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Advisory Announcement

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REVISED

Mandatory Retention of All Salmon

Prince William Sound Area

Directed Pollock Pelagic Trawl Fishery Opens

Emergency Order # 2-GF-E-03-25

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 9.1 million pounds. **The registration deadline for this fishery is January 13 at 4:30 p.m.**

Registrations for the PWS pollock pelagic trawl fishery will only be issued to individuals who possess a 2025 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.

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, and catch reporting procedures.

At the December 2024 meeting the Board of Fisheries repealed the 60% pollock section cap [*PWS Pollock Pelagic Trawl Management Plan* (5 AAC 28.263)] to prevent moving the fleet when bycatch rates are low. The 60% section cap is in effect for rockfish and salmon:

- 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 three species groups as follows:

| | Species Group | | |
|-------------------------|---------------|------------|-------------------------|
| | Rockfish | Salmon | Shark, Squid, and Other |
| Bycatch Apportionment | 0.50% | 0.04% | 4.46% |
| Annual Bycatch Cap | 45,500 pounds | 1,152 fish | 405,860 pounds |
| 60% Section Bycatch Cap | 27,300 pounds | 691 fish | NA |

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There is mandatory retention of all rockfish and king salmon. 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 and at the Board of Fish meeting in December of 2024, ADF&G was given authority to close areas of concern in PWS, by gear type, to aid in rockfish conservation efforts. The department is seeking the assistance of participants in directed groundfish and halibut fisheries to set gear away from areas of known rockfish concentrations.

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 and the test fishery will be announced in a separate news release.

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