

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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2016/17 Alaska Weathervane Scallop Guideline Harvest Levels

The commercial weathervane scallop fishery in Exclusive Economic Zone (3–200 nmi) of Alaska is jointly managed by the State of Alaska and the federal government under the *Fishery Management Plan for the Scallop Fishery off Alaska* (FMP). The FMP was developed by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council under provisions of the *Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act* (MSA). Most aspects of scallop fishery management in federal waters are delegated to the State of Alaska. However, the MSA mandates all FMP fisheries be managed under annual catch limits (ACL) that account for all sources of mortality to ensure overfishing does not occur. The 2016/17 season scallop GHGs established by Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) comply with federal ACL requirements.

Weathervane scallop fisheries in the Yakutat, Prince William Sounds, Kodiak, Alaska Peninsula, Dutch Harbor, and Bristol Bay-Bering Sea registration areas will open on July 1, 2016. Guideline harvest levels (GHL) for the 2016/17 scallop season, and crab bycatch limits are listed below.

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Registration Area	Guideline Harvest Level (Pounds of Shucked Meat)	Crab Bycatch Limit (Number of Crab)	
		Tanner Crab	King Crab
Yakutat			
Area D	120,000	NA	NA
District 16	5,000	NA	NA
Prince William Sound	6,300	TBA	TBA
Cook Inlet	10,000	3,933	30
Kodiak			
Northeast District	55,000	20,816	25
Shelikof District	25,000	43,477	50
Southwest District ¹	25,000	12,000	50
Semidi District ¹	<i>Exploratory Area (by commissioner permit)</i>		
Alaska Peninsula			
long 160° to 161° W	7,500	<i>Monitored Inseason</i>	
Unimak Bight ¹	15,000	12,000	50
Dutch Harbor			
Bering Sea Waters	5,000	5,000	10
Pacific Ocean Waters	5,000	5,000	10
Bering Sea	7,500	260,000	500
		<i>C. opilio & hybrids</i>	
		300,000	

¹ Commissioner permit required to harvest scallops in the Southwest/Semidi districts and Unimak Bight.
NA = Not Applicable.

Yakutat

The Yakutat District GHL will remain 120,000 pounds of shucked meat. The 5-year running catch per unit effort (CPUE) has steadily increased since the GHL decrease implemented prior to the 2012/13 season, however it is still the fourth lowest since the switch from summer and winter seasons, and is well below the 20 year mean. Age sampling of the catch shows that the large majority of scallops caught are in the 5–10 year old range, thus there is no likely loss of potential harvest of individuals by continuing the current harvest levels. A minimum fishery performance standard of 34.9 pounds of shucked meat per dredge hour is in place in the Yakutat District. If the cumulative CPUE drops below this level once at least 50% of the GHL has been taken then the fishery will be closed prior to reaching the GHL.

The District 16 GHL will decrease from 25,000 pounds of shucked meat to a monitoring level of 5,000 pounds. The 2015/16 season saw another drop in CPUE. The 2015/16 and 2014/15 seasons had the first and second lowest CPUEs respectively since the switch from summer and winter seasons at approximately half of the 20 year mean. Additionally the 5-year running CPUE is the lowest in the comparable time series. A GHL of 5,000 pounds of shucked meat will allow for continued monitoring of the stock, and GHLs will increase in future if stock health metrics show rebounds. A minimum fishery performance standard of 21.4 pounds of shucked meat per dredge hour is in place in District 16.

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Prince William Sound

The Prince William Sound Area commercial weathervane scallop season in the West Kayak (WKS) Subsection will open on July 1 with a 6,300-pound GHLS. The East Kayak Subsection (EKS) will remain closed for the 2016/17 season.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has been biennially assessing weathervane scallops near Kayak Island since 1996. In the WKS, commercial fishing has been closed since 2010, when historically low levels of abundance and biomass were observed in the survey. The most recent weathervane scallop assessment near Kayak Island was completed in April 2016, and has documented a continuing trend of increased abundance and biomass.

The abundance and biomass in the EKS has shown a continued decline and are at the lowest point in the history of the survey. The EKS has been closed to commercial scallop fishing since 2012, and continuing the closure will allow the current biomass to reproduce and generate potential future recruitment, as well as enable the younger scallops to grow and recruit to the fishery.

Cook Inlet

The commercial weathervane scallop season in waters of the Cook Inlet Area Kamishak District located north of lat 59°18.50' N will open August 15, 2016 with a GHLS of 10,000 pounds of shucked meat, which is the lower bound of the guideline harvest range (GHR) of 10,000–20,000 pounds allowed to open the fishery (5AAC 38.330). Crab bycatch levels are 30 king and 3,933 Tanner crabs.

In May 2015, a biennial assessment of Kamishak District scallops occurred in the north bed exclusively. Survey results showed a small increase in scallop abundance in the northern portion of the district and an age structure that included both older and younger scallops. Based on biomass estimates, a GHLS of 10,000 pounds will be available for harvest and result in a harvest rate of approximately 5%. Survey results showed a concentration of smaller scallops in the southern portion of the north bed. Therefore, the southern portion of the north bed will be closed to conserve younger scallops. In addition, the entire southern bed will be closed for the season.

Prior to fishing, qualified individuals must obtain a scallop area registration and logbook from the ADF&G office in Homer. Management of the fishery will be based upon fishery performance, scallop catch composition, and crab bycatch levels. Regulation 5 AAC 38.227 establishes catch reporting requirements, check-in and check-out procedures for each trip, shell sample collection, and accommodation of a department observer. The third-party contract observer requirement is waived for this fishery provided that participants accommodate an ADF&G observer when requested. Continuation of the observer waiver will depend on compliance with fishery management measures described in regulation.

Kodiak

During the 2016/17 weathervane scallop season in the Kodiak, Alaska Peninsula, and Dutch Harbor areas, ADF&G will assess inseason fishery performance as measured by CPUE and monitor crab bycatch. Poor fishery performance or excessive crab bycatch may result in area, or partial area closures prior to achieving the full GHL.

The Northeast District scallop GHL will remain at 55,000 pounds of shucked meat.

Based on recent declining trends in fishery CPUE, the 2016/17 Shelikof District scallop GHL will be 25,000 pounds of shucked meat. Harvest will be capped at 20,000 pounds of shucked meat east of long 154° W. Harvest in the remainder of the district west of long 154° W will be capped at 5,000 pounds of shucked meat.

The Southwest District will open to exploratory scallop fishing under the provisions of a commissioner permit (5 AAC 38.420 (b)(1)) with a harvest limit of 25,000 pounds of shucked meat. Participating vessels are encouraged to distribute effort to delineate scallop beds.

Alaska Peninsula

Two areas in the Alaska Peninsula Area will open for the 2016/17 season. Pacific Ocean waters from 3–200 nautical miles off shore between long 160° W and 161° W will open with a GHL of 7,500 pounds of shucked meat. Pacific Ocean waters from 3–200 nautical miles off shore of Unimak Bight (west of a line extending south from Cape Pankof at long 163° 03.70' W and east of line extending south from Scotch Cap Light at long 164° 44.72' W) will open to exploratory scallop fishing under the authority of a commissioner permit. Harvest in Unimak Bight will be capped at 15,000 pounds of shucked meat.

Dutch Harbor

The Dutch Harbor Area will open with a GHL of 5,000 pounds of shucked meat available in Pacific Ocean waters and a GHL of 5,000 pounds of shucked meat in Bering Sea waters.

Bristol Bay-Bering Sea

The Bristol Bay-Bering Sea Registration Area will open with a GHL of 7,500 pounds of shucked meat.

For additional information contact ADF&G in Kodiak (907-486-1840), Douglas (907-465-6393), Dutch Harbor (907-581-1239), Homer (907-235-8191), or Cordova (907-424-3212).

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