

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



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**BERING SEA SNOW CRAB SEASON OPENS OCTOBER 15
TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH ANNOUNCED**

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) have completed analysis of 2016 NMFS trawl survey results for Bering Sea snow crab. The 2016/17 Bering Sea snow crab fishery will open in Bering Sea District waters west of 166° W longitude at 12:00 noon October 15, 2016 and remain open through May 15, 2017 in the Eastern Subdistrict (east of 173° W longitude) and through May 31, 2017 in the Western Subdistrict (west of 173° W longitude).

The 2016/17 Bering Sea District snow crab fishery total allowable catch (TAC) is based on model-survey abundance estimates. The TAC is 21.57 million pounds and is apportioned as follows:

Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ)	19,413,000 pounds
Community Development Quota (CDQ)	2,157,000 pounds
Total	21,570,000 pounds

The lower 2016/17 TAC reflects continuing declines in survey biomass for both mature male and female snow crab and the high proportion of old shell crab in the exploitable population. In addition, fishery performance has been declining since the 2007/08 season; with the 2015/16 catch per unit effort being the lowest since crab rationalization began in 2005/06.

Due to the closure of 2016/17 Bering Sea Tanner crab fisheries west of 166° W long, retention of Tanner crab (*C. bairdi*) during the Bering Sea snow crab (*C. opilio*) fishery is prohibited.

To protect the Pribilof blue king crab stock, the Bering Sea snow crab fishery will not open in waters enclosed by connecting the following coordinates: 58° N, 171° W; 58° N, 167° W; 57°30' N, 167° W; 57°30' N, 168° W; 57° N, 168° W; 56°30' N, 169° W; 56°30' N, 170° W; 57° N, 171° W; 58° N, 171° W. The associated closed ADF&G statistical areas are: 675730, 685730,

695730, 705730, 705701, 705703, 695701, 695700, 685700, 695631, 695632, the northeast half of 705630, and the northwest half of 685630. A map of the closed area will be provided at the time of registration.

A valid United States Coast Guard (USCG) Commercial Fisheries Vessel Safety Decal is required before vessel registration. Vessels must also have an activated vessel monitoring system approved by NMFS. The operator of a vessel participating in IFQ or CDQ crab fisheries must notify the USCG at least 24 hours prior to departing port when carrying crab pot gear. USCG can be contacted at: (907) 581-3466 or (907) 359-1575 (after hours).

At the time of vessel registration, all pots onboard the vessel and in wet storage must be in compliance with Bering Sea District snow crab fishing regulations. There is no crab pot limit or buoy tag requirement for the Bering Sea snow crab fishery. Fishermen may register up to 20 groundfish pots.

A fisherman may transport crab pot gear to the fishing grounds for another fisherman; however, the registered fisherman of the crab pot gear has seven days to be active in the registration area where the gear is deployed. Fishermen may register gear operation cooperatives, and a fisherman may make a one-time transfer of all pot gear to one other fisherman at the completion of fishing operations.

Preseason gear inspections will be available beginning October 8, 2016 in Dutch Harbor, and October 13 in King Cove and Akutan. Vessel registration will begin at noon October 13, 2016. An individual holding a current Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) Bering Sea Tanner crab interim use permit card (T91Q or T09Q) must be present during registration. Fishermen may participate concurrently in IFQ and CDQ fisheries, but a separate registration and CFEC permit card are required for each fishery.

Fishermen must notify ADF&G within 72 hours of completing fishing operations in a registration area or when departing the registration area with gear in long-term storage or transferred to another vessel. Unbaited gear with doors open may be stored for up to 14 days outside of designated storage areas after fishing is completed. Pots must be removed from the water or placed in long-term storage if left unattended in a registration area for more than 14 days. A fisherman's registration will be invalidated after 14 days of inactivity in a registration area.

For questions regarding issuance of quota share and IFQ/IPQ, contact NOAA Fisheries RAM Division at 1-800-304-4846 (option #2). For questions regarding federal Crab Rationalization Program regulations, contact NOAA Fisheries Sustainable Fisheries Division at (907) 586-7228 or the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement in Kodiak at (907) 486-3298 or Dutch Harbor at (907) 581-2061.

For further information contact ADF&G Dutch Harbor at (907) 581-1239, or ADF&G Kodiak at (907) 486-1840.

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