Petersburg. . . The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) announced today that the Southeast Alaska (Registration Area A) commercial red (RKC) and blue king crab (BKC) fishery will be closed for the 2019/2020 season. The 2019 stock assessment survey results estimated 109,000 pounds of legal male RKC available for harvest which is below the minimum threshold of 200,000 pounds required to open the commercial fishery [5 AAC 34.113]. The Southeast Alaska Red King Crab Management Plan [5 AAC 34.113] directs the department to manage the RKC fishery in accordance with the Alaska Board of Fisheries’ “Policy on King and Tanner Crab Resource Management”.

Regionally, the biomass estimates for mature and legal male RKC decreased from last season. For 2019, three of the seven survey areas had increases in either legal or mature biomass, and except for Lynn Sisters, those increases in legal biomass were balanced with decreases in mature biomass. The adjusted biomass estimates for legal and mature RKC for the Southeast Region (survey areas only) are 0.91 million pounds and 1.04 million pounds respectively for the 2019/2020 season; a 1% decrease in the legal male biomass and a 6% decrease in mature male biomass. 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 budgetary reductions. 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 (1979 to 2019), commercial harvest (1979 to 2017), and biological data collected during port sampling of commercial landings. Harvest data from 1974 - 1984 indicate that an average of 52.8% has been taken from surveyed areas and 47.2% 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 (15-year) and short-term (4-year) averages.

Stock health ratings of poor and below average were calculated for six 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 five survey areas. Overall recruitment, in the form
of pre-recruit CPUE, is at significantly below average levels for five of the seven survey 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:


The Emergency Order corresponding with this announcement is EO 1C2319.


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