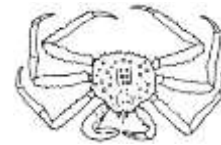

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



Sam Cotten, Commissioner
Scott Kelley, Director



Contact:	Petersburg Area Office
Joe Stratman	P.O. Box 667
Adam Messmer	Petersburg, Alaska 99833
Phone: (907) 772-5238	Date: March 29, 2017
Fax: (907) 772-9336	Time: 4:00 p.m.
(907) 465-4853	
(907) 465-4944	

COMMERCIAL GOLDEN KING CRAB ANNOUNCEMENT ICY STRAIT AND NORTHERN AREAS CLOSURE DATE

Petersburg . . . The Alaska Department of Fish and Game announced today that the commercial golden king crab fishery in the Icy Strait and Northern Areas will close at 12:00 noon, **Friday, April 7, 2017**. These areas are being closed in response to continued poor fishery performance. These declines are similar to the time period of the early to mid-1990s when the department routinely closed fishing areas before harvest reached preseason guideline harvest levels (GHL). A detailed justification for the closure of each area is provided below.

Icy Strait Area

The preseason GHL for golden king crab in Icy Strait was 10,000 pounds. Through March 28, 2017, 5,318 pounds have been harvested by six vessels. Catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) has averaged 2.2 crab per pot in Icy Strait during the period 2000-2016. The average CPUE this season of 0.9 crab per pot is 41% of the average for the past 17 seasons and is the lowest on record for the past 17 seasons. Catch rates for golden king crab landed to date (22 pounds per boat/per day), are the third lowest on record for the past 17 seasons and well below the 2000-2016 average of 138 pounds per boat/per day.

Northern Area

The preseason GHL for golden king crab in Northern was 10,000 pounds. Through March 28, 2017, 4,213 pounds have been harvested by seven vessels. CPUE has averaged 2.8 crab per pot in Northern during the period 2000–2016. The average CPUE this season of 0.8 crab is only 29% of the average and is the second lowest CPUE in the past 17 seasons. Catch rates of golden king crab landed to date (13 pounds per boat/per day), are the lowest on record for the past 17 seasons and well below the 2000–2016 average of 219 pounds per boat/per day.

The department will continue to monitor fishery performance via harvest ticket/logbook and port sampling data for the remaining open areas: Mid-Chatham Strait, Lower Chatham Strait, and Southern. Additional management actions may be taken as necessary and the department will provide as much advance notice as possible for future area closures.

A vessel may leave gear in a stored condition for five days after the closure of a portion of Registration Area A [5 AAC 34.127(2)]. All gear must be removed from the Icy Strait and Northern Areas no later than 12:00 noon, April 12, 2017.

The Emergency Order corresponding with this announcement is EO 1C0617.

News releases web site: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>.

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