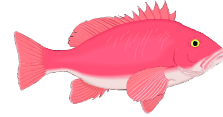


**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES
NEWS RELEASE**



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**FISHERY UPDATE
2010 CENTRAL REGION GROUND FISH FISHERIES OUTLOOK**

General

This annual news release provides a brief overview of Central Region (Cook Inlet and Prince William Sound Areas) groundfish fishing opportunities for the 2010 calendar year.

Fishermen, processors, and buyers are reminded that they must adhere to the 2009-2010 Groundfish Fishery Commercial Fishing Regulations available from ADF&G. Copies of groundfish regulations are available at southcentral ADF&G offices in Homer (235-8191), Cordova (424-3212), Anchorage (267-2104), Soldotna (262-9368), second floor of the Seward City Building, and on the state website at: www.cf.adfg.state.ak.us. Questions regarding interpretation of regulations should be directed to ADF&G groundfish staff in Homer or Cordova offices.

By regulation, all vessels operating gear for groundfish are required to obtain an Area Registration from ADF&G prior to fishing. A vessel may be registered for only one groundfish registration area at a time and must check out of an area prior to registering for another area. Cook Inlet (CI) or Prince William Sound (PWS) registrations can be obtained in person or by fax from department offices in Anchorage, Cordova, Kodiak, Soldotna, and Homer. Fishermen must present a gear-appropriate, valid CFEC interim use or permanent permit card to register. To register by fax, a legible photocopy of the permit card must be received with a request for an area registration. Non-pelagic trawl gear may not be used to target groundfish in the CI and PWS areas.

Unless otherwise specified by emergency order or regulation, no combination of retained incidental species (bycatch) may exceed 20 percent of the total round weight of directed groundfish and halibut aboard the vessel (5AAC 28.070). However, all rockfish must be retained and any rockfish bycatch in excess of the allowances listed under the Rockfish headings below, must be weighed and reported on the fish ticket, by species, as an overage. Proceeds from overages are paid to State of Alaska.

When a directed season is open for Pacific cod or pollock, regulations for improved retention and improved utilization (IR/IU) of groundfish (5 AAC 28.070 & 5 AAC 28.075) require that all captured Pacific cod or pollock be retained by the fisherman and accepted by a buyer. Similarly, all Pacific cod or pollock harvested must be retained up to the maximum retainable bycatch amounts when a bycatch season is open for these species.

All groundfish species or fisheries not specifically mentioned in this document will be managed via the miscellaneous groundfish commissioner's permit requirements specified in CI regulation 5 AAC 28.379 or PWS regulation 5 AAC 28.220.

Anyone intending to fish in federal waters, greater than 3 nautical miles from shore, should contact the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for information prior to fishing.

Area NMFS Offices

Homer:	907-235-2337	Seward:	907-224-5348	Anchorage:	907-271-5006
Kodiak:	907-481-1780	Juneau:	907-586-7228		

State regulation **5 AAC 28.055**, adopts by reference the federal regulations at 50 CFR 679.24, which were modified in 2008, and **requires seabird avoidance measures (SAM) in all longline and for groundfish and halibut in state waters except the Inside District of PWS and the Cook Inlet District of the Cook Inlet Area.** The requirement to use SAM affects vessels fishing for halibut, sablefish, parallel Pacific cod, and miscellaneous groundfish. For additional information see this link: <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/protectedresources/seabirds/guide.htm>.

Several fishing closures designed to protect endangered Steller sea lions (SSL) are noted by management area. In addition, **all vessels participating in a parallel groundfish fishery, except those using jig or hand troll gear, must have a NMFS-approved vessel monitoring system (VMS). Information on VMS can be obtained from the NMFS website: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/ole/ak_faqs.html.**

Prince William Sound Area

Prince William Sound Area (5AAC 28.200): All waters of Prince William Sound and waters of Alaska bounded on the west by the longitude of Cape Fairfield (148°50.25' W. long.) south to the latitude of Cape Douglas (58°51.10' N. lat.), then west to 149°00.00' W. long., then south along 149°00.00' W. long. and on the east by 144°00.00' W. long.

PWS Inside District: All waters of PWS enclosed by lines from Pt. Whittshed to Pt. Bentinck, Cape Hinchinbrook to Zaikof Pt., and Cape Cleare to Cape Puget.

PWS Outside District: is divided into two sections:

Eastern Section: waters of the PWS area excluding the Inside District and between 147°00' W. long. and 144°00' W. long.

Western Section: waters of the PWS area excluding the Inside District and west of 147°00' W. long.

Groundfish fishing closures related to SSL conservation include waters surrounding two rookeries in the PWS area, Seal Rocks and Wooded Island (Fish Island) (Figure 1). Directed commercial fishing for groundfish is closed to all gear types within 3 nautical miles of each of

these rookeries. For specific regulatory language describing the closure areas, contact NMFS in Kodiak at 907-481-1780 or consult the website at: <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/regs/679b22.pdf>.

Pollock - The directed fishery will open at 12:00 noon January 20 with a 3.64 million pound guideline harvest level (GHL). Participants must obtain a pollock fishery registration from the department no later than January 13. Regulation 5 AAC 28.263 PWS Pollock Pelagic Trawl Management Plan requires in-season catch reports, logbooks, and accommodation of a department observer upon request. After the directed fishery closes, pollock must be retained up to the maximum allowable bycatch amount to other open directed groundfish fisheries. Additionally, all pollock taken with jig gear in the state waters Pacific cod fishery may be retained.

Sablefish – PWS limited entry sablefish permit holders must obtain a fishery-specific registration prior to the April 1 deadline in order to participate in the 2010 fishery. Fishery season dates are April 15 –August 31. The 242,000-pound GHL is divided among registered permit holders under the shared quota approach described in regulation 5 AAC 28.272. CFEC regulations allow an interim-use or limited entry permit holder to use a vessel with an overall length greater than the vessel category for which the permit is issued. The department will distribute a news release during the first week of April outlining 2010 fishery management and allocation by permit class. Sablefish in PWS may not be retained as bycatch. Killer whale depredation on hooked sablefish has been a problem in recent years, resulting in the removal of undocumented numbers of sablefish during longline retrieval. Fishermen should note that this problem has typically decreased after mid May.

Rockfish – Rockfish in PWS may only be retained as bycatch to other directed fisheries. The PWS Rockfish Management Plan in regulation 5 AAC 28.265 requires full retention of all rockfish caught and mandates that proceeds from the sale of any bycatch overage be paid to the State of Alaska. Rockfish bycatch limits are 20% during the PWS sablefish fishery, 5% during the state waters Pacific cod fishery, and 10% during other directed groundfish and halibut fisheries. The rockfish harvest cap of 150,000 lb and the 5-day trip limit of 3,000 lb remain in effect. Black rockfish in federal waters of the PWS Area are managed by ADF&G as part of the 150,000 lb GHL.

Lingcod – ADF&G has management authority for lingcod in both state and federal waters of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Lingcod may be retained when the directed fishery is open (July 1 - December 31, unless closed earlier by emergency order) and as bycatch at the 20% level following closure of the directed fishery. Harvest guidelines are 7,300 lb for the Inside District and 25,300 lb for the Outside District. The department will also issue an emergency order to require all lingcod be landed with the head on and the vent intact, for gender determination, so that biological sampling goals can be met.

Pacific cod - The PWS parallel Pacific cod season will open on January 1 and close concurrent with the Pacific cod season in federal waters of the Central Gulf of Alaska. See the “General” section at the top of this document regarding **VMS and seabird avoidance** requirements for parallel fishery participants. Fishermen are reminded that the eastern portion of the PWS Inside District is closed to fishing with groundfish pot gear except for shallow areas on either side of Hinchinbrook Entrance (5AAC 28.250). Regulations require that Pacific cod be retained up to

the maximum bycatch allowance unless 1) closed by emergency order or 2) the vessel is participating in a directed Pacific cod fishery. In PWS Pacific cod may be retained at a 20 percent bycatch allowance to other directed fisheries for vessels using longline, pot or mechanical jig gear. This bycatch allowance is in addition to the bycatch allowance of 20 percent for other species specified in 5 AAC 28.070. However, the landed weight of Pacific cod retained as bycatch may not exceed 20 percent of the directed finfish species on board the vessel. The commissioner may, by emergency order, close and immediately reopen a season in which the bycatch limit for any species is reduced.

The state waters Pacific cod season will open seven days after the closure of the parallel Pacific cod fishery. The season will be open to pot, jig, and longline gear in the Inside District, Western Section of the Outside District, and that portion of the Eastern Section of the Outside District from 147° 00 W. long. to Hook Point (146° 15.12' W. long.). The state waters fishery requires a separate exclusive area registration.. Exclusive area registration forms can be completed at department offices in Homer, Cordova, Soldotna, Kodiak, and Anchorage. A news release in late January will provide additional information.

Skates: The department will again conduct a skate fishery targeting longnose and big skates in PWS through funding provided by a 2008 capital budget request. The season will open concurrent with the IFQ halibut fishery and close no later than April 30. Registration for the fishery will occur via Commissioner's Permit (5 AAC 28.083). A separate news release will announce the fishery registration deadline and GHl's by species. Commissioner's Permits will be available at ADF&G offices in Cordova, Anchorage, and Homer. Fishermen must present a 2010, gear-appropriate, miscellaneous finfish interim use permit card issued by the CFEC and documentation of a current U.S. Coast Guard safety inspection in order to register. Fishery management measures will include logbooks, reporting requirements, and accommodation of department observers and may include trip limits.

Cook Inlet Area

Cook Inlet Area (5AAC 28.300) - All waters of Alaska within Cook Inlet and along the outer Kenai Peninsula north of the latitude of Cape Douglas (58°51.10' N. lat.) and west of the longitude of Cape Fairfield (148°50.25' W. long.).

Cook Inlet District - Waters of Alaska in the Cook Inlet Area north of a line from Cape Douglas to Point Adam (59° 15.27' N lat.).

North Gulf District - Waters of Alaska in the Cook Inlet Area north of the latitude of Cape Douglas, and west of the longitude of Cape Fairfield excluding the Cook Inlet District.

Pollock - Cook Inlet Area pollock must be retained up to maximum bycatch amounts. However, all pollock taken with jig gear in the state waters Pacific cod fishery may be retained.

Sablefish - The season will open at 12:00 noon July 15 by emergency order and a fishery GHl will be announced in early June. Participation in the fishery requires a separate registration and logbooks. The fishery has vessel trip limits of 3,000 pounds of sablefish (round weight) in any

two consecutive days. Registrations and logbooks are available at department offices. The 2010 GHL for this fishery is estimated to be 54,000 lb and is based upon the 1992-1996 historical average of 104,000 lb adjusted proportionally to changes of the total allowable catch (TAC) for sablefish in the federal Central Gulf of Alaska. Sablefish may be retained in the state waters of the Cook Inlet Management Area only when the directed season is open.

Rockfish – There is a 150,000 lb GHL for all rockfish species in the Cook Inlet Area. All rockfish caught must be retained. A jig-only (mechanical or hand troll) fishery targeting **pelagic rockfish** opens July 1. Black and dark rockfish in federal waters of CI area are managed by ADF&G as part of the Cook Inlet GHL. There is a 1,000 lb trip limit in the Cook Inlet District and a 4,000 lb, trip limit in the North Gulf District. A trip is defined as any landing in 5 consecutive days. Rockfish bycatch allowances are: 5% during the state waters and parallel Pacific cod fisheries, 10% during the halibut fishery, and 10% to other directed groundfish fisheries. Proceeds from bycatch overages must be paid to the State of Alaska.

Lingcod ADF&G has management authority for lingcod in both state and federal waters of the EEZ. Directed fishing for lingcod opens July 1, is restricted to harvest with jig (mechanical or hand troll) gear, and has a 52,500 lb GHL. Lingcod may be retained **only** when the directed fishery is open. The Resurrection Bay portion (north of a line from Aialik Cape to Cape Resurrection) of the North Gulf District is closed to any retention of lingcod.

Pacific cod - Pacific cod fishing closures related to SSL conservation establish longline and pot gear closures within 10 nautical miles (nm), in addition to no-transit zones within 3 nm, of Sugarloaf Island and Outer Pye Island rookeries to protect endangered Steller sea lions (Figure 2). For specific regulatory language describing the closure areas, contact NMFS in Kodiak at 907- 481-1780 or consult the NMFS website at: <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/regs/679b22.pdf>.

The parallel Pacific cod season will open January 1 and will be managed concurrently with NMFS management of the Pacific cod fishery in adjacent federal waters of the Central Gulf of Alaska. See the “General” section at the top of this document regarding the **VMS and seabird avoidance** requirements for parallel fishery participants. Portions of both Kachemak and Kamishak Bays are closed to fishing with groundfish pot gear. Fishermen are reminded to check with groundfish staff in Homer or consult regulations regarding specific areas of Cook Inlet that are closed to fishing with pot gear. After the parallel fishery closes, Pacific cod must be retained up to the maximum bycatch allowance unless 1) closed by emergency order or, 2) the vessel is participating in the state waters Pacific cod fishery.

Twenty-four hours following the closure of the parallel Pacific cod fishery, the state waters Pacific cod season will open in the Cook Inlet Management Area. This fishery will require a separate exclusive area registration for either pot or jig gear. Exclusive registration forms can be completed at department offices in Homer, Cordova, Soldotna, Kodiak, and Anchorage. A news release in late January will provide additional information.

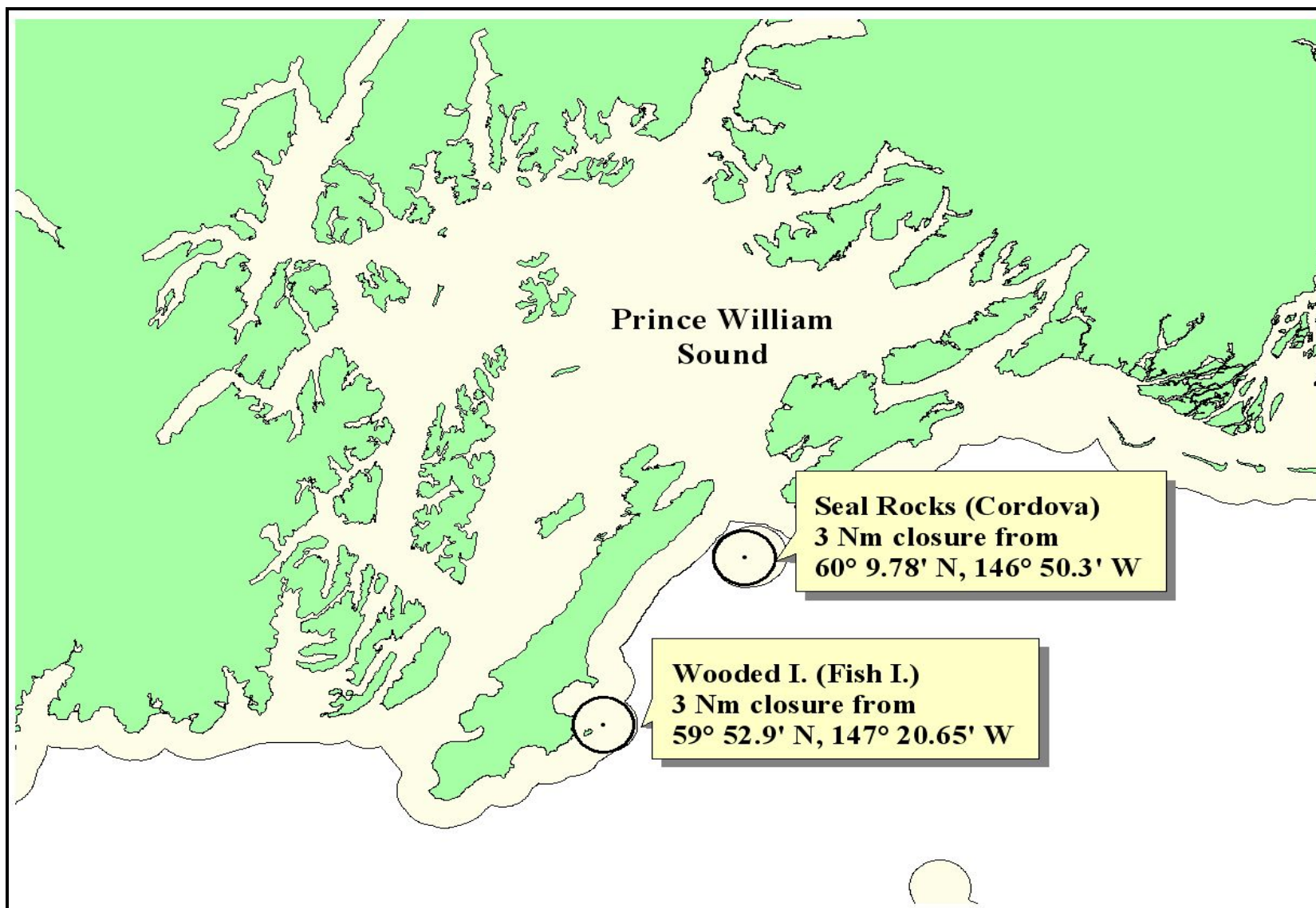


Figure 1. Directed groundfish fishing closure areas surrounding Steller sea lion rookeries in the Prince William Sound Area.

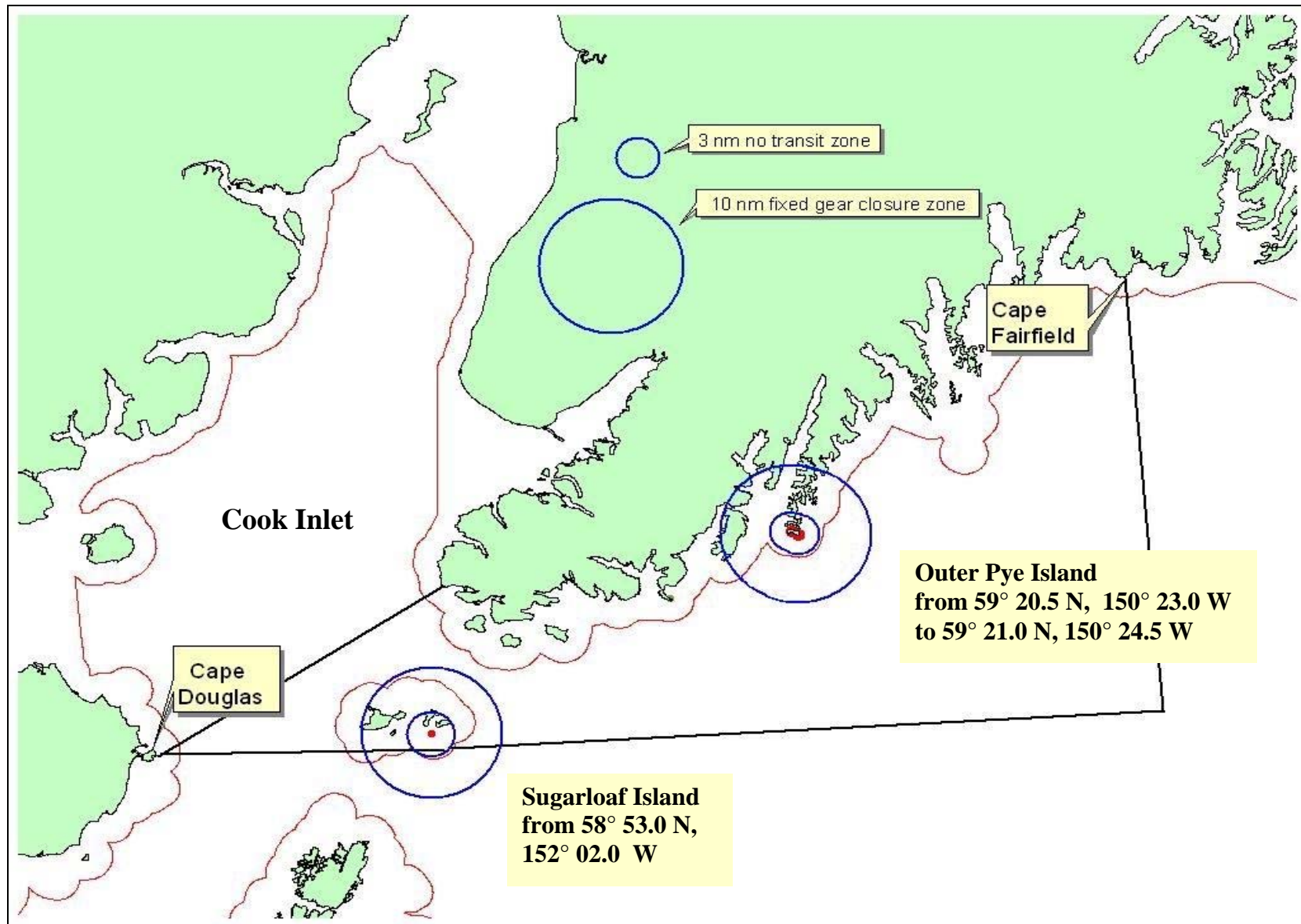


Figure 2. Vessel no-transit and fixed gear Pacific cod fishing closure zones around Steller sea lion rookeries within the Cook Inlet Management Area.