

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



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WINTER RED KING CRAB COMMERCIAL FISHERY ANNOUNCEMENT

The Crab Planning Team (CPT) recently made recommendations for 2017 Norton Sound red king crab allowable biological catch (ABC) and over fishing limit (OFL) levels, as well as legal male biomass (LMB) estimates. Guideline harvest levels (GHLs) are set based on LMB and must be kept sufficiently below the ABC to accommodate all other sources of fishery-related mortality such as subsistence and personal use harvests. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) is anticipated to adopt ABC, LMB and OFL amounts for Norton Sound red king crab when they meet in early February.

If the NPFMC approves the CPT recommendations, the department will implement a harvest rate of 11.5% of the LMB of 4.32 million pounds red king crab fishery yielding a total commercial GHL of 496,800 pounds. This level of commercial harvest allows a buffer of approximately 43,000 pounds, from the ABC of 540,000 pounds, to account for subsistence harvests and incidental mortality of non-target crab discards.

Total estimated harvest including the anticipated combined winter and summer subsistence harvest (10,000–20,000 pounds) is expected to be between 4–6% below the ABC. This management approach is consistent with the 2016 season when overall combined harvest (winter commercial + summer commercial + subsistence) was approximately 5% below the ABC. By regulation 8% of the GHL is allocated to the winter commercial fishery resulting in a potential 39,744 pound allocation. The Community Development Quota (CDQ) fishery is allocated 7.5% by regulation resulting in a potential 37,260 pound allocation. Any commercial harvest allocation not taken during the winter commercial fishery will be added to the summer commercial fishery allocation.

The department will open the winter commercial fishery on February 7 at 10 a.m. Permit holders can register for the fishery at the Fish & Game office in Nome or village residents can call 1-800-560-2271 to register. Permit holders are limited to 20 crab pots and pot tags must be attached to the pot. Permit holders must be present any time their commercial pot gear is being operated and can be assisted by licensed crew members. However, crewmembers cannot deploy or operate gear on their own.

Good Luck and Good Crabbing!