Fishery Management Plan for the Kodiak District Commercial Tanner Crab Fishery, 2023

by

Nathaniel Nichols

November 2022

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Divisions of Sport Fish and Commercial Fisheries



Symbols and Abbreviations

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et cetera (and so forth) etc. logarithm (natural) ln
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alternating current AC registered trademark ® (acceptance of the null
ampere A trademark TM hypothesis when false) β
calorie cal United States second (angular) "
direct current DC (adjective) U.S. standard deviation SD
hertz Hz United States of standard error SE
horsepower hp America (noun) USA variance
hydrogen ion activity pH U.S.C. United States population Var
(negative log of) Code sample var
parts per million ppm U.S. state use two-letter
parts per thousand ppt, abbreviations
(e.g., AK, WA)
volts V
watts W

REGIONAL INFORMATION REPORT NO. 4K22-12

FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE KODIAK DISTRICT COMMERCIAL TANNER CRAB FISHERY, 2023

by

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> > November 2022

The Regional Information Report Series was established in 1987 and was redefined in 2007 to meet the Division of Commercial Fisheries regional need for publishing and archiving information such as area management plans, budgetary information, staff comments and opinions to Alaska Board of Fisheries proposals, interim or preliminary data and grant agency reports, special meeting or minor workshop results and other regional information not generally reported elsewhere. Reports in this series may contain raw data and preliminary results. Reports in this series receive varying degrees of regional, biometric and editorial review; information in this series may be subsequently finalized and published in a different department reporting series or in the formal literature. Please contact the author or the Division of Commercial Fisheries if in doubt of the level of review or preliminary nature of the data reported. Regional Information Reports are available through the Alaska State Library and on the Internet at: http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/publications/.

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ABSTRACT

This document provides an overview of regulations governing the Kodiak District commercial Tanner crab *Chionoecetes bairdi* fishery including vessel registrations, gear specifications, operation of pot gear, pot storage, landing requirements, fishing hours, and inseason reporting. The Eastside, Southeast, Southwest, and Semidi Island Overlap Sections will open to commercial Tanner crab fishing at 12:00 noon January 15, 2023, unless delayed by weather. The total Kodiak District guideline harvest level (GHL) is 5.8 million pounds with 4 million pounds available in the Eastside Section, 950,000 pounds available in the Southeast Section, and 850,000 pounds available in the Southwest Section; no GHL is established in the Semidi Island Overlap Section. The gear limit is 30 pots per vessel in the Eastside, Southeast, and Southwest Sections; the gear limit in the Semidi Island Overlap Section is 70 pots per vessel. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) will manage the Kodiak District commercial Tanner crab fishery using inseason catch reports. Section and subsection closures may occur before GHLs are fully harvested based on fishery performance, harvest distribution, or bycatch of nontarget crab. Participants should note that delivery requirements and postclosure pot storage requirements vary depending on the type of closure and the amount of advance notice given.

Key words: Tanner crab, Chionoecetes bairdi, Kodiak District, Area J, regulations, commercial fishery

INTRODUCTION

AREA DESCRIPTION

The Kodiak District for Tanner crab *Chionoecetes bairdi* includes waters of Registration Area J south of the latitude of Cape Douglas, west of long 149°W, and east of the longitude of Cape Kumlik (5 AAC 35.505). The district is subdivided into eight sections: Northeast, Eastside, Southeast, Southwest, Westside, North Mainland, South Mainland, and Semidi Island Overlap (Figure 1).

HARVEST STRATEGY

Two sets of regulatory abundance and management thresholds must be met for a fishery to open. Mature male abundance thresholds, computed at either 50% or 100% of the long-term average abundance (1988–2021), are established for six sections in the Kodiak District which must be met or exceeded (5 AAC 35.507(c)(1) and (2)). Additionally, abundance must be sufficient to provide for a guideline harvest level (GHL) of at least 100,000 pounds before a section may open (5 AAC 35.507(a)(2)).

In March of 2022, the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) adopted updated Tanner crab harvest strategies for the Kodiak, Chignik, and South Peninsula Districts. The updated harvest strategies incorporate both mature male and mature female abundance when determining maximum legal male exploitation rates. A complete summary of harvest strategy revisions can be found in *Updated Tanner Crab Harvest Strategies for Kodiak, Chignik, and South Peninsula Districts: A Report to the Alaska Board of Fisheries* (Spalinger et al. 2021).

The Semidi Island Overlap Section of the Kodiak District does not have a mature male abundance threshold and is opened concurrently with adjacent sections that have met abundance and management thresholds (5 AAC 35.507(b)(2)(A)). In March of 2022, the BOF removed the daylight fishing hours provision to allow operation of pot gear 24 hours per day when the season is open. The BOF also changed the regulatory season closure date in the Semidi Island Overlap Section to February 28, however, the section may close by emergency order before the regulatory closure based on fishery performance.

2023 GUIDELINE HARVEST LEVELS

Based on results from the 2022 ADF&G trawl survey, the Eastside, Southeast, and Southwest Sections met regulatory requirements for a 2023 commercial Tanner crab fishery. The total 2023 Kodiak District Tanner crab GHL is 5.8 million pounds; the Eastside Section GHL is 4 million pounds, the Southeast Section GHL is 950,000 pounds, and the Southwest Section GHL is 850,000 pounds. The Northeast, Westside, North Mainland, and South Mainland Sections did not meet regulatory requirements for a fishery to open and will remain closed for the 2023 season (Figure 1).

By regulation, the Semidi Island Overlap Section opens when either the Southwest Section of the Kodiak District or the Chignik District are opened; therefore, the Semidi Island Overlap Section will open in 2023 to both Kodiak District and Chignik District permit holders (Figure 1).

REGULATIONS

OVERVIEW

Commercial Tanner crab regulations begin on page 58 of the current 2022–2023 Statewide King and Tanner Crab Commercial Fishing Regulations booklet. Specific regulations pertaining to Tanner crab fisheries in Registration Area J begin on page 91. Following is a summary of 2023 Tanner crab fishing regulations in the Kodiak District.

SEASON OPENING AND FISHING PERIODS

The 2023 commercial Tanner crab season opens by regulation at 12:00 noon January 15, 2023, unless delayed by weather (5 AAC 35.510(a)(2)). The season will be delayed for 24 hours if the National Weather Service (NWS) marine forecast for Shuyak Island to Sitkinak (PKZ132) issued at 4:00 a.m. January 14 contains a gale warning. If after the initial weather delay, the 4:00 a.m. January 15 NWS marine forecast again contains a gale warning, the season opening will be delayed an additional 24 hours. Season opening delays may continue on a rolling 24-hour basis until 12:00 noon January 25, when the season will open regardless of the marine forecast.

In the Eastside, Southeast, and Southwest Sections, fishing gear may only be operated for 10 hours each day, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:59 p.m.; baited gear may be left in the water from 6:00 p.m. to 7:59 a.m. (5 AAC 35.510(a)(1)). In the Semidi Island Overlap Section, gear may be operated 24 hours per day (5 AAC 35.510(a)(4)).

Based on ADF&G's assessment of effort, harvest rate, and remaining GHL, daily fishing periods may be increased if it appears the GHL will not be fully harvested by the end of the regulatory season (March 31).

PERMITS AND REGISTRATION

The Kodiak District commercial Tanner crab fishery is a limited entry fishery with two Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) permits: one for vessels under 60 feet overall length (TB9BK) and one for vessels up to 120 feet overall length (TB9AK). Holders of a permit for vessels under 60 feet may not make landings on a vessel 60 feet or greater. Holders of a permit for vessels up to 120 feet may use their permit on any vessel 120 feet or less. Vessel operators

https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/fishregulations/pdfs/commercial/2022_2023_cf_king_tanner_crab.pdf (accessed 11/21/2022).

must have a valid CFEC permit card and commercial vessel license prior to registering with ADF&G. Additional information on permits and vessel licenses can be obtained from CFEC in Juneau (Appendix A1).

All vessels must be validly registered with ADF&G prior to fishing. The Kodiak District is a superexclusive registration district for Tanner crab (5 AAC 35.506(a)). A registration is validated upon being signed by an ADF&G representative, regardless of fishery participation or landings. A vessel registered for the Kodiak District Tanner crab fishery may not be used to take Tanner crab in any other registration district during the same registration year (5 AAC 35.005(c)). A vessel operator that registers for the 2023 Kodiak District Tanner crab fishery may not operate any other Tanner crab vessel registered for any other superexclusive registration area within the same registration year (5 AAC 35.020(h)). The Tanner crab registration year is August 1 to July 31 (5 AAC 35.020(c)).

Registrations will be validated starting 26 hours before the fishery opens (5 AAC 35.506(k)(2)). Vessel tank and gear inspections are not required. The ADF&G office in Kodiak will be open on Saturday January 14 from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. Registrations may be validated in person or via fax or e-mail beginning at 10:00 a.m. (Appendix A1). ADF&G staff will also be validating registrations in Kodiak at St. Paul (downtown) and St. Herman (Dog Bay) harbors; staff will be located at the tops of the ramps. The Alutiq Tribe of Old Harbor office will be available to facilitate fishery registration by scanning or faxing registrations to ADF&G Kodiak and printing finalized copies for registered vessels. If the fishery is delayed due to weather, the registration validation period will also be delayed. A copy of the vessel registration must remain onboard the vessel while fishing. Registrations are automatically invalidated 24 hours after closure of the fishery.

Vessel operators must register to fish in either the Eastside, Southeast, Southwest, or Semidi Island Overlap Section. A vessel may not be registered for, or fish in, more than one section at a time. Vessel operators may change section registration; however, they must notify ADF&G of their intent to change sections and deliver all crab onboard the vessel. Any gear in the original section must be open and unbaited prior to delivery. Vessel operators may place baited gear in the new section prior to delivery but may not retrieve that gear until all crab from the original section has been delivered.

All tender vessels must be registered with ADF&G prior to tendering. Tender vessels may not have a pot-hauling block or other Tanner crab gear onboard and may not be used to harvest Tanner crab (5 AAC 35.033). Catcher vessels participating in the Tanner crab fishery cannot transport crab for other registered catcher vessels.

GEAR LIMITS AND CONFIGURATION

Gear limits in the Kodiak District are determined by the size of the GHL. The 2023 GHL is more than 5,000,000 pounds; therefore, the regulatory gear limit is 30 pots per vessel (5 AAC 35.525(c)(1)(B)). The Semidi Island Overlap Section pot limit is 70 pots per vessel (5 AAC 35.507(b)(2)(C)).

Commercial Tanner crab pots may not be more than 10 feet long by 10 feet wide by 42 inches high. Rigid tunnel eye openings must be less than five inches high and have a perimeter greater than 36 inches (5 AAC 35.050(2) and (3)). Ring nets are not legal gear in the Kodiak District for commercial harvest of Tanner crab (5 AAC 35.525(a)).

Escape mesh or rings are required on all Tanner crab pots. Each pot must contain at least one third of one vertical surface of the pot composed of not less than 6 ¾ inch stretched mesh webbing or have at least four circular escape rings which have an inside diameter of at least five inches (5 AAC 35.525(b)(1)(A)). Escape rings must be installed on the vertical plane of the pot to allow for escapement of undersized crab. Escape rings are not required to be placed within a certain distance from the bottom of the pot; however, ADF&G recommends placing rings within one mesh from the bottom of the pot to optimize escapement of sublegal and female crab.

All pots must also contain a biodegradable escape mechanism consisting of an opening 18 inches or greater in length placed parallel to and within six inches of the bottom of the pot, and laced, sewn, or secured together by a single length of untreated, 100 percent cotton twine no larger than 30 thread and knotted at each end only (5 AAC 39.145).

BUOY TAGS AND MARKING REQUIREMENTS

The main or trailer buoy on each pot must display one fishery-specific identification tag (buoy tag) issued by ADF&G for the current year (5 AAC 35.526(a)). Separate buoy tags are required for gear operated in the Semidi Island Overlap Section. Buoy tags can be purchased at a cost of \$1.50 per tag from the ADF&G office in Kodiak (Appendix A1). Upon request, buoy tags may be mailed through the U.S. Postal Service. A valid 2023 Tanner crab CFEC permit card (TB9AK or TB9BK) is required to receive tags.

Should buoy tags be lost during the fishery, replacement tags may be obtained by contacting ADF&G in Kodiak (Appendix A1). The vessel owner, operator, or agent must provide the unique number(s) of each lost tag and complete an affidavit form describing how the tags were lost (5 AAC 35.526(b)). Pots with lost tags may be left on the fishing grounds but must be secured fully open with all bait and bait containers removed until replacement tags are affixed to the buoy.

At least one buoy must be marked with the ADF&G vessel number and may not be marked with additional numbers (5 AAC 35.051); however, symbols and letters are acceptable on this buoy. Trailer or other buoys may be marked with any desired numbers, symbols, or letters to mark ownership or string sequence.

OPERATION OF OTHER POT GEAR AND POT STORAGE

A person or vessel that operates pot gear (e.g., commercial Pacific cod or subsistence pots) within the Kodiak District at any time during the 14 days immediately prior to the start of the 2023 commercial Tanner crab fishery may not participate in the 2023 commercial Tanner crab fishery (5 AAC 35.053(a)(1)). While the Tanner crab fishery is open, registered vessels may not operate other pot gear, including pots to catch Pacific cod for bait (5 AAC 35.053(b)). Pacific cod caught in Tanner crab pots cannot be sold but may be retained for bait; Pacific cod retained for bait must be recorded on Tanner crab fish tickets.

Prior to the season opening, up to 30 pots may be stored in waters 25 fathoms or less in the Eastside, Southeast, or Southwest Sections with all bait and bait containers removed; rectangular pots must have doors secured fully open, and cone and pyramid pots must have doors not secured closed (5 AAC 35.052(a)). Legal Tanner crab pots with buoy tags attached may be placed into shallow water storage during the 14 days prior to the fishery start. However, once placed into storage, vessel operators may not retrieve those pots prior to the start of the fishery, including the 26-hour period between registration validation and the fishery opening (5 AAC 35.053(a)(1)). Pots may be

stored at depth for 7 days after the Tanner crab season closure in any section of the Kodiak District (5 AAC 35.527(5)).

Vessels may not have more than 30 pots onboard or in wet storage while the vessel is validly registered for Tanner crab in the Kodiak District; pots in excess of the 30-pot limit may not be placed into wet storage in the Semidi Island Overlap Section unless the vessel is validly registered to fish in the Semidi Islands Overlap Section.

TANNER CRAB SIZE LIMIT

The legal minimum retainable size of Tanner crab in Kodiak District is 5.5 inches carapace width (5 AAC 35.060). Only legal male Tanner crab may be retained; all other crabs incidentally captured must be immediately returned to the water unharmed (5 AAC 35.065). King crab may not be retained for subsistence or personal use during the commercial Tanner crab fishery (5 AAC 02.420; 5 AAC 35.053(b)).

LANDING REQUIREMENTS

Vessel operators are required to deliver all catch within 24 hours of the closure (5 AAC 35.031(c)). Vessels delayed due to weather or mechanical issues will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Vessel operators delivering Tanner crab to ports outside Kodiak District are required to contact the ADF&G office in Kodiak prior to leaving the district (5 AAC 35.031(b)). At the time of the closure, vessels delivering outside the district must provide the estimated number of crab onboard the vessel, delivery port, processing facility, and estimated time of arrival. All catcher-seller vessels must have a valid catcher-seller permit for the current year to sell live Tanner crab and must submit a fish ticket to the ADF&G Kodiak office within seven days of landing (5 AAC 39.130(c)).

After the closure of the Tanner crab season, vessels intending to participate in the Pacific cod pot gear fishery must deliver all crab and either remove all Tanner crab pots from the water or place pots into shallow-water storage before targeting Pacific cod.

PARTICIPATION IN PACIFIC COD JIG GEAR FISHERY

Vessel operators may participate in the state-waters Pacific cod jig gear fishery and the Tanner crab fishery simultaneously; all fishing activity (Tanner crab and Pacific cod) must be conducted within state waters (0–3 nmi). Vessel operators must obtain a CFEC miscellaneous finfish permit for mechanical jig gear and a valid state-waters Pacific cod vessel registration from the ADF&G office in Kodiak (Appendix A1). Vessels that participate in the Kodiak Area state-waters jig gear season will be subject to state fisheries regulations, and all Pacific cod harvested will be deducted from the Kodiak Area state-waters jig gear GHL allocation.

If Pacific cod is retained for bait by the permit holder, the permit holder must complete a fish ticket with the number and estimated weight of fish retained. If Pacific cod is sold off the boat to be used as bait, a valid 2023 catcher-seller permit is required and whole fish weight must be obtained from a certified scale and reported on a fish ticket. A fisheries business license and/or additional permits may be required depending on processing/marketing activity; contact the ADF&G office in Kodiak for more information (Appendix A1).

INSEASON CATCH REPORTING AND MANAGEMENT

ADF&G will manage the fishery using inseason catch reports provided by vessel operators. Catch reports will be taken using satellite dispatch (0715), phone (907-486-1840), text/InReach/WhatsApp (907-512-5841), or email (nathaniel.nichols@alaska.gov). Vessel operators will be issued a reporting worksheet during registration (Appendix B1). ADF&G will initially call vessels for reports starting at 6:00 p.m. daily, but the reporting schedule may change if effort declines.

Completion of reporting worksheets is strongly encouraged (Appendix B1). Report vessel name, area fished, number of pots lifted, and number of crab retained, and fill in each day's catch individually. For each date fished, draw the location of the pot string(s) on the map provided. To ensure confidentiality, completed reports can be returned to ADF&G dockside staff or the ADF&G Kodiak office upon each delivery; reports may also be emailed (nathaniel.nichols@alaska.gov) or texted (907-512-5841). Vessel operators who do not turn in a reporting worksheet for each delivery may be contacted by dockside staff to complete a confidential interview.

The fishery will be closely monitored, and section or subsection closures may occur before GHLs are fully harvested based on fishery performance (measured by catch of legal crab per pot), harvest distribution, or bycatch of non-target crab. ADF&G will make every effort to communicate potential closures with as much notice as possible to allow sufficient time for vessels to configure gear for storage before a closure; however, the potential exists for short advance notice closures.

Because there is no established GHL for the Semidi Island Overlap Section, inseason management actions will be based solely on fishery performance. If catch per pot of legal males is low or if bycatch of non-target crab is high, full or partial section closures may occur before the regulatory season closure on February 28.

Closure announcements will be communicated to the fleet by dispatch, distributed via the ADF&G advisory announcement e-mail subscription service (http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main), and relayed through participating processors.

SUMMARY OF CLOSURE SCENARIOS

Delivery requirements and pot storage requirements vary depending on the type of closure (entire or partial section) and the amount of advance notice given for the closure. Following is a summary of closure scenarios, pot storage options, delivery requirements, and re-registration requirements contained in 5 AAC 35.030, 5 AAC 35.031, 5 AAC 35.052, 5 AAC 35.527, and 5 AAC 35.556.

Closure of the entire section with six or more hours advance notice

All pots must be open and unbaited at the time of the closure.

Vessel operators are required to deliver all catch within 24 hours of the closure.

Open and unbaited pots may be stored at any depth up to seven days after the section closure. After seven days, all gear remaining in the closed section must be removed from the water or placed in shallow water storage (25 fathoms or less).

After a section closure, vessel operators may contact ADF&G from the fishing grounds and register for a different open section. Once registered, vessel operators may place baited gear in the open section prior to delivery, but that gear may not be retrieved until all crab from the initial section has been delivered. Vessel operators may only operate gear during the daily fishing period (8:00

a.m. to 5:59 p.m.) even when retrieving unbaited gear after the closure or placing baited pots in the other open section prior to delivery.

Closure of the entire section with less than six hours advance notice

Vessel operators are required to proceed directly to port at the time of the closure and deliver catch within 24 hours.

After the closure, vessel operators may not place gear in storage or retrieve pots from storage until all catch has been delivered.

Vessel operators are required to return to the fishing grounds within 72 hours after delivery to rail dump all crab from any baited gear left on the grounds.

If baited gear remains in the closed section after the initial delivery, a tank inspection will be required before vessels can register and resume fishing in a different open section.

Vessel operators may register for a different open section only after completing delivery and legally storing gear in the closure area.

Partial closure of the section with six or more hours advance notice

This situation occurs when bays or other specific areas close prior to closure of the entire section.

All pot gear in the closure area must be open and unbaited at the time of the closure.

Vessel operators may store open and unbaited pots in waters deeper than 25 fathoms for seven days in the closure area.

Vessel operators may place baited gear in other areas of the section that remain open to fishing.

Within the partial closure area, vessel operators may only operate gear during the daily fishing period (8:00 a.m. to 5:59 p.m.), even when retrieving unbaited gear after the closure.

Partial closure of the section with less than six hours advance notice

This scenario is unlikely. Should this type of closure occur, landing, pot storage, and registration requirements will be defined and communicated to the fleet by dispatch and distributed by advisory announcement at the time of the closure announcement.

REFERENCES CITED

Spalinger, K., N. Nichols, and M. Knutson. 2021. Updated Tanner crab harvest strategies for Kodiak, Chignik, and South Peninsula Districts: A report to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Commercial Fisheries, Regional Information Report 4K21-13, Kodiak.

FIGURES

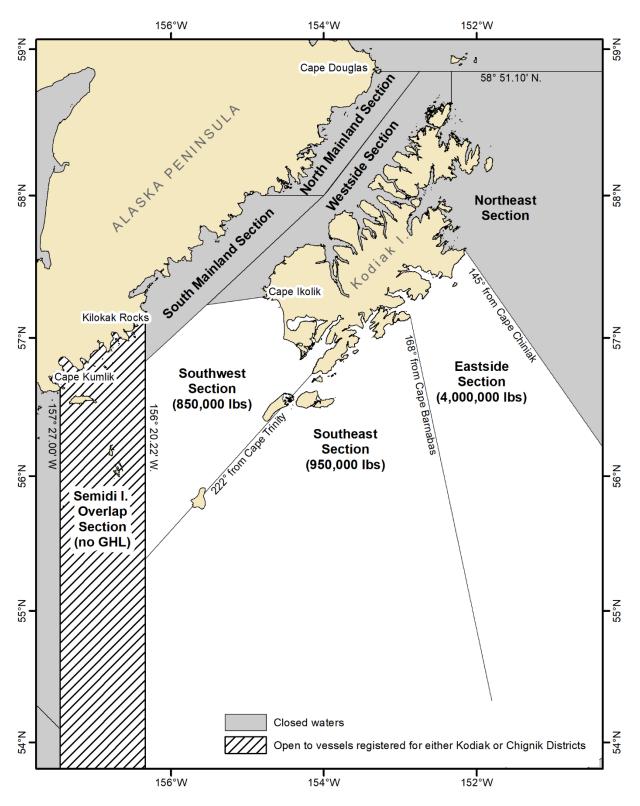


Figure 1.-District and section boundaries and guideline harvest levels (GHLs) for the Kodiak District commercial Tanner crab fishery, 2023.

APPENDIX A: CONTACT PERSONS, AGENCIES, AND PHONE NUMBERS

Appendix A1.–List of contacts by agency and location.

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME website: http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishingCommercialByArea.southwest

Kodiak Office

Mailing address: 351 Research Court Physical address: 351 Research Court Phone: (907) 486-1840

Kodiak, Alaska 99615 2nd floor, Kodiak, Alaska Satellite Dispatch: 0715 or 7894

Text/InReach/WhatsApp: (907) 512-5841

Dockside cell: (907) 539-5954

Fax: (907) 486-1824

Nath Nichols Kodiak, Chignik, Alaska Peninsula Area Shellfish/Groundfish Manager <u>nathaniel.nichols@alaska.gov</u>

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DIVISION OF ALASKA WILDLIFE TROOPERS website: http://www.dps.state.ak.us/AWT/

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COMMERCIAL FISHERIES ENTRY COMMISSION website: http://www.cfec.state.ak.us/

Juneau Office

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APPENDIX B: REPORTING WORKSHEET



2023 Kodiak District Tanner Crab Fishery Inseason Reporting Worksheet



Item 1	Item 2	Item 3
Area fished	Number of	Number of
(mark map on back)	pots lifted	crab retained
		Area fished Number of

Instructions:
Report DAILY between 6:00 and 7:00 PM to ADF&G Kodiak by any of the following methods:

- -Matrix dispatch 0715
- -Phone to ADF&G office (907) 486-1840
- -Text/InReach/WhatsApp to (907) 512-5841
- -E-mail to nathaniel.nichols@alaska.gov

Report area fished, number of pots lifted, and number of crab retained separately for each day and area fished (see map on back).

Do not combine daily reports. If one or more reporting calls are missed, communicate each day's catch individually during the next reporting call.

*Return this worksheet and map with fishing locations to ADF&G dockside sampler or shellfish management office.

(**Do not** leave form at processor office or drop box.)