



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

REPORT TO THE NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

December 9, 1997

The State of Alaska is delegated the authority to manage fisheries in federal waters for crab, scallops, troll salmon, and demersal shelf rockfish in the Eastern Gulf of Alaska. Fisheries for lingcod and state waters Pacific Cod are managed by the state. This report summarizes fishery management of these species for the period September 16, to December 1, 1997.

BERING SEA/ALEUTIAN ISLANDS KING AND TANNER CRAB FISHERIES

The Saint Matthew blue king crab fishery opened September 15 with 117 vessels registered and a GHJ of 5.0 million lbs. Harvest in the fishery, which closed on September 22 was 4.7 million lbs. The Pribilof Islands blue and red king crab fishery opened concurrently with the Saint Matthew blue king crab fishery on September 15 with 48 vessels registering. A combined species GHJ was set at 1.5 million lbs. The fishery closed on September 29 with a total harvest of 1.3 million lbs., 756,000 lbs. of red king crab and 512,000 lbs. of blue king crabs. The Bristol Bay red king crab fishery opened at 16:00 hours on November 1 with a GHJ of 7.0 million lbs. A total of 257 vessels participated in the fishery. The fishery closed at 18:00 hours on November 5 with a total harvest of 8.6 million lbs. The Aleutian Islands brown king crab fishery opened on September 1 with 14 vessels registering and a GHJ of 5.9 million lbs. split 3.2 million lbs. east of 174° west longitude and 2.7 million lbs. west of 174° west longitude corresponding to areas of stock distribution. The eastern area closed to fishing at 12:00 noon on November 24. Harvest is expected to be 3.3 million lbs.

STATEWIDE SCALLOP FISHERY

The department closed Kodiak Northeast district scallop fishery November 18 bringing the total Kodiak area harvest to 356,000 lbs. of shucked meats. Crab bycatch from the Northeast district was 13,000 Tanner crabs and no king crab. This is well below the limit of 91,600 Tanner crabs and 50 king crabs. To date a total of 6 unique vessels have harvested scallops statewide and 3 unique vessels fished Cook Inlet. The Alaska Peninsula and Adak registration areas remain open to scallop fishing.

SALMON TROLL FISHERY

The 1997/1998 winter troll fishery opened on October 11. The catch through December 1 was 5,000 fish. Approximately 1,450 fish were from Alaska hatcheries.

SE ALASKA DEMERSAL SHELF ROCKFISH AND LINGCOD FISHERIES

Since the first of September, 144,704 ^{POUNDS} ~~t (metric ton)~~ of DSR have been harvested in the CSEO, SSEO, and EYKT management areas. The directed DSR fishery reopened on November 16 and has already closed in CSEO after harvest of the remaining 30 t Directed DSR fisheries remain open in EYKT and SSEO. Reported bycatch in IFQ fisheries was estimated at approximately 2 t in NSEO, 5 t in CSEO, 3 t in SSEO and 4 t in EYKT. Lingcod is open for dinglebar gear but closed inside 3 miles December 1. A total of 72,000 lbs. of lingcod have been landed since September 1 and over half is bycatch in the longline fisheries.

STATE WATERS PACIFIC COD FISHERY

In Prince William Sound 8 vessels have harvested 130,000 lbs. of the 880,000 lb. Pacific cod GHL. At the end of October the department released 400,000 lbs. of the GHL to NMFS to provide for the possibility of additional harvest and removed exclusive area registration and gear limits for the area. A total of 64 vessels have harvested Pacific cod in the Cook Inlet fishery: 547,000 lbs. using jig gear and 146,000 lbs. using pot gear. The department released 900,000 lbs. of the Cook Inlet GHL back to NMFS in the end of October. At the same time exclusive area registration and gear limits were lifted and in early November fishing effort increased slightly. In Cook Inlet the department has been sampling Pacific cod deliveries four times a week and using on-board observers to collect bycatch information three days a week. Harvest in the Westward region through the third week of November was: 7.2 million lbs. of an 8.5 million lb. GHL in the Kodiak district; 8.0 million lbs. of a 9.4 million lb. GHL in the South Alaska Peninsula district; and 1.1 million lbs. of a 5.9 million lb. GHL in the Chignik district. The department eased restrictions on vessel size, pot limits, jig machine limits, and lifted the exclusive registration area at the end of October to allow the industry additional opportunity to harvest Pacific cod. Since that time deliveries have increased to nearly 500,000 pounds per week from the Kodiak and South Alaska Peninsula districts. The department projects the preseason GHL will be taken in those areas. The Chignik district has not been fished in over a month and it is unlikely the 1997 GHL will be achieved in that area.

In anticipation of regulatory harvest step-up provisions, it is recommended that the NPFMC reserve 20% of the Western Gulf Pacific cod ABC for the 1998 South Alaska Peninsula state waters fishery. Considering the Kodiak fishery is projected to achieve harvest goals, while the Chignik and Cook Inlet areas may not, it is recommended the NPFMC reserve 17.5% of the Central Gulf ABC for state waters Pacific cod fisheries.

OTHER GROUND FISH

In Southeast, Chatham Strait sablefish was open September 1 to November 15 with 4.72 million lbs. landed. Though the Clarence Strait sablefish longline fishery closed in the spring, the sablefish pot fishery opened September 1 and harvested a total of 116,385 lbs.

The department has developed a GHL for pollock in Prince William Sound using survey data from longline and bottom trawl gears. The 1998 GHL of 1,900 t is an increase of 100 t over the 1997 GHL. Also, preliminary results of genetic comparisons of pollock collected from Prince William Sound, state waters of the northern Gulf of Alaska, and federal waters near Middleton Island and Kodiak should be available in January.