



**Advisory Announcement**  
*For Immediate Release: December 20, 2023*

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**Prince William Sound Area**  
**Directed Pollock Pelagic Trawl Fishery Opens**  
**Emergency Order # 2-GF-E-02-24**

The directed fishery for walleye pollock using pelagic trawl gear in the Prince William Sound Area (PWS; Registration Area E) will open at 12:00 noon January 20 with a guideline harvest level (GHL) of 9.61 million pounds. **The registration deadline for this fishery is January 15 at 4:30 p.m.**

Registrations for the PWS pollock pelagic trawl fishery will only be issued to individuals who possess a 2024 Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) miscellaneous saltwater finfish interim-use permit card for trawl gear. Permit card applications are available at Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) offices, CFEC, or online at [www.cfec.state.ak.us](http://www.cfec.state.ak.us).

Registrations are available in ADF&G offices in Homer and Kodiak and may also be completed by fax or e-mail. Contact the Homer office with groundfish regulatory and registration questions (907-235-8191). Registration packets may be emailed to participants or distributed through ADF&G offices in Homer and Kodiak; these packets include check-in and check-out requirements, log sheets, catch reporting procedures, and accommodation of ADF&G observers.

The *PWS Pollock Pelagic Trawl Management Plan* (5 AAC 28.263) limits the harvest from any one of the following three Inside District management sections to no more than 60% of the GHL (5.77 million lb):

- 1) Port Bainbridge Section: waters west of 148° W. long.
- 2) Knight Island Section: waters between 148° W. long. and 147° 20.00' W. long.
- 3) Hinchinbrook Section: waters east of 147° 20.00' W. long.

Total bycatch is limited to 5% or less of the total pollock harvested. The bycatch allowance is apportioned into the following five species groups as follows:

	Species Group					Total
	Rockfish	Salmon	Shark	Squid	Other	
Bycatch Apportionment	0.50%	0.04%	0.96%	3.00%	0.50%	5.00%
Annual Bycatch Cap (lb)	48,066	3,845	92,287	288,398	48,066	480,663
60% Section Bycatch Cap (lb)	28,840	2,307	55,372	173,039	28,840	288,398

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These bycatch apportionments for the fishery correspond to the allowable bycatch levels for individual vessels participating in the fishery as round weights of bycatch species, as a percentage of the round weight of pollock onboard the vessel. There is mandatory retention of all rockfish. All bycatch in excess of the above listed percentage amounts in an individual landing must be weighed and reported as bycatch overage on an ADF&G fish ticket, and these rockfish proceeds must be surrendered to the state. If bycatch in the fishery approaches or exceeds the above listed section or annual bycatch caps, the directed trawl fishery within that section or within PWS will be closed by emergency order (EO).

The department has growing concerns about the status of rockfish stocks. The rockfish Guideline Harvest Level (GHL) in PWS was exceeded in 2022 and 2023. To stay within the 2023 annual PWS rockfish GHL the department reduced rockfish bycatch limits, did not re-open the parallel Pacific cod season, and sought emergency authority from the Board of Fisheries (BOF) to close areas to commercial fishing with specific gear types by emergency order. The department is seeking the assistance of participants in directed groundfish and halibut fisheries to set gear away from areas of known rockfish abundance and is considering pursuing additional regulatory management measures to control rockfish bycatch. Voluntary measures taken to aid in the conservation of rockfish are greatly appreciated and may have a positive effect on future opportunities.

As established by 5 AAC 28.070 (e), a CFEC permit holder operating a vessel fishing for groundfish shall bring on board the vessel all walleye pollock caught while operating the vessel. The permit holder or a crewmember may not take any action intended to discard or release walleye pollock before the fish is brought on board the vessel. The permit holder shall retain all walleye pollock brought on board a vessel when a directed fishery for walleye pollock is open. Therefore, all pollock caught during the pollock pelagic trawl fishery must be brought on board the vessel and retained, even if this action results in a trip limit overage; excess pollock above the trip limit must be weighed and reported as a trip limit overage on an ADF&G fish ticket.

Because high effort could compromise ADF&G's ability to manage for both the section harvest and bycatch limits, it may be necessary to adopt weekly or daily fishing periods to ensure a manageable fishery.

Once the allowable harvest level within a section is attained, the directed trawl fishery within that section will close by EO.

ADF&G will solicit bids for a test fishery, which funds research in PWS; the available harvest will be 900,000 lb.

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