

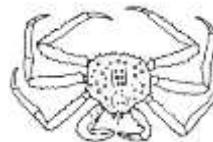
# ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

## DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

### NEWS RELEASE



*Sam Cotten, Commissioner*  
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Phone: (907) 772-5238	Date: August 7, 2018
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#### COMMERCIAL GOLDEN KING CRAB ANNOUNCEMENT MID-CHATHAM STRAIT CLOSURE DATE

Petersburg . . . The Alaska Department of Fish and Game announced today that the commercial golden king crab fishery in the Mid-Chatham Strait Area will close at 12:00 noon, **Saturday, August 11, 2018**. This area is 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). While the fishery dependent data used to manage golden king crab since 2000 are more robust since the inception of the logbook program, port sampling and harvest ticket data prior to 2000 were also used to assess current catch rates and recruit crab composition. A detailed justification for the closure is provided below.

#### **Mid-Chatham Strait Area**

The established preseason GHL for golden king crab in Mid-Chatham Strait was 10,000 pounds. Due to effort from fewer than three vessels in the area, harvest data are not reportable; currently there is no effort in the area. Prior to this season, the catch rates (catch per unit effort or CPUE) had been in decline for seven consecutive seasons and improved only slightly this season. The CPUE has averaged 3.4 crab per pot during the period 2000-2017. The average CPUE this season is approximately 50% of the average for the past 18 seasons and matches the 2014/2015 season for the second lowest CPUE since 2000.

Port sampling data show the percentage of recruit crab to the harvest has also declined, from a peak of 60% during the 2004/2005 season, to approximately 30% this season. The average contribution from the recruit portion of the stock for the period 1986-2017 from port sampling data is 37%. Historically, periods of low percentage of recruit crab in the harvest have preceded periods of low harvest. From 1988-1991, percentage of recruit crab in port sampling data averaged 21%. This was followed by a six year period of record low harvests averaging 27,000 pounds annually.

The department will continue to monitor the GHL in the remaining open area – Lower Chatham Strait. Permit holders are reminded that call-in requirements remain in effect for all current registrants. 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 Mid-Chatham Strait Area no later than 12:00 noon, Thursday, August 16, 2018.

The Emergency Order corresponding with this announcement is EO 1C1618.

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

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