

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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2016 Tanner Crab Seasons in the Kodiak, Chignik, and South Peninsula Districts

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has completed analysis of 2015 Tanner crab survey results from the Kodiak, Chignik, and South Peninsula districts. Commercial Tanner crab fisheries in these districts may occur when the estimated abundance of mature male Tanner crab meets or exceeds stock size thresholds established in regulation (5 AAC 35.507 *Kodiak, Chignik, and South Peninsula Districts C. bairdi* Tanner crab harvest strategies).

Kodiak District: Mature male abundance thresholds are established for six sections in the Kodiak District (5 AAC 35.507(b)(1)(A–F)). A minimum of two sections must meet or exceed established stock size thresholds before a commercial fishery may open. In sections that meet or exceed the molting mature stock size thresholds, legal-size male abundance must be sufficient to provide for a guideline harvest level (GHL) of at least 100,000 pounds per section and at least 400,000 pounds total for all open sections in the district. Based on 2015 Kodiak District trawl survey results only the Southeast Section exceeded the mature male stock size abundance threshold. Abundance estimates in the other five sections were below the mature male abundance thresholds. Therefore, the Kodiak District will remain closed for the 2016 commercial Tanner crab season.

Chignik District: A single molting mature male abundance threshold is established for the Chignik District (5 AAC 35.507(b)(2)). Legal male abundance must be sufficient to provide for a minimum GHL of 200,000 pounds of Tanner crab before a commercial Tanner crab fishery may occur in the district. The 2015 survey abundance estimate of mature male Tanner crab was above the regulatory stock size threshold, but below the 200,000 pound GHL requirement. Therefore, the Chignik District will remain closed for the 2016 commercial Tanner crab season.

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South Peninsula District: Mature male abundance thresholds are established for two sections (Eastern and Western) in the South Peninsula District (5 AAC 35.507(b)(3)(A and B)). In a section that meets or exceeds the molting mature stock size threshold, legal-size male abundance must also be sufficient to provide for a minimum GHF of 200,000 pounds of Tanner crab before either section may open to commercial fishing.

The estimated 2015 mature male abundance in the Eastern Section was below the stock size threshold necessary for a 2016 commercial Tanner crab fishery. Estimated Tanner crab abundance in the Western Section met the minimum mature male stock size and legal male GHF threshold requirements for a fishery; however, the season will remain closed during 2016 based on several factors: 1) satisfying the minimum regulatory GHF requirement would necessitate an exploitation rate on legal males near the regulatory maximum harvest level which would be inconsistent with past management practices; 2) approximately 83% of all legal-sized crab observed during the 2015 Western Section survey were found in a localized area in Morzhovoi Bay; 3) legal-size male crab abundance outside of Morzhovoi Bay was low; and 4) abundance of juvenile male and female crab in Morzhovoi Bay was high relative to legal male crab making the non-targeted portions of the stock susceptible to high bycatch mortality if a fishery were to occur. To conserve the legal-sized stock as well as noncommercial Tanner crab, the Western Section will remain closed for the 2016 season.

For additional information on Tanner crab harvest strategies or survey results, contact the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Kodiak at (907) 486-1840.

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