

# ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

## DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

### NEWS RELEASE



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Date Issued: June 22, 2017

#### **2017/18 Alaska Weathervane Scallop Guideline Harvest Levels**

The commercial weathervane scallop fishery in the 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 (ACLs) that account for all sources of mortality to ensure overfishing does not occur. The 2017/18 season scallop guideline harvest levels (GHLs) established by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) comply with federal ACL requirements.

Weathervane scallop fisheries in the Yakutat, Prince William Sound, Kodiak, Alaska Peninsula, Dutch Harbor, and Bristol Bay–Bering Sea areas will open on July 1, 2017 and the Cook Inlet Area will open on August 15, 2017. ADF&G will assess inseason fishery performance as measured by CPUE and/or monitor crab bycatch. Poor fishery performance or excessive crab bycatch may result in area, or partial area, closures prior to achieving the full GHL. Guideline harvest levels for the 2017/18 scallop season and crab bycatch limits are listed below.

Registration Area	Guideline Harvest Level (pounds of shucked meat)	Crab bycatch limit (number of crab)	
		Tanner crab	King crab
<b>Yakutat</b>			
Area D	140,000	NA	NA
District 16	5,000	NA	NA
<b>Prince William Sound</b>			
West Kayak Subsection	6,300	1,600	NA
<b>Cook Inlet</b>			
Kamishak District north of lat 59°18.50' N	10,000	3,933	30
<b>Kodiak</b>			
Northeast District	55,000	19,388	25
Shelikof District	25,000	63,926	50
Southwest District <sup>1</sup>	25,000	12,000	50
Semidi District <sup>1</sup>		<i>Exploratory area</i>	
<b>Alaska Peninsula</b>			
long 160° W to 161° W	7,500	<i>Monitored inseason</i>	
Unimak Bight <sup>1</sup>	15,000	12,000	50
<b>Dutch Harbor</b>			
Bering Sea Waters	5,000	5,000	10
Pacific Ocean Waters	5,000	5,000	10
<b>Bering Sea</b>	7,500	65,000	500
		<i>C. opilio and hybrids</i>	
		300,000	

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

## Yakutat

The Yakutat District GHL will increase from 120,000 to 140,000 pounds of shucked meat for the 2017/18 season. Raw and standardized CPUE of both meat and whole weights showed increases last season and a continued increase in 5-year means. Catch rates in the beds with the highest pressure in the past two seasons also continued to increase. Although a portion of this increase was due to higher than average yield in the 2016/17 season, stock health metrics indicate that the stock can withstand a higher level of harvest.

The Yakutat District fishery is managed for a minimum fishery performance standard of 34.9 pounds of shucked meat per dredge hour. If the cumulative CPUE drops below this level once at least 50% of the GHL has been taken then management action will occur; generally, the fishery will be closed prior to reaching the GHL.

The District 16 GHL will remain at a monitoring level of 5,000 pounds of shucked meat.

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, 2017 with a GHL of 6,300 pounds. The East Kayak Subsection (EKS) will remain closed for the 2017/18 season.

ADF&G has assessed weathervane scallops near Kayak Island since 1996. The WKS has been closed to commercial fishing since 2010, when historically low levels of abundance and biomass were observed in the survey until it was opened in 2016 after the weathervane scallop assessment survey near Kayak Island documented a continuing trend of increased abundance and biomass.

The abundance and biomass in the EKS has shown a continued decline and was at the lowest point in the history of the survey in 2016. The EKS has been closed to commercial scallop fishing since 2012, and will remain closed, to 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, 2017 with a GHL 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 (5 AAC 38.330). Crab bycatch levels are 30 king and 3,933 Tanner crabs.

Based on biomass estimates from the most recent survey, a GHL of 10,000 pounds will be available for harvest. In 2015, a survey of Kamishak District scallops was completed, but only in the north bed. These survey results showed a slight increase in scallop abundance in the northern portion of the district and an age structure that included both older and younger scallops. 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 an ADF&G observer. The third-party contract observer requirement is waived for this fishery provided 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**

The Northeast District will open with a GHL of 55,000 pounds of shucked meat.

The Shelikof District will open with a GHl of 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 under the authority of a commissioner permit (5 AAC 38.420(b)(1)) with a GHl of 25,000 pounds of shucked meat. Participating vessels are encouraged to distribute effort to further delineate scallop beds.

### **Alaska Peninsula**

Two areas in the Alaska Peninsula Area will open for the 2017/18 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 under the authority of a commissioner permit (5 AAC 38.420(c)(1)). The Unimak Bight GHl will be 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 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), or Homer (907-235-8191).

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