

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



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**FISHERY ANNOUNCEMENT
PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND AREA E
PARALLEL PACIFIC COD SEASON CLOSING TO LONGLINE GEAR
STATE-WATERS PACIFIC COD SEASON OPENING TO LONGLINE GEAR
EMERGENCY ORDER # 2-GF-E-11-15**

The Prince William Sound (PWS) Area E parallel Pacific cod season will **close to vessels using longline gear effective 12:00 noon December 15, 2015 and the state-waters Pacific cod season will immediately open to vessels using longline gear**. This closure coincides with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) closure of directed fishing for groundfish by catcher vessels (C/Vs) using hook-and-line gear in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). NMFS is taking this action because the 2015 Pacific halibut bycatch allowance specified for the other hook-and-line fishery by C/Vs in the GOA has been reached.

Fishermen participating in the parallel Pacific cod season with longline gear must deliver their harvest within 24 hours of the closure and prior to participating in the state-waters season. The PWS parallel Pacific cod season remains open to vessels fishing with pot and jig gear.

The PWS state-waters Pacific cod season has a guideline harvest level (GHL) of 1,558,668 pounds and harvest to date remains confidential due to limited participation. The state-waters season will close by emergency order (EO) or at midnight on December 31, whichever occurs first. **Big skate closed to retention on February 11, 2015 as bycatch in PWS waters by EO (#2-GF-E-05-15).** Bycatch limits remain the same as the parallel season and are listed below.

Fishermen must obtain a **PWS state-waters Pacific cod area registration** before participating in the state-waters Pacific cod season. Vessel registrations may be obtained from department offices in Homer and Cordova or from Department of Public Safety in Seward. A **new fishery requirement in 2015**, under authority of 5 AAC 28.020(c), requires fishermen to **check in with the department prior to each fishing trip** in the PWS Management Area by telephone at (907) 424-7225 and reporting the following three items: 1) vessel name, 2) estimated date and time of departure for trip, and 3) estimated length of trip. This requirement is detailed on the area registration form.

Fishing area: During a state-waters season, Pacific cod may be taken in waters of the PWS Area (5 AAC 28.205) except for those waters of the Outside District east of 146° 15.12' W. long. (the latitude of Hook Point) (5 AAC 28.267 (e) (2)).

Steller Sea Lion rookery closures: Directed fishing for all groundfish species is closed in waters within 3 nautical miles of two Steller sea lion rookeries within PWS (Figure 1). For specific regulatory language contact NMFS in Kodiak at (907) 481-1780 or <http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/regs/679b22.pdf>.

Bycatch limits: Bycatch limits by species or species aggregate for the Prince William Sound Management Area state-waters Pacific cod fishery are set as follows by Emergency Orders 2-GF-E-01-15 and 2-GF-E-05-15, 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 binocularata*) may not be retained after noon February 11, 2015;
- (2) may retain 15 percent shark species in aggregate (includes spiny dogfish);
- (3) must retain all pollock;
- (4) must retain all rockfish (and thornyhead) as required by 5 AAC 28.265 and any rockfish in excess of 5 percent in aggregate must be weighed and reported as bycatch overage on an ADF&G fish ticket;
 - (A) no rockfish landing or combination of landings may exceed the 5-day trip limit of 3,000 pounds
- (5) may retain 20 percent other groundfish in aggregate;
- (6) may not retain lingcod prior to July 1; after July 1 may retain 20 percent lingcod.

For additional information, contact ADF&G in Cordova, at 907-424-3212.

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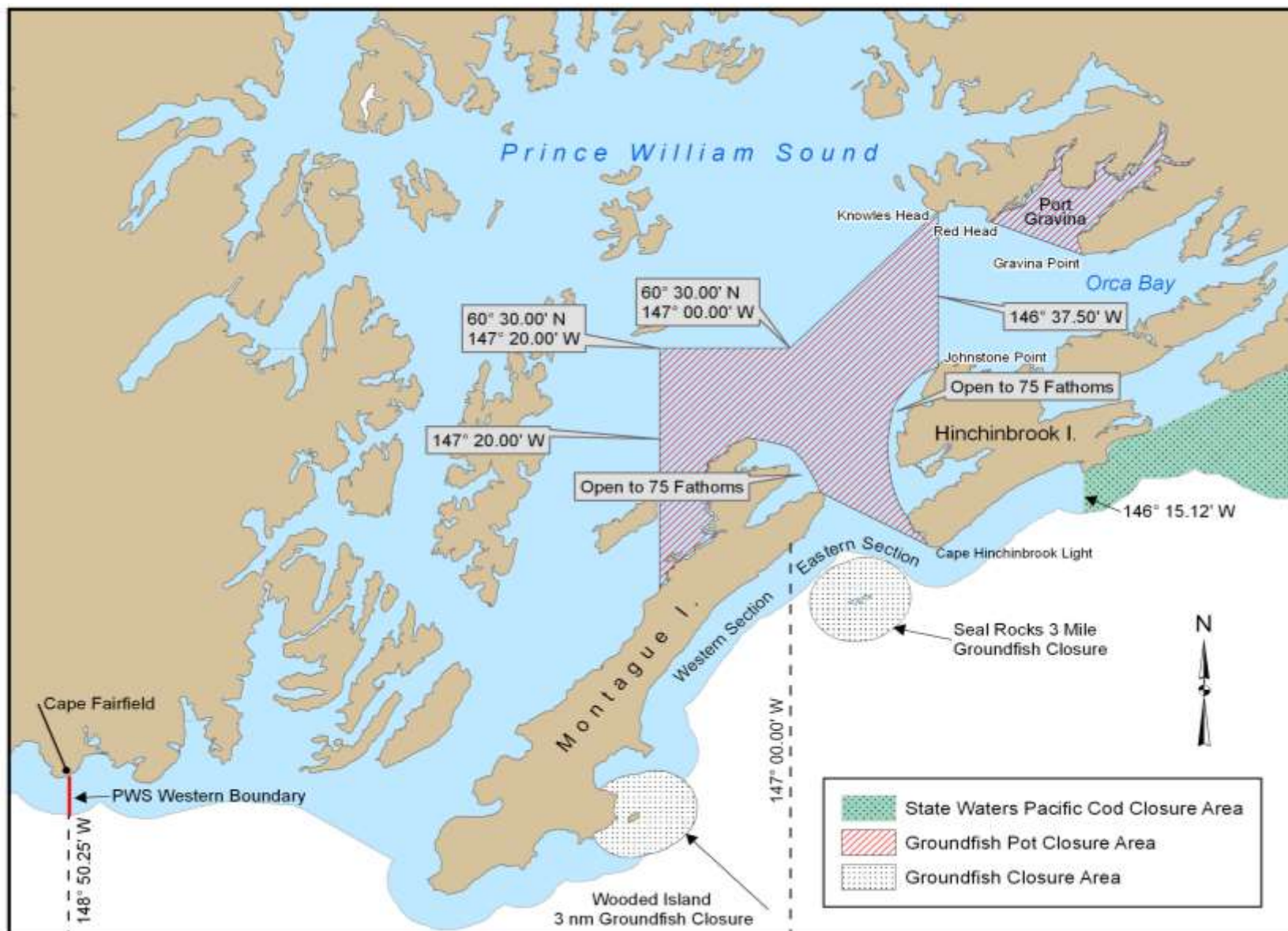


Figure 1.-Prince William Sound closures to groundfish pot gear, groundfish fishing, and to the state-waters Pacific cod season.

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