SOUTHEAST ALASKA DIRECTED PACIFIC COD FISHERY ANNOUNCEMENT

Sitka . . . The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) announced today the directed fishery for Pacific cod will close at 11:59 p.m., Thursday, February 7, 2019, in the waters of Cross Sound, Icy Strait and Port Frederick (Figure 1). This area is defined as all waters of groundfish statistical areas 365804, 355801, and 355802.

The guideline harvest range for Pacific cod in the Northern Southeast Inside (NSEI) and Southern Southeast Inside (SSEI) Subdistricts combined is 750,000 – 1,250,000 round pounds. Over 74,000 round pounds of Pacific cod have been taken from Icy Strait area during the 2018/2019 seasonal fishing period through the end of January; this constitutes a 71% decrease in harvest from the 3-year average between the 2014/2015 and 2016/2017 fishing periods and an 58% decrease in Pacific cod harvest from the 5-year seasonal average. Port sampling data collected this season also indicate a high proportion of small fish in the commercial harvest. The decline in Southeast Alaska harvest continues to suggest that this area is experiencing a period of reduced biomass, similar to that seen in the Gulf of Alaska. This area closure is announced to distribute effort and harvest throughout the remaining open areas of NSEI and SSEI. The area will reopen to directed fishing for Pacific cod on July 1, 2019.

This closure affects the directed Pacific cod fishery only. Pacific cod taken as bycatch in other fisheries may be retained in these areas as permitted by established bycatch allowances.

Pacific cod catches will be closely monitored and fishermen are advised that additional area closures may occur on short notice. Closures will be announced by ADF&G news release, United States Coast Guard “Notice to Mariners” report, and the National Weather Service broadcast. Area closures will also be announced on the Groundfish Hotline at 907-747-4882.

The Emergency Order corresponding with this announcement is EO 1G0319.

Figure 1. Directed fishing for Pacific cod closes in Cross Sound, Icy Strait, and Port Frederick at 11:59 p.m., February 7, 2019.