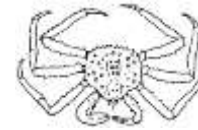

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



Sam Cotten, Commissioner
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SOUTHEAST ALASKA RED AND BLUE KING CRAB COMMERCIAL FISHERY CLOSURE ANNOUNCEMENT

Petersburg. . . The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) announced today that the Southeast Alaska (Registration Area A) commercial red king crab fishery will not open during the 2018/2019 fishing season.

The Southeast Alaska Red King Crab Management Plan [5 AAC 34.113] directs the department to manage the Southeast Alaska red king crab fishery in accordance with the Alaska Board of Fisheries' "Policy on King and Tanner Crab Resource Management". The department shall close the fishery if the department's estimate of available harvest is below the minimum threshold of 200,000 pounds of legal male red king crab. The estimate of available harvest, based on 2018 stock assessment survey results, is below the minimum threshold.

Regionally, the biomass estimates for mature and legal male red king crab (RKC) decreased from last season. Of the seven survey areas, six had decreases in legal biomass and five had decreases in mature biomass compared to 2017 biomass estimates. The adjusted biomass estimates for legal and mature RKC for the Southeast Region (survey areas only) are 1.0 million pounds and 1.25 million pounds respectively for the 2018/2019 season; a 9% decrease in the legal male biomass and a 7% decrease in mature male biomass from the 2017/2018 season. Regional biomass is estimated from the seven surveyed areas and extrapolated to the entire region.

Survey and Analysis

Areas surveyed include Pybus Bay, Gambier Bay, Seymour Canal, Peril Strait, the Juneau area, Lynn Sisters, and Excursion Inlet. Port Frederick and Holkham Bay were dropped as survey areas in 2015 due to budget constraints. The estimate of available harvest was determined through a catch-survey analysis (CSA) for all surveyed areas. The CSA incorporates data from the department's stock assessment pot survey (2018 and prior years), commercial harvest (2017 and prior years), and port sampling data from landings of commercial harvest. Biomass estimates produced for each survey area were adjusted based on mark/recapture work conducted in six of the seven surveyed areas. Harvest data indicate that an average of 52.8% of historical harvest has been taken from surveyed areas and 47.2% of historical harvest has been taken from non-surveyed areas. This surveyed/non-surveyed area ratio was used to calculate legal and mature biomass estimates for the non-surveyed areas.

Equilibrium harvest rates were calculated for each surveyed area based on the relationship between historical harvest rates and their associated change in mature male biomass. The stock health status and biomass level, when compared to baseline biomass values for each area, were used to modify proposed

harvest rates or determine area closures. Stock health ratings are based on catch per unit effort (CPUE) of all size/sex classes compared to long-term (10-year) and short-term (4-year) averages.

Stock health ratings of poor and below average were calculated for five of the seven survey areas. In addition, CPUEs for most sex/size classes in all seven survey areas are below long-term averages and biomass estimates for mature and legal crab are below average in six survey areas. Overall recruitment, in the form of pre-recruit CPUE, is at average levels for five of the seven surveyed areas which suggests that regionwide improvements to mature and legal male biomass are still underway.

Additional information may be found in regulation 5 AAC 34.113. SOUTHEAST ALASKA RED KING CRAB MANAGEMENT PLAN on page 13 of the 2017-2019 King and Tanner Crab Commercial Fishing Regulations booklet available in area offices, or online at:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishregulations.commercial>

The Emergency Order corresponding with this announcement is EO 1C1818.

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

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