

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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FISHERY ANNOUNCEMENT

PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND AREA-E

2014 ALL PACIFIC COD SEASONS CLOSE DECEMBER 31

2015 PARALLEL PACIFIC COD SEASONS OPEN JANUARY 1

EMERGENCY ORDERS # 2-GF-E-01-16 AND # 2-GF-E-03-16

The Prince William Sound (PWS) Area E parallel and state-waters Pacific cod seasons close to all gear types at midnight December 31, 2015. The parallel Pacific cod season immediately opens to all legal gear types January 1, 2016. Fishermen are reminded that all fish must be landed within 24 hours following the closure of the 2015 seasons and prior to participating in the 2016 season. The PWS parallel Pacific cod season closure for jig or pot gear will coincide with their respective closures in the adjacent federal Central Gulf of Alaska Regulatory Area (CGOA). The PWS parallel season closure for longline gear will coincide with the federal closure of the less than 50 foot hook-and-line (<50' HAL) gear group in the CGOA.

Fishermen are reminded:

- 1) to obtain a PWS 2016 **parallel Pacific cod season registration** from ADF&G prior to fishing;
- 2) that participants using pot or longline gear in parallel Pacific cod fisheries must have a functioning, 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 Outside District of PWS. Additional information on SAM can be found at: <http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/protectedresources/seabirds/guide.htm>.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) continues to prosecute and improve the North Pacific Groundfish and Halibut Observer Program. Vessel operators participating in directed halibut and/or state-water parallel groundfish fisheries are encouraged to become familiar with this federal program. Information and frequently asked questions on the restructured observer

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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.

Directed fishing for all groundfish species is closed in waters within 3 nautical miles of two Steller sea lion rookeries within PWS and certain waters are closed to fishing with groundfish pot gear (Figure 1, 5 AAC 28.250(a)). For specific regulatory language regarding Steller sea lion protection areas contact NMFS in Kodiak at (907) 481-1780 or <http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/regs/679b22.pdf>.

Bycatch limits by species or species aggregate for the Prince William Sound Management Area parallel Pacific cod fishery are set as follows by Emergency Order 2-GF-E-01-16 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 28.265 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.

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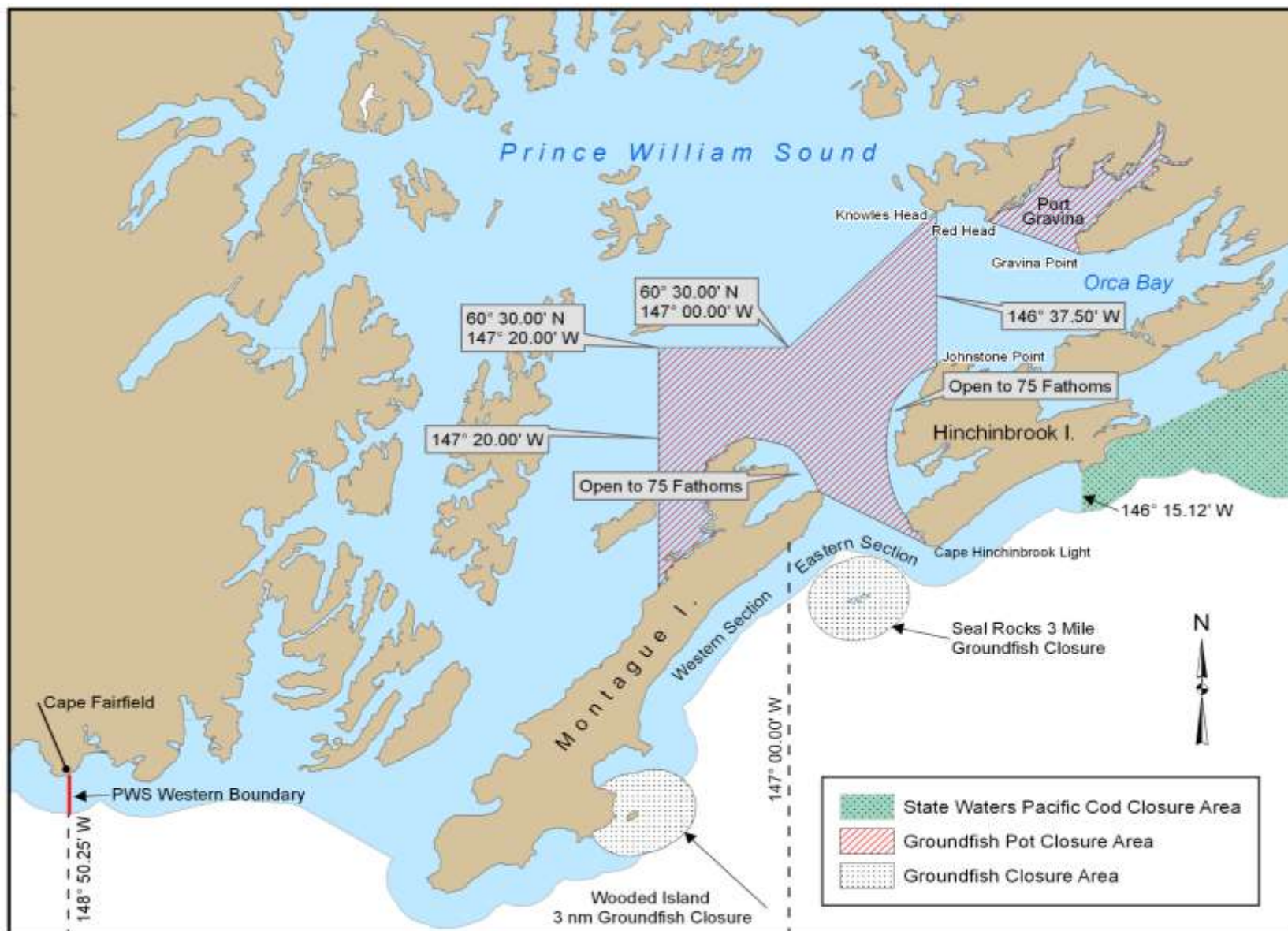


Figure 1. Prince William Sound closures to groundfish pot gear, groundfish fishing, and to the state waters Pacific cod season.

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