal biomass are still perhaps years away, this area will remain closed to fishing.
- Port Frederick and Holkham Bay were dropped as survey areas in 2015 for budgetary reasons. For the purposes of the personal use fishery, both areas will be managed as non-surveyed areas.
- Non-surveyed areas can likely continue to withstand a low level of harvest in the near term, so will be kept open with a minimal bag and possession limit.

Closed Area Descriptions

- Seymour Canal: Section 11-D, Seymour Canal (waters of Seymour Canal north of 57°37.00' N. latitude).
- Peril Strait: Section 13-C, Peril Strait (all waters of Peril Strait including Hoonah Sound, Ushk Bay, Rodman Bay, Saook Bay, Hanus Bay, Sitkoh Bay, and contiguous waters west of a line from Point Hayes to Point Thatcher, and north of a line from Pogibshi Point due west to the Chichagof shoreline).
- Lynn Sisters: Waters north of a line from a point at 58°27.00' N. latitude, 135°06.50' W. longitude, due east to a point at 58°27.00' N. latitude, 135°03.00' W. longitude, and west of a line from a point at 58°27.00' N. latitude, 135°03.00' W. longitude to Point Whidbey including St. James Bay.
- Excursion Inlet: Waters east of a line from a point at 58°22.57' N. latitude, 135°30.08' W. longitude, south to a point at 58°19.28' N. latitude, 135°30.06' W. longitude, and north of a line from a point at 58°19.28' N. latitude, 135°30.06' W. longitude to a point at 58°16.13' N. latitude, 135°20.61' W. longitude including Excursion Inlet.

- Gambier Bay: Gambier Bay waters north and west of a line between Point Gambier and 57°24.90' N. latitude, 133°53.00' W. longitude.
- Pybus Bay: Pybus Bay waters north and west of a line from Point Pybus to the easternmost tip of San Juan Island and from there to a point at 57°14.60' N. latitude, 134°07.30' W. longitude.

Refer to Figure 1 for a map showing open and closed waters for personal use red and blue king crab fishing.

Juneau Area: Section 11-A

The Section 11-A (Juneau area) personal use red and blue king crab fishery will not open for the 2015/2016 season. Details of the red and blue king crab personal use fishery closure within Section 11-A were previously released in a separate news release dated July 8, 2015. For more information on the status of the red and blue king crab personal use fishery within Section 11-A, please contact Dave Harris at 465-4250.

Recent Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) action on the Southeast Alaska personal use red and blue king crab fishery:

The BOF met in January 2015 to discuss proposals for Southeast and Yakutat shellfish fisheries. The BOF adopted a department proposal to increase the legal size limit for blue king crab in subsistence, personal use, and commercial fisheries in Registration Areas A and D. Fishermen are reminded that male **red and blue** king crab must be seven inches or greater in width of shell to be retained. Male king crab less than the minimum legal size and female king crab must be immediately returned to the water unharmed.

Other information

No more than 4 pots or 10 ring nets per vessel may be used in the personal use king crab fishery [5 AAC 77.664(f)]. A pot used to take king crab must have at least two escape rings on opposing vertical or sloping sides of the pot that are not less than six and one-quarter inches inside diameter. Each fisherman shall plainly and legibly inscribe the fisherman's first initial, last name, and home address on a keg or buoy attached to a pot. A keg or buoy attached to the pot must also be inscribed with the vessel name or the division of motor vehicles registration number (AK number) of the vessel used to operate the pot [5 ACC 77.010 and 5 AAC 77.664(f)].

Please refer to 5 AAC 77.664 in the 2015-2016 Subsistence and Personal Use Statewide Fisheries Regulations booklet for additional regulations regarding personal use red and blue king crab fishing, or view the regulations online at:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishregulations.commercial>

The Emergency Order corresponding with this announcement is EO 1C1615.

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

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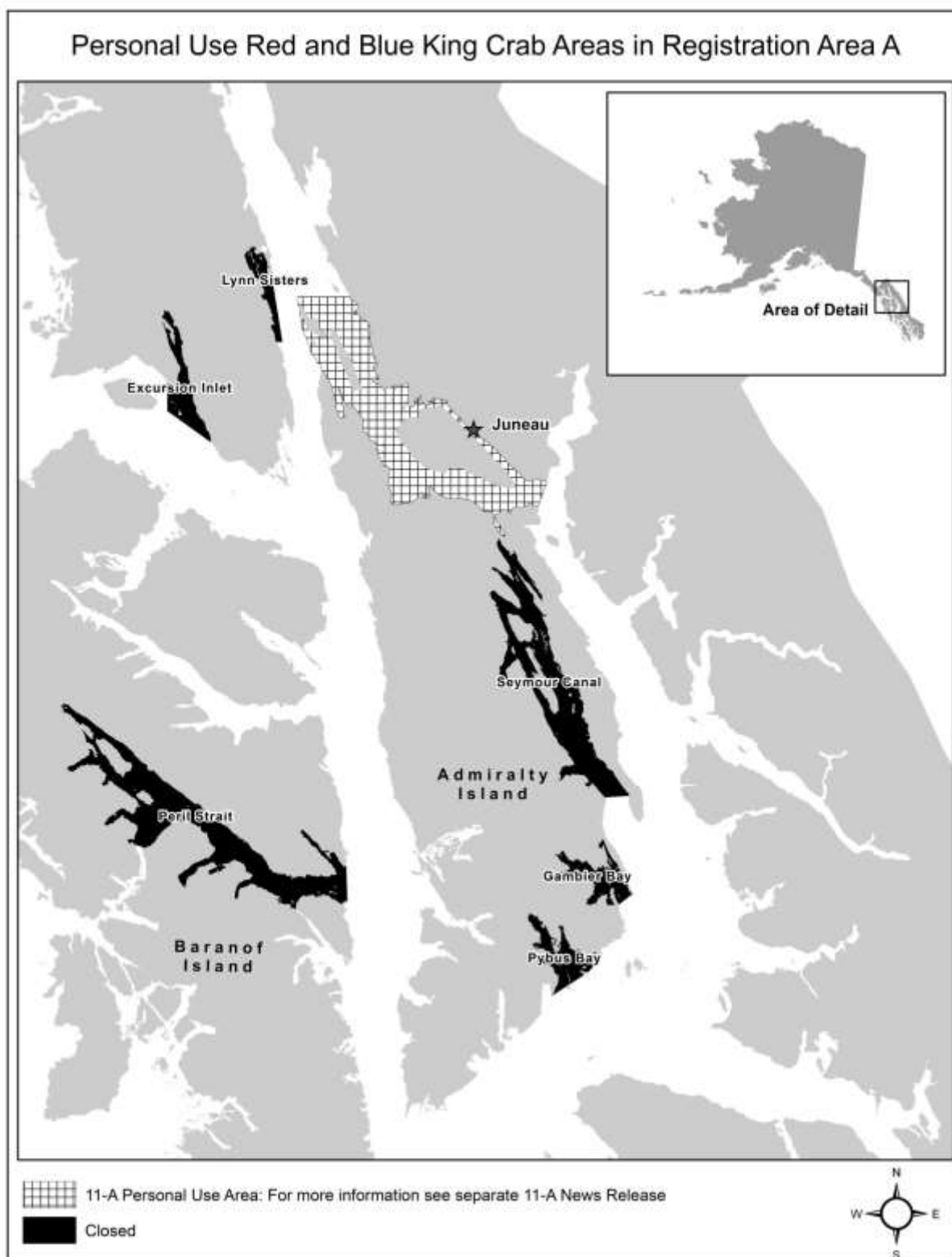


Figure 1. This map shows closed areas for the 2015/2016 red and blue king crab personal use fishery and is for reference purposes only. Please refer to text in this news release for legal descriptions of management area boundaries and other details.