

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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FISHERY ANNOUNCEMENT

2015 COOK INLET PARALLEL PACIFIC COD SEASON CLOSES DECEMBER 31

2016 COOK INLET PARALLEL PACIFIC COD SEASON OPENS JANUARY 1

EMERGENCY ORDERS # 2-GF-H-01-16 AND # 2-GF-H-02-16

The 2015 Cook Inlet Area (CI) parallel Pacific cod season closes to vessels using pot and jig gear at midnight December 31, 2015. The parallel Pacific cod season immediately opens to all legal gear types on January 1, 2016. A parallel Pacific cod season is established via emergency order (EO) to coincide with the season dates and gear types set by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for the initial Pacific cod season in the adjacent federal Central Gulf of Alaska Regulatory Area (CGOA). Fishermen are reminded that all fish must be landed within 24 hours following the closure of the 2015 season and prior to participating in the 2016 season. The parallel Pacific cod season will close by EO for each gear type to coincide with respective gear sector closures in the federal CGOA.

In 2016, Cook Inlet Management Area skate bycatch limits will follow the federal waters reduction in maximum retainable amounts (MRA) for the Gulf of Alaska (GOA). The bycatch limit for combined skate species has been reduced to 5% by round weight of directed finfish species on board a vessel.

Fishermen are reminded:

- 1) to obtain a Cook Inlet Management Area **Parallel Season Pacific Cod 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://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/vms/> and,
- 3) to adhere to the federal **seabird avoidance measures (SAM)** which are required in all longline fisheries for groundfish in the North Gulf District of the Cook Inlet Area. Additional information describing SAM can be found at: <http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/protectedresources/seabirds/guide.htm>.

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NMFS continues to prosecute the North Pacific Groundfish and Halibut Observer Program. Vessel operators participating in directed halibut and/or parallel groundfish fisheries are encouraged to become familiar with this federal program. Information on the observer program can be found at: <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/observers/> or by contacting the NMFS Sustainable Fisheries Division in Juneau at (907) 586-7228.

Regulation 5AAC 28.350 (b) closes certain waters on the west side of Cook Inlet and within Kachemak Bay to groundfish pot gear (Figure 1). Two rookeries within the Cook Inlet Area, Outer (Pye) Island and Sugarloaf Island remain closed to fishing with pot or longline gear during a parallel Pacific cod season to protect Steller sea lions. Waters within three nautical miles (nmi) of these locations are closed to vessel transit and waters within 10 nmi of these locations are closed to fishing with fixed gear via emergency order. Contact NMFS in Kodiak at ph: (907) 481-1780 or 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 are set by Emergency Order 2-GF-H-01-16, which established a 20% bycatch allowance of Pacific cod to other directed groundfish and halibut fisheries. Bycatch limits for the parallel Pacific cod fishery are set as follows as round weight of bycatch as a percentage of the round weight of the target species:

- (1) may retain 5 percent skate species in aggregate;
- (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 28.365 and any rockfish in excess of 10 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 4,000 pounds in the North Gulf District or 1,000 pounds in the Cook Inlet District;
- (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.

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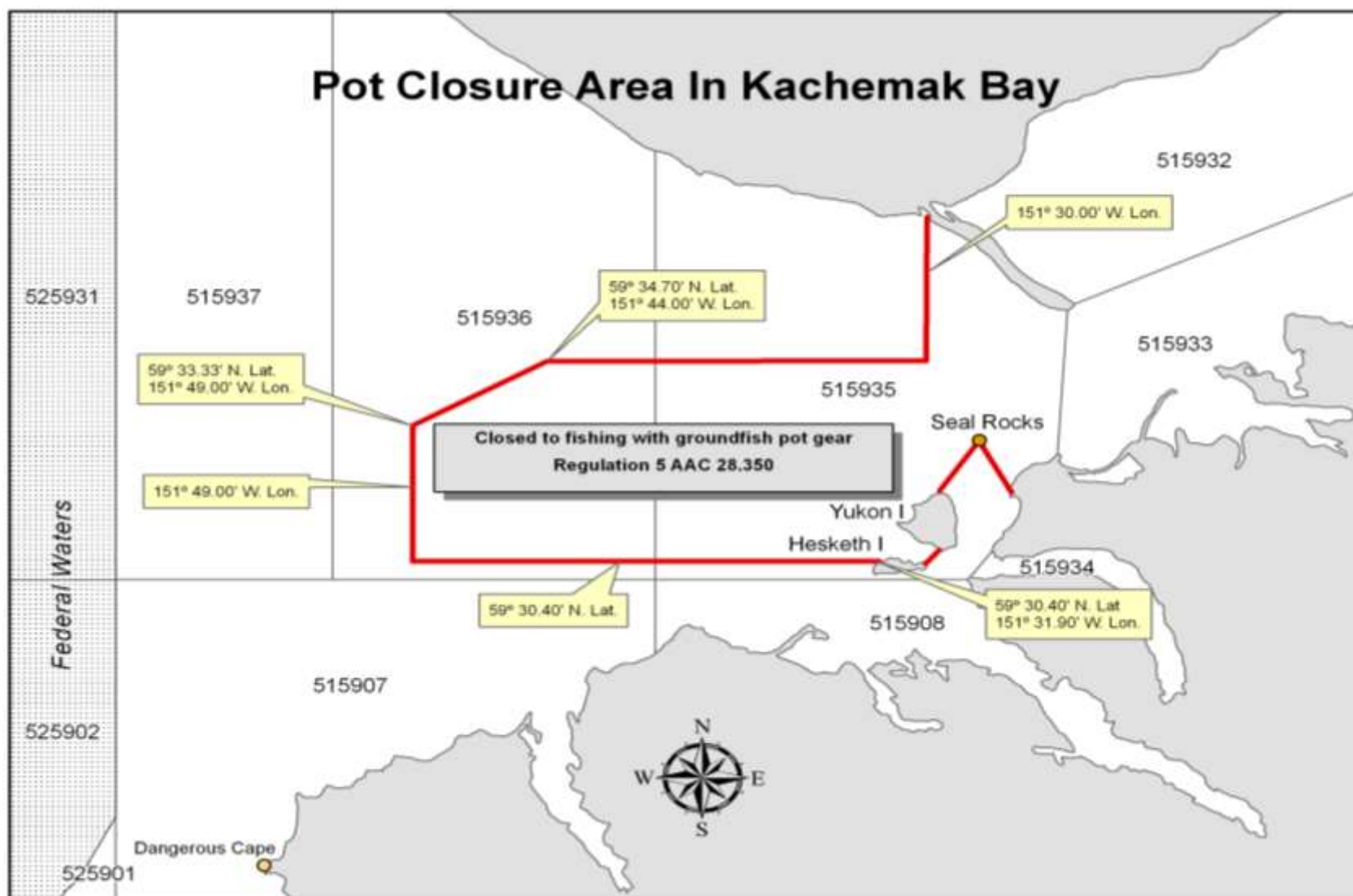


Figure 1. Kachemak Bay groundfish pot closure area with coordinates.

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