



**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**

**REPORT TO THE NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

**September 18, 1996**

Fisheries managed under delegated authority of the State of Alaska since the last council meeting include crab, scallops, salmon and demersal rockfish.

BERING SEA/ALEUTIAN ISLANDS KING AND TANNER CRAB FISHERIES: On August 14, the Department announced the 1996/97 guideline harvest levels for the Bering Sea and Bristol Bay king crab fisheries, and on August 29, the guideline harvest levels for Bering Sea Tanner crab (see attached News Releases, August 14, and August 29, 1996).

The new Aleutians District, consisting of the Adak and Dutch Harbor brown king crab registration areas, opened to fishing on September 1. The guideline harvest level for the new district is split, with 3.2 million pounds of brown king crab allowed east of 174° West longitude and 2.7 million pounds west of 174° West longitude. By regulation, observers are required on all vessels participating in the fishery.

Bering Sea king crab fisheries in the St. Matthew section and the Pribilof Islands district open on September 15.

The 1995/96 Adak brown king crab fishery closed by regulation on August 15 with a total harvest of 4.6 million pounds valued at \$9.7 million. The 1994/95 Adak brown king crab harvest was 6.1 million pounds valued at \$20.3 million.

The Norton Sound red king crab fishery opened by regulation on July 1 with a guideline harvest level of 350,000 pounds. A total of 53 vessels registered for the fishery, landing approximately 220,000 pounds valued at over \$495,000 before the September 3 regulatory closure. Due to pre-molting crab observed during the fishery and preliminary survey results indicating a substantial decrease in the

closure. Due to pre-molting crab observed during the fishery and preliminary survey results indicating a substantial decrease in the red king crab population, the fishery was not extended to try and maximize the harvest. Based on the survey results, reduced harvest levels can be expected.

STATEWIDE SCALLOP FISHERY: On July 23, 1996, the State of Alaska announced that after being closed for over 17 months, the Alaska weathervane scallop fishery would open at 12:00 noon, August 1, 1996. State waters in the Yakutat and District 16 areas remained closed due state waters harvests in January 1996, and all waters of Prince William Sound remained closed as state managers believe the illegal fishing in 1995 harvested what would have been this year's GHL. All remaining state and federal waters, except for Cook Inlet, opened simultaneously throughout the state, (see attached News Release dated July 23, 1996).

SALMON TROLL FISHERY: Approximately 45,500 Chinook salmon were harvested during the May and June fisheries that targeted Alaska hatchery stocks. The July general summer fishery occurred between July 1 through July 10 and harvested 76,400 fish. A second Chinook opening occurred August 19 and 20, and harvested 8,100 fish, for a total harvest of 130,000 Chinook. The 1996 Alaska harvest was managed not to exceed between 140,000 and 155,000 Chinook.

SOUTHEAST ALASKA GROUND FISH FISHERY: 1) The directed demersal shelf rockfish fishery is closed until November after the IFQ fishery closes; 2) for the first time in the Southern Southeast Outside area, a directed lingcod fishery has developed with approximately 80,000 pounds landed, and; 3) the Chatham Strait blackcod fishery opens September 8 for 60 days. A 24,500 pound/permit limit is in effect for the 122 permits in this fishery.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- 1) On **October 3, 1996**, the annual Bering Sea/Aleutian Island Crab Industry and ADF&G staff meeting will be held at the Alaska Fisheries and Technology Center in **Kodiak, Alaska**. The public and industry representatives are urged to attend.
- 2) The Board of Fisheries will deliberate a statewide groundfish management plan at their Fall meeting, **October 28-30**, at **Lake Lucille, Alaska**.

# COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



## NEWS RELEASE

ALASKA DEPARTMENT  
OF FISH & GAME



STATE OF ALASKA  
Department of Fish and Game  
Frank Rue, Commissioner

Westward Region  
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Kodiak, AK 99615

Robert C. Clasby, Director  
Commercial Fisheries Management  
and Development Division

Contact: James A. Spalinger  
Regional Shellfish/Groundfish  
Management Biologist  
Westward Region

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: July 23, 1996

### ATTENTION ALASKA SCALLOP FISHERMEN

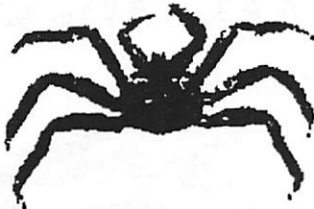
Weather-vane scallop fisheries in areas K, M, O, Q, and R will open at 12:00 noon August 1, 1996 in both state and federal waters. Fisheries will also open in area D and District 16 of area A in federal waters only. It is required that all vessels be registered for an individual area and carry an onboard observer.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has released the king and Tanner crab bycatch levels and guideline harvest levels for the 1996/97 scallop fishery. The bycatch and guideline harvest levels by area are as follows:

<u>Registration Area</u>	<u>Guideline Harvest Level</u> (pounds of shucked meats)	<u>Bycatch Levels</u>	
		<u>Tanner Crab</u>	<u>King Crab</u>
Southeast	0 to 27,000	-	-
Yakutat	0 to 195,000	-	-
Kodiak	0 to 400,000	-	-
Shelikof	-	16,100	22
Northeast	-	130,000	66
Alaska Peninsula	0 to 200,000	22,000	435
Dutch Harbor	0 to 170,000	10,700	10
Bering Sea	0 to 600,000	257,000 <i>C. bairdi</i>	500
		275,000 <i>C. opilio</i>	
Adak	0 to 75,000	10,000	50

Fishermen should be aware that these bycatch levels are the maximum allowed. Registrations require vessel operators to notify observers of every king crab encountered. If, at any time the bycatch rate becomes excessively high the department may close those effected areas prior to achieving these levels. When possible the department will inform the fleet as to the overall crab bycatch rate by area as the season progresses. For additional information please contact the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Kodiak at (907)-486-1840.

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## NEWS RELEASE

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Robert C. Clasby, Director  
Commercial Fisheries Management  
and Development Division

Contact: Rance Morrison  
Area Shellfish Biologist  
Dutch Harbor, AK

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: August 6, 1996

### ATTENTION ALEUTIAN ISLANDS KING CRAB FISHERMEN

At their spring 1996 meeting, the Alaska Board of Fisheries passed regulations which combined the Adak and Dutch Harbor king crab areas into a single king crab management area. This new area, called the Aleutian Islands king crab Management Area "O", extends west from Scotch Cap Light to the U.S. and Russian Convention Line.

The Aleutian Islands Area, which opens at 12:00 noon on September 1 for brown king crab, will be managed and closed by emergency order, on a stock-by-stock basis. There are two major stocks of brown king crab which occur in this area. One, in the eastern or Seguam Pass area, the other, in that area west of Adak Island. Based on historic commercial landings, the division line between these two populations has been established at 174° West longitude.

The eastern or Seguam stock has traditionally been divided by the Dutch Harbor and Adak management Areas at 171° West longitude. Historically, this area has been more intensively fished in it's western half, that portion in the former Adak Management Area, than in the eastern half in the Dutch Harbor area. As a result, a higher percentage of first year recruit crab and lower average weights have been observed in that portion of this stock west of 171° West longitude.

Based on this information, the Board of Fisheries directed the department to manage king crab stocks throughout the entire Seguam area consistent with harvest goals established for the former Dutch Harbor area. Consequently, the most recent five year average harvest of 1.6 million pounds for the Dutch Harbor portion of this stock will be applied to the western portion of the Seguam area.

-Continued-

News Release

August 6, 1996

This results in a total harvest goal of 3.2 million pounds for that portion of the Aleutian Islands Management Area east of 174° West longitude.

In the western part of the Aleutian Islands Management Area, west of 174° West longitude, the harvest goal will remain at the most recent five year average harvest level of 2.7 million pounds.

Additional new regulations for the Aleutian Islands king crab fishery, which go into effect on September 1, 1996, require all pots fished for brown king crab be operated **ONLY** from a shellfish longline. Each pot must be equipped with at least four circular escape rings (5.5" minimum inside diameter) installed on the vertical plane **OR** at least one-third of one vertical surface of the pot composed of not less than nine-inch stretched mesh webbing.

Fishermen are reminded that onboard fisheries observers are required on all fishing and processing vessels participating in the Aleutian Islands king crab fishery. An observer, briefed for the fishery, must be onboard the vessel at the time of the tank inspection. Also, the holder of a 1996 K91R or K09R Adak king crab or 1998 K91O or K09O Aleutian Islands king crab interim-use (C.F.E.C.) permit card must also be on the vessel at the time of registration, tank inspection and during all fishing operations.

Registration and tank inspections will be available 72 hours prior to the start of the season at Dutch Harbor and Akutan. Courtesy pre-tank inspections will be available **IN DUTCH HARBOR ONLY**, and **only** to facilitate loading of gear. Pre-tank inspections **WILL NOT BE PROVIDED IN AKUTAN**.

Beginning August 15, 1996, longline gear storage will be allowed in waters 50 fathoms or less in the entire Aleutian Islands Management Area, except that gear may not be stored in waters of Hot Springs Bay or Kalekta Bay as specified in 5 AAC 34.625(d). Gear may not be stored in the water east of 171° West longitude from June 1 through August 15.

Fishermen are also reminded, according to 5 AAC 34.050, a vessel validly registered to take king crab in Statistical Area O may not place king crab gear in or remove king crab gear from the water within the 72 hours before the opening of the king crab fishery in that area.

End



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Contact: James A. Spalinger  
Regional Shellfish  
Management Biologist  
Westward Region

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: August 14, 1996

### ATTENTION BERING SEA AND BRISTOL BAY KING CRAB FISHERMEN

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has released guideline harvest levels (GHL) for upcoming Bering Sea king crab fisheries. The projected harvest is based on the 1996 National Marine Fishery Service (NMFS) Bering Sea summer trawl assessment survey. Results of this survey have been reviewed by ADF&G and NMFS staff and the following harvest levels were established.

<u>Registration Area</u>	<u>Opening Date</u>	<u>GHL (Million of Pounds)</u>
St. Matthew Island	12:00 noon, September 15	4.3
Pribilof Islands	12:00 noon, September 15	1.8
Bristol Bay	12:00 noon, November 1	5.0

#### **St. Matthew Island blue king crab fishery.**

The St. Matthew king crab fishery will open at 12:00 noon on September 15, 1996. The blue king crab population in this area is considered stable. The 4.3 million pound GHL in the St. Matthew Island fishery is based on a 20% exploitation rate of 5.2 million mature males in the population.

#### **Pribilof Islands king crab fishery.**

The Pribilof Islands fishery will open to fishing for blue and red king crab at 12:00 noon on September 15, 1996. Blue king crab stock abundance is reduced from last year but remains above fishery threshold levels. Red king crab estimates are also reduced with a major part of the population comprised of large, older individuals. The combined species harvest of 1.8 million pounds is based on 20% exploitation of mature blue king crab and some expected incidental catch of red king crab.

**Bristol Bay red king crab fishery.** The Bristol Bay red king crab fishery will open at 12:00 noon on November 1, 1996. Population levels remain low, but survey results indicate the mature female population is above the threshold established in the King Crab Management Plan. A 10% exploitation rate on mature males as prescribed in the management plan resulted in a guideline harvest level of 5.0 million pounds.

Survey results for Bering Sea Tanner crab fisheries will be available by September 4, 1996. For further details contact the Alaska Department of Fish and Game at 486-1840.

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: August 29, 1996

### ATTENTION BERING SEA CRAB FISHERMEN

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game and National Marine Fisheries Service have completed their annual stock analyses for Bering Sea *Chionoecetes bairdi*, *C. opilio* and Korean Hair crab populations. The following guideline harvest levels have been established for the 1996/97 fisheries.

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>GHL</u>	<u>OPENING DATE</u>
<i>C. bairdi</i> (west of 163° W long)	6.2 million pounds	Nov. 1
<i>C. opilio</i> (4" and larger)	117.0 million pounds	Jan. 15
Korean Hair crab (Pribilof District)	0.9 million pounds	Nov. 1

#### *C. bairdi*

The total population estimate for the *C. bairdi* stock remains at low levels. The 1996 survey shows a population of 9 million legal males compared to 11 million legal males last year. Poor recruitment to legal-sized crab is expected to continue in the next few years. Fishing for *C. bairdi* east of 168° West longitude will open concurrent to the Bristol Bay red king crab season on Nov. 1st. The area between 163° and 173° W longitude will reopen to *C. bairdi* fishing 10 days after the close of the king crab season.

-Continued-

News Release

August 29, 1996

The guideline harvest level of 6.2 million pounds was based on 40% exploitation of legal size males in the *C. bairdi* population west of 163° W longitude. The majority of those crab are old shell postrecruits. The area east of 163° will be open to Tanner crab fishing only as incidental catch during the king crab fishery and will not be managed to a guideline harvest level.

### *C. Opilio*

Survey results for the *C. opilio* resource indicate a harvestable surplus of 117 million pounds of male opilio. Populations of large crab have approximately doubled over the previous season. The guideline harvest level was based on 58% exploitation of crab 4 inches and greater. No Eastern or Western Subdistrict guidelines were established as the crab were predominately located in the Eastern Subdistrict. The fishery will be managed as a single stock.

### Korean Hair Crab

The NMFS survey results indicate a Pribilof District population of 3.1 million male Korean hair crab 3.25 inches or greater in carapace width. A conservative 20% exploitation rate was used to establish a guideline harvest level of 900,000 pounds because uncertainty in the population estimates and lack of information on reproductive biology of Korean hair crab. Estimates of Korean Hair crab populations in other districts of the Bering Sea are too low to warrant fisheries.

For further details contact the Alaska Department of Fish and Game at 907-486-1840.

END



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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: September 9, 1996

### ATTENTION BERING SEA/ALEUTIAN ISLANDS CRAB INDUSTRY

The annual Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) staff/crab industry meeting will be held in **Kodiak, Alaska, October 3, 1996**. The meeting will be held at the Fish Tech Center, and will begin at 8:30 A.M. and continue until 5:00 P.M.

The meeting will cover important issues relating to recent Board of Fisheries and North Pacific Fishery Management Council actions in the Bering Sea crab and groundfish fisheries. In addition, ADF&G staff will present the information on the BSAI crab survey results, preseason Guideline Harvest Levels (GHL) for the Bristol Bay red king crab and Bering Sea Tanner crab fisheries, fishery updates on the St. Mathew and Pribilof Islands king crab fisheries. The crab observer program, (opilio season info??) Bristol Bay king crab size reduction, and the Adak pot limit proposal will also be discussed.

The public is urged to attend this meeting. This is an excellent opportunity to interact with the management and research staff's involved in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands crab fisheries.