



Advisory Announcement
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CONTACT: Adam Messmer
Region I Lead King/Tanner Crab Biologist
Adam.messmer@alaska.gov
(907) 465-4853

**2023/2024 SOUTHEAST ALASKA COMMERCIAL RED AND BLUE KING CRAB
FISHERY CLOSURE**

The Southeast Alaska (Registration Area A) commercial red king crab (RKC) and blue king crab fishery will be closed for the 2023/2024 season. The 2023 stock assessment survey estimated 118,899 pounds of legal male RKC available for harvest, less than 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".

The Southeast RKC regional biomass estimates for the 2023/2024 season are 1.42 million lb of legal male crab and 2.08 million lb of mature male crab with only four (Lynn Sisters, Juneau, Gambier Bay, and Seymour Canal) of the seven survey areas having increases in either legal or mature biomass. The regional legal biomass increased by 9% and mature biomass increased by 20% from the previous year. 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, Juneau, Lynn Sisters, and Excursion Inlet. Peril Strait was not surveyed in 2023 and will now be surveyed on a biennial basis. The estimate of biomass was determined through a catch-survey analysis (CSA) for all surveyed areas. The CSA incorporates data from the department's annual stock assessment pot survey (1979–2023), commercial harvest (1979–2017), 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. Appropriate harvest rates were then applied to area-specific stock biomass estimates to calculate the amount available for harvest. Stock health ratings are based on catch per unit effort (CPUE) of all size and sex classes compared to long-term (15-year) and short-term (4-year) averages.

Four of the seven survey areas had stock health ratings of poor or below average. The CPUE of juvenile males has improved in two of the seven survey areas (Gambier Bay and Lynn Sisters) to be above the long-term average levels along with the Juneau area remaining above the long-term average, suggesting some improvement in these components. Recruitment, in the form of prerecruit CPUE, is significantly below long-term average levels for two of the seven survey areas (Pybus Bay and Excursion Inlet). Only Gambier Bay, Lynn Sisters, and Juneau are at or significantly above the long-term average for prerecruit CPUE, suggesting 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 17 of the 2023–2024 Statewide King and Tanner Crab Commercial Fishing Regulations booklet available in area offices, or online at:

https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/fishregulations/pdfs/commercial/cf_king_tanner_crab_2023_2024.pdf.

The Emergency Order corresponding with this announcement is EO 1C2923.

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

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