

April 2013

**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME  
REPORT TO THE NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

Fisheries managed by the State of Alaska since the last council report includes those for crab and groundfish.



**Aleutian Islands Golden King Crab** (FIGURES 1 & 2)

The Area 2012/13 Area O (Aleutian Islands) commercial golden king crab fishery opened August 15, 2012. The total allowable catch (TAC) is 6.29 million pounds. The TAC is apportioned east and west of 174° W longitude with the eastern IFQ/CDQ TAC set at 3.31 million pounds and the western IFQ/CDQ TAC set at 2.98 million pounds.

As previously reported, the eastern Aleutian Islands TAC has been full harvested. The western Aleutian Islands fishery is ongoing and four vessels have harvested 2.65 million pounds (89%) of the combined IFQ and ACA allocation; CPUE is similar to past years at 22 crabs per pot. The golden king crab fishery in the Aleutian Islands remains open through May 15, 2013.

**Bering Sea Snow Crab** (FIGURE 5)

The Bering Sea snow crab fishery opened on October 15, 2012 and will remain open through May 15, 2013 in the Eastern Subdistrict and through May 31, 2013 in the Western Subdistrict. The 2012/13 snow crab TAC is 66.35 million pounds, 59.715 million pounds are apportioned to the IFQ fishery and 66.35 million pounds are apportioned to the CDQ fishery. Seventy vessels registered for the fishery and 22 vessels are currently fishing. To date, 54 million pounds (90%) of IFQ and 5.8 million pounds (87%) of CDQ TAC have been harvested. Catch rates are down slightly and average CPUE is 214 crabs per pot. Ice is covering northern parts of the fishing ground and moving west.

**Central Region Pacific Cod**

**Prince William Sound** (FIGURE 6)

The GHL increased slightly from last year to 1.78 million pounds (808 mt) and is calculated as 25 percent of the federal Eastern Gulf ABC. The Prince William Sound state-waters season has an exclusive registration designation.

The state-waters jig season opens 24-hours after the closure of the CGOA federal A-season jig fishery which to date remains open.

The state-waters pot season opened at noon on February 11, 24-hours after the closure of the CGOA federal A-season pot fishery. No vessels registered to fish with pot gear.

The state-waters longline season opened on March 28, concurrent with the IFQ Halibut season opening date. Thirteen vessels have registered to fish with longline gear and harvested a total of 180,000 pounds.

**Cook Inlet** (FIGURE 7)

The GHL for the Cook Inlet Area is calculated as 3.75 percent of the ABC for the Central GOA and the 2013 GHL was set at 4.07 million pounds (1,850 mt). The GHL is allocated 75% to pot gear and 25% to jig gear. Pot vessels larger than 58 feet are limited to 25% of the total GHL prior to September 1. In addition to the directed fishery, Pacific cod may be retained in state

waters as bycatch to other directed groundfish and halibut fisheries at a maximum of 20%. Cook Inlet is designated as an exclusive registration area for Pacific cod.

The state-waters jig season in Cook Inlet opens 24-hours after the closure of the CGOA federal A-season jig fishery which to date remains open.

The state-waters pot season opened at noon on February 11, 24-hours after the closure of the Central Gulf of Alaska A-season pot fishery. The fishery closed to pot vessels greater than 58 feet in length on March 11. Total pot fishery harvest to date is 2.52 million pounds by 13 vessels.

### **Westward Region Pacific Cod**

#### **Kodiak Pacific Cod (FIGURE 8)**

The 2013 state-waters GHL for the Kodiak Area is 13.58 million pounds (6,160 mt) and is allocated 50 percent to mechanical jig and hand troll gears and 50 percent to pot gear, or 6.79 million pounds (3,080 mt) each. Vessel operators fishing with pot gear on vessels longer than 58 feet overall length are restricted to 25% of the GHL before September 1. The Kodiak Area is designated as an exclusive registration area for Pacific cod.

The state-waters pot fishery opened on February 17, seven days after the CGOA federal A-season pot fishery closure and closed on April 2, 2013. A total of 35 vessels participated in the fishery and it was anticipated that the total allocation would be reached at the time of the closure.

The state-waters jig fishery opened at noon on March 15, 2013 to facilitate exploitation of the state-waters GHL. Through March 9, 2013 approximately 94% of the federal/parallel CGOA A-season jig gear allocation remained unharvested. By regulation, the state may close the Kodiak Area parallel season and immediately reopen the Kodiak Area state-waters season. This allows concurrent seasons to occur; a state-water jig gear season that accrues to the GHL and a federal (3 to 200 nmi) CGOA jig gear season that accrues to the TAC. To date, 53 vessels have harvested just over 22,000 pounds of the GHL fishery.

#### **Chignik Pacific Cod (FIGURE 9)**

The 2013 GHL is 9.5 million pounds (4,300 mt), with pot vessels targeting 90 percent of that amount. The area is designated superexclusive registration for the state-waters Pacific cod season and vessels may not exceed 58 feet in overall length.

The state-waters jig fishery opened by regulation on March 15. The Western GOA parallel jig season that overlaps with the Chignik Area (state waters east of Kupreanof Point) closed March 14 at 11:59 p.m. No vessels have registered for the jig fishery.

The state-waters pot season opened on March 7, seven days after the CGOA federal A-season pot fishery closure and closed on March 29, 2013. Nineteen vessels participated and total harvest was 8.7 million pounds.

#### **South Alaska Peninsula Pacific Cod (FIGURE 10)**

The 2013 GHL is 15.586 million pounds (7,070 mt), with 85 percent targeted by pot gear. A 58-foot vessel length limit is in effect in the South Alaska Peninsula Area and the area has an exclusive registration designation.

April 2013

The SAP state-waters jig fishery opened at noon on March 15, 2013 to facilitate exploitation of the state-waters GHL. Through March 10, 2013, approximately 95% of the federal/parallel WGOA A-season jig gear allocation remained unharvested. Therefore, the state closed the SAP Area parallel season and immediately reopen the SAP Area state-waters season, allowing for concurrent seasons. Sixteen vessels have registered to fish and current harvest is just over 62,000 pounds.

The state-waters pot season opened at noon on March 9 (after two 24-hr weather delays) and closed on March 22, 2013. This season, thirty-eight vessels harvested a total of 13.38 million pounds.

#### **Aleutian Islands (Adak) Pacific Cod (FIGURE 11)**

The 2013 GHL for the Aleutian Islands District state-waters Pacific cod fishery is 20.3 million pounds (9,200 mt). The A season opened January 1, between 175° W long. and 178° W long. to vessels 60 feet overall length (OAL) or less using pot, jig, and non-pelagic trawl gear and vessels 58 feet OAL or less using longline gear. Beginning noon March 15, the state-waters season was expanded to include all state waters west of 170° W long. and opened to vessels 125 feet or less OAL using pot gear, vessels 100 feet OAL or less using trawl gear, and vessels 58 feet or less OAL using longline and jig gear.

Daily catch reporting is required for all vessels and the daily harvest limit is 150,000 pounds round weight, with a maximum of 150,000 pounds of unprocessed Pacific cod on board a vessel at any time.

Stellar sea lion closures in place prior to 2011 are in effect during the state-waters Pacific cod season with an additional 3-mile fishing closure around the Kanaga Island/Ship Rock rookery.

Thirteen vessels have registered the fishery (5 trawl, 7 pot, and 1 longline vessel) and eight vessels are currently active. Harvest remains confidential due to one processor.

On April 1, in the waters outside of 175° W long. to 178° W long. closed to the state-water fishery and the parallel fishery was immediately opened. Within state waters from 175° W long. to 178° W long. the state-waters A season remains open to vessels 60 feet OAL or less using pot, jig, and trawl gear and vessels 58 feet OAL or less using longline gear.

#### **Alaska Board of Fisheries**

**Alaska Peninsula/Aleutian Islands Finfish, February 26 – March 3, 2012, Anchorage**

**162** – Close all waters of Unalaska Bay to groundfish fishing with pelagic trawl gear.

*Carried as amended to move trawl start date from August 1 to September 1.*

**163** – Modify state-waters sablefish season to coincide with federal sablefish season.

*Carried*

Statewide finfish, March 19 – 24, 2013, Anchorage

245 – Change the vessel size limit for the Registration Area O (Aleutian Islands Area) red king crab fishery, in state waters from 172° W. long. to 179° W. long., from 90 feet or less in overall length to less than 60 feet in overall length.

*Carried*

246 – Establish a pot limit of 10 pots per vessel fishing for red king crab near Adak Island in Registration Area O (Aleutian Islands Area).

*Carried*

Figure 1

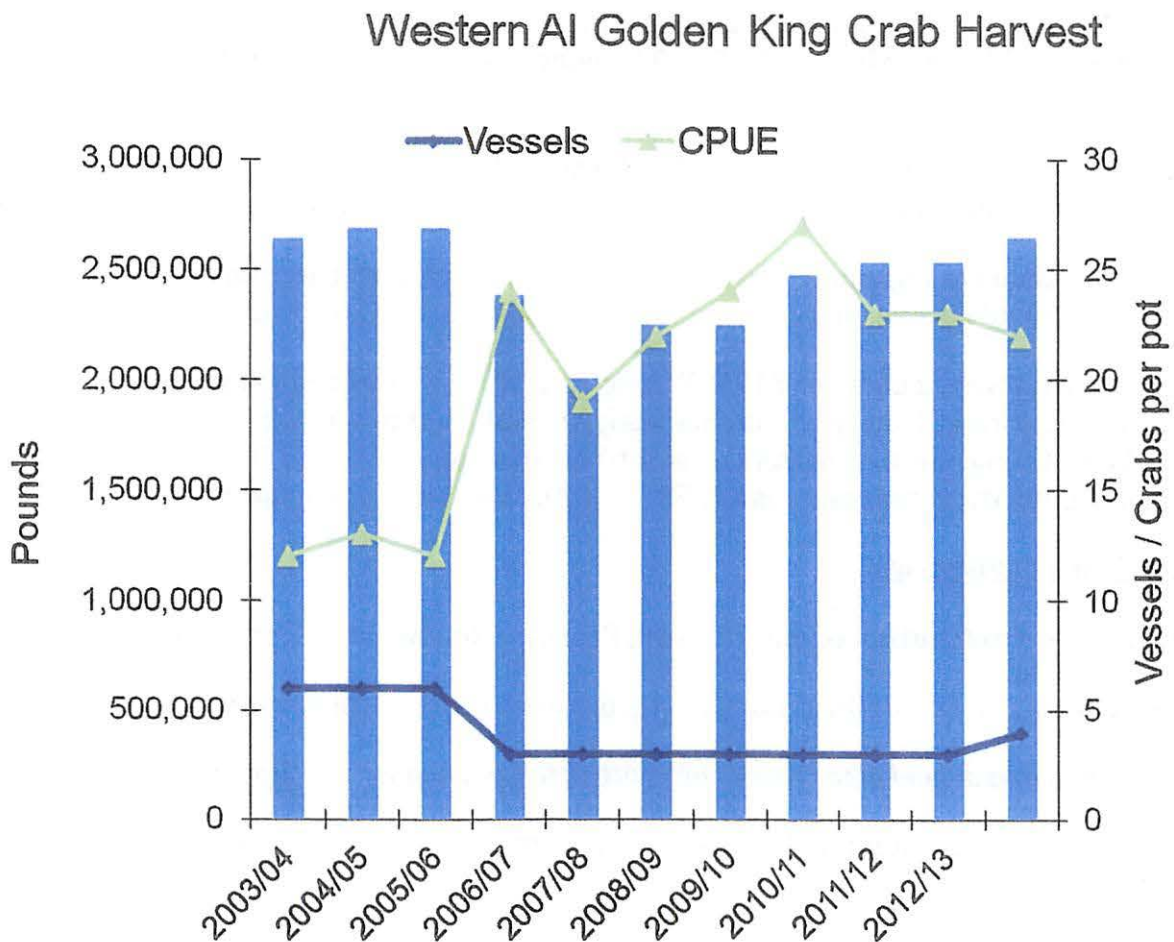


Figure 2

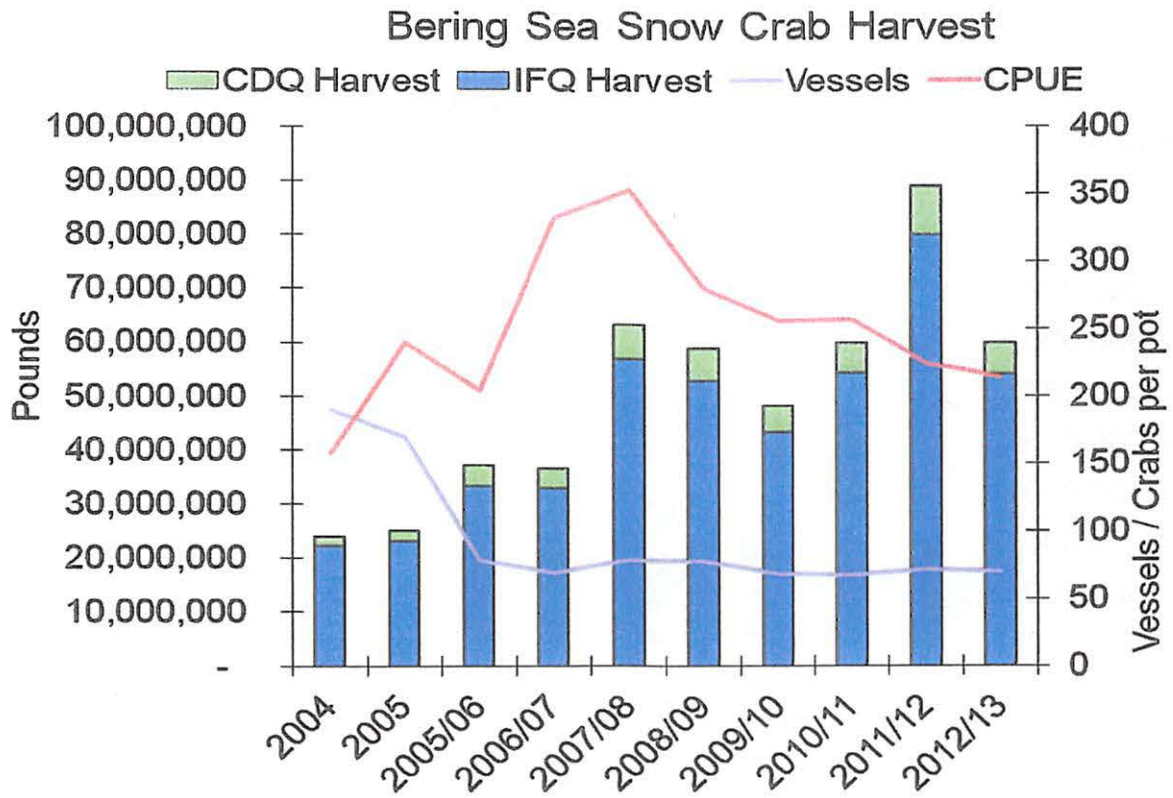


Figure 3

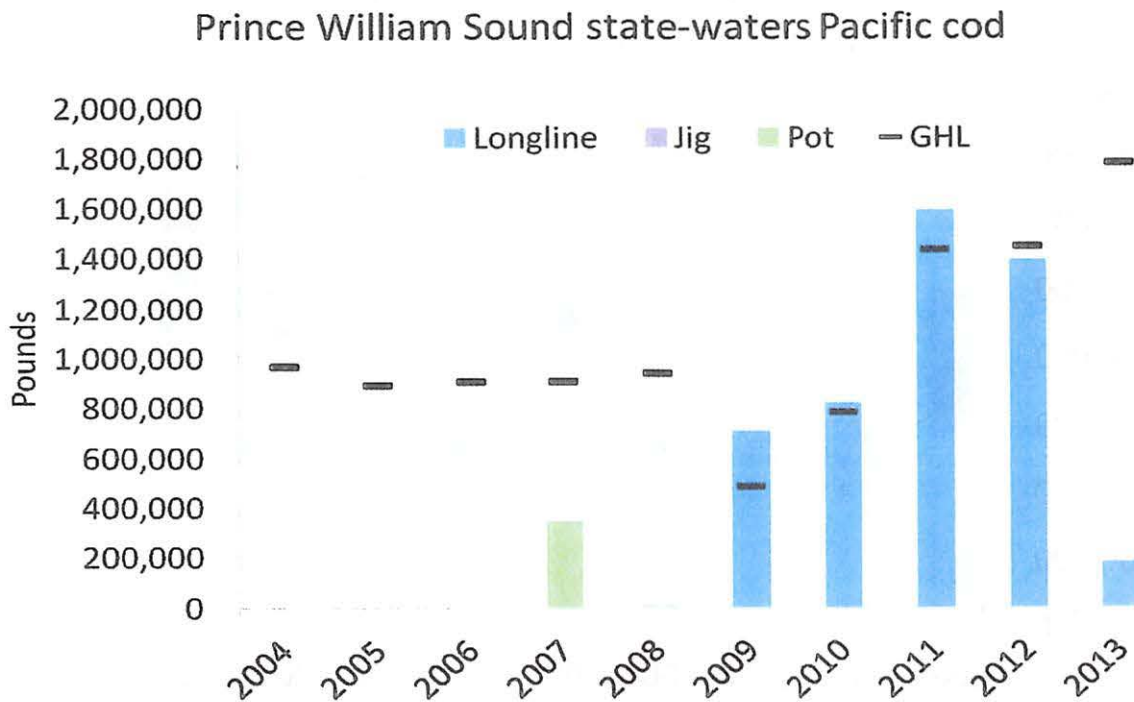




Figure 4

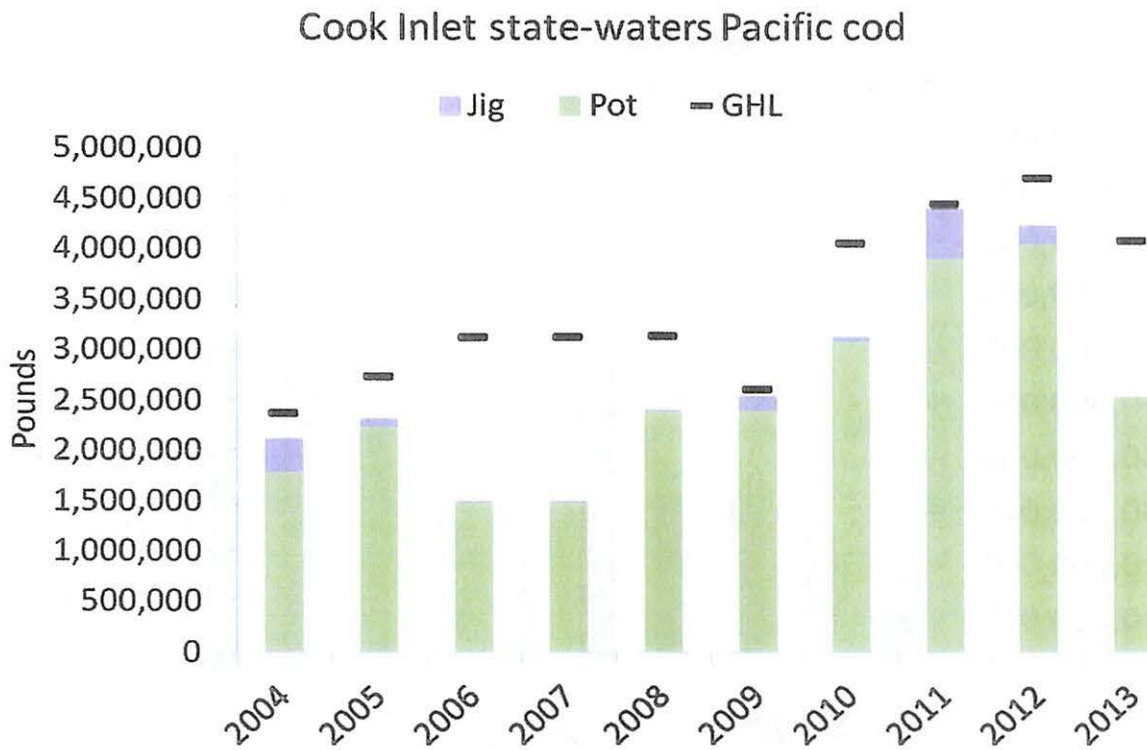


Figure 5

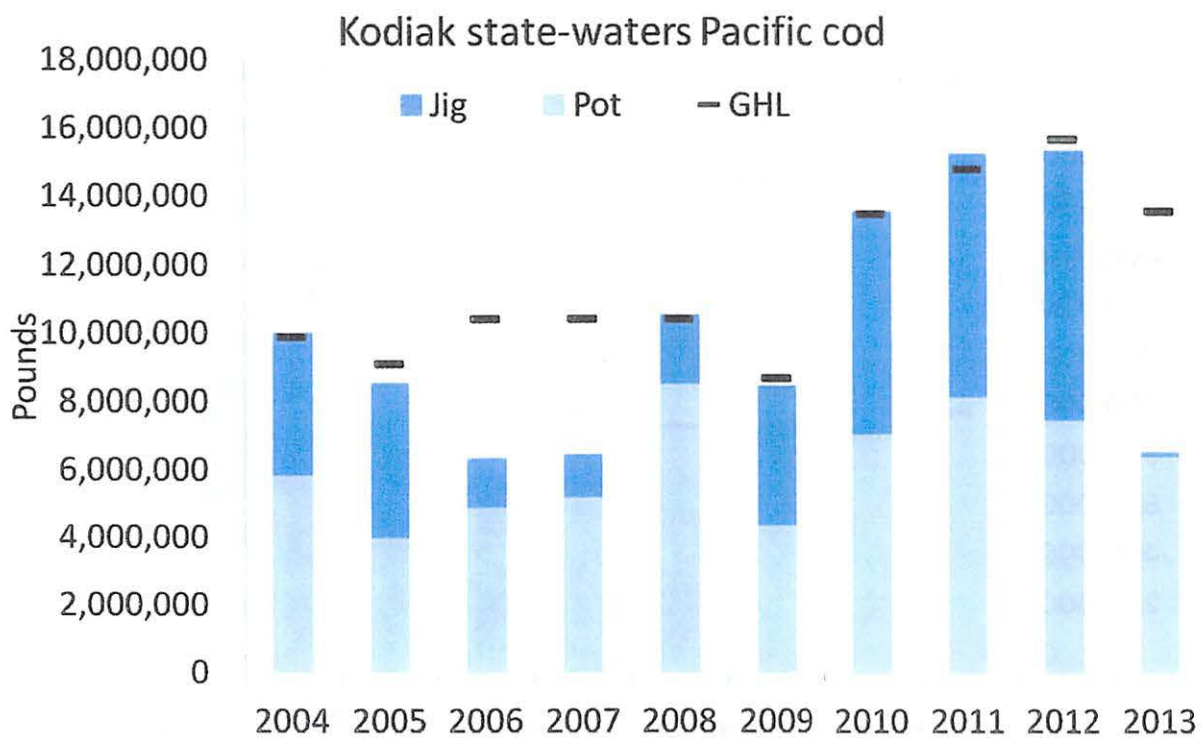


Figure 6

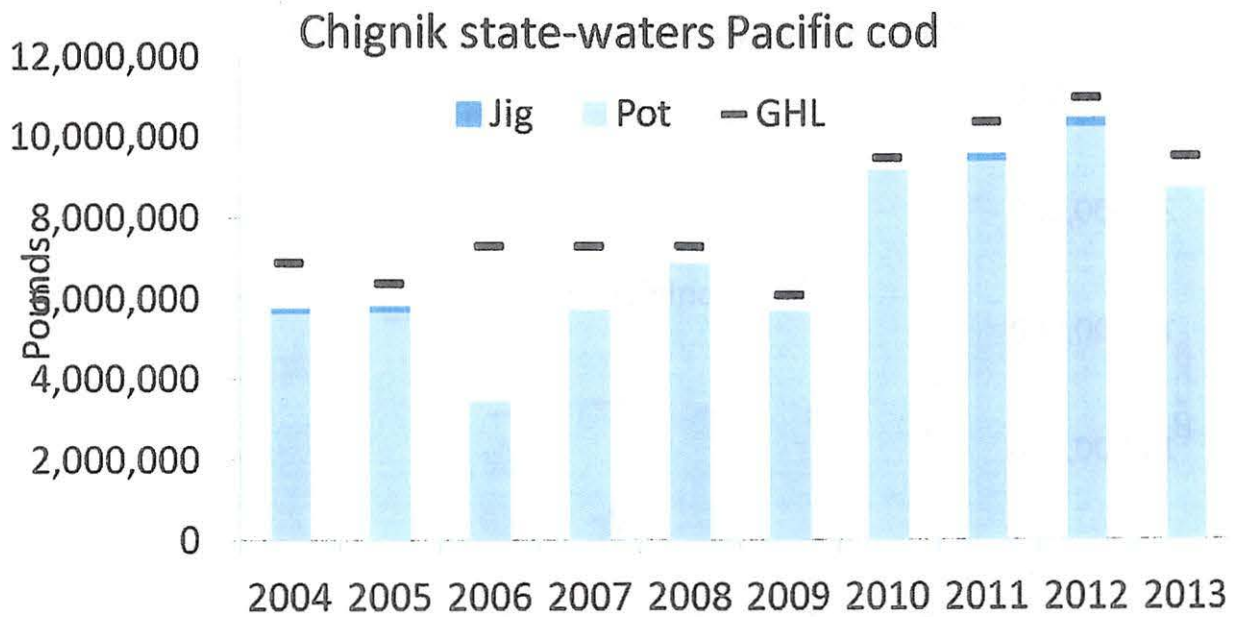


Figure 7

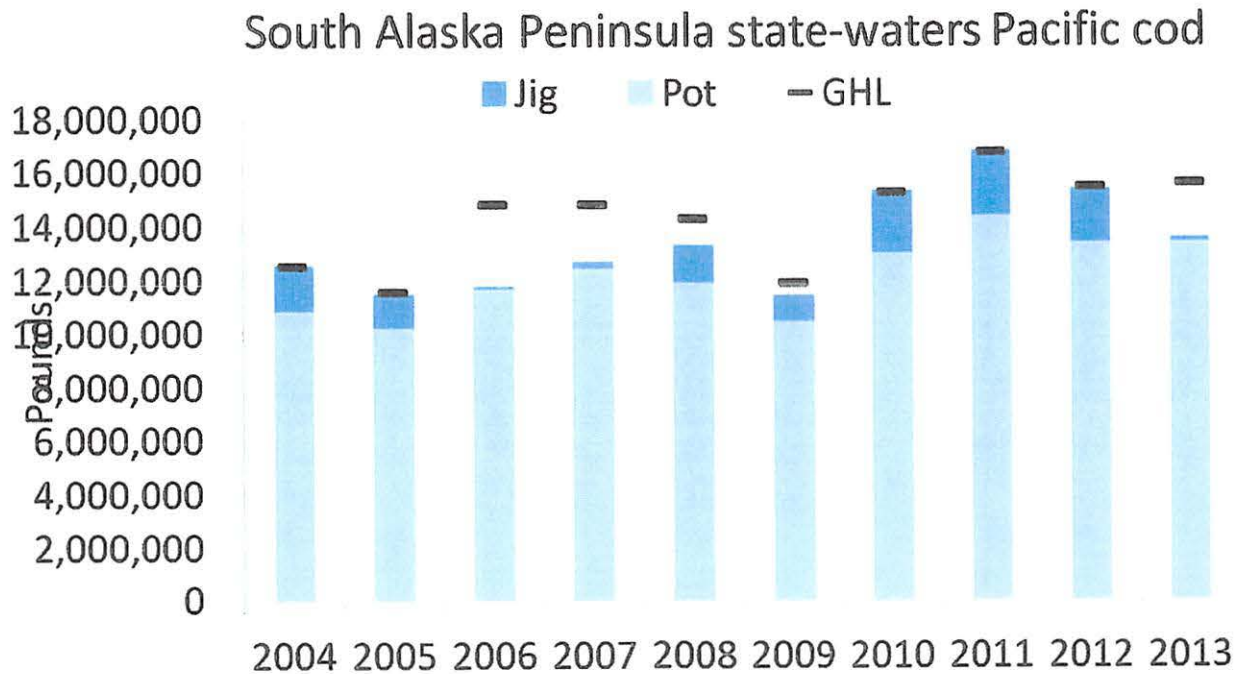
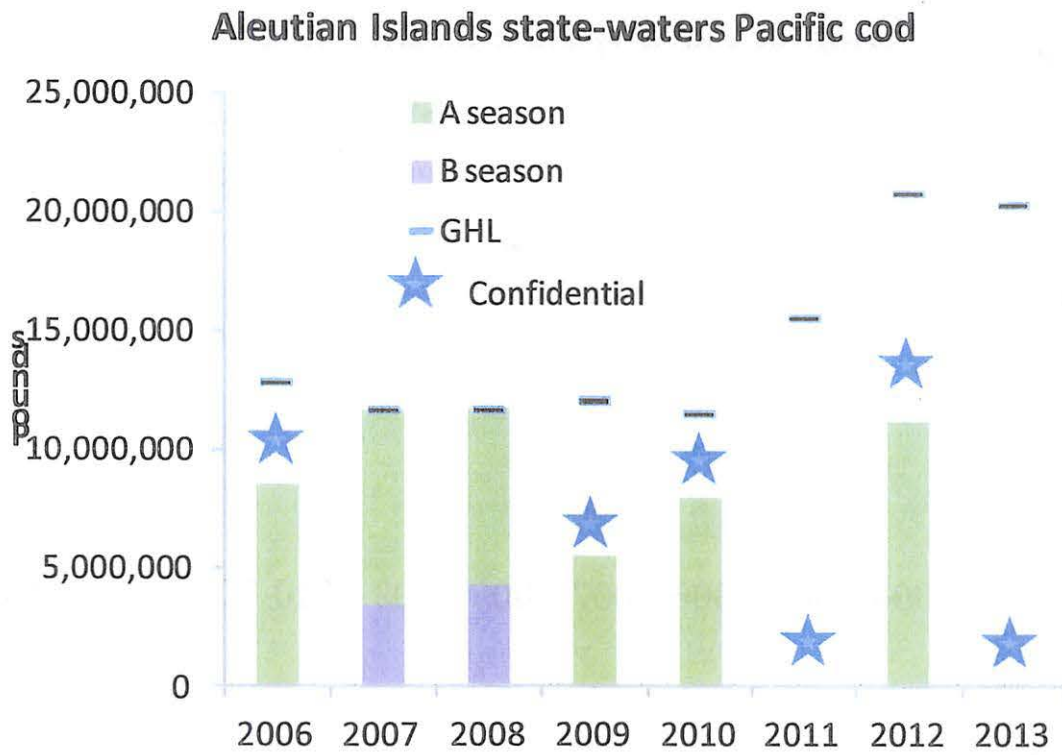


Figure 8







UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

January 24, 2013

Commissioner Campbell  
Department of Fish and Game  
Office of the Commissioner  
1255 West 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
P.O. Box 115526  
Juneau, Alaska 99811

**RE: Federal VMS data access**

Dear Commissioner Campbell,

I have had the opportunity to review your letter dated December 19, 2012, and while I appreciate the value ADF&G finds in federal VMS data for their fisheries management purposes, the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) will not reinstate vTrack access for the ADF&G Biologists.

OLE offers direct access to VMS data, by way of vTrack accounts, to personnel in the fisheries law enforcement offices of our Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA) partner States. We make VMS data available to State fisheries management offices by request without providing direct access to the System. This differentiated data-sharing practice holds true for all of our JEA partner states.

Following a comprehensive audit of our JEA partners' vTrack accounts in August 2012, it was determined that the accounts given to the ADF&G Biologists were given out in error, and in contrast with our data sharing policies. We apologize for the mistake.

We recognize the valuable role that VMS data plays in fisheries management, and we are prepared to deliver VMS data to you on a per request basis.

Sincerely,

Bruce Buckson

*Director, NOAA Office of Law Enforcement*

cc: Tracy Dunn, Jennifer Werner, Kelly Spalding, Jim Balsiger, Sherrie Myers, Jeff Regnard





THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL

**Department of  
Fish and Game**

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December 19, 2012

Director Bruce Buckson  
US Department of Commerce/NOAA  
Office for Law Enforcement  
8484 Georgia Avenue, Suite 415  
Silver Springs, MD 20910

Dear Director Buckson:

In October 2012, fishery managers with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) were notified that their real-time access to the vessel monitoring system (VMS) through individual vTrack accounts was erroneously granted and their accounts were disabled. These accounts, some of which had been active for four or more years, were authorized through forms provided by the Office for Law Enforcement (OLE): State vTrack Account Activation/Change Form and Non-Disclosure Agreement. As an alternative, OLE has allowed state managers to participate in the State VMS data request process, in which data requests are responded to on a monthly basis. This system is not feasible or timely for inseason fishery management purposes.

ADF&G's original appeal for real-time access was requested, and subsequently granted, in the attached 2007 letter to the Alaska Regional Administrator, Dr. Balsiger, and OLE Special Agent-In-Charge Jeff Passer. Rationale for real-time access provided in that letter persists, as VMS data are a critical management tool to ensure that our shared fishery resources are managed sustainably. Please consider this letter as our formal request to have vTrack accounts reinstated as soon as possible for ADF&G fishery managers.

Harvesters will begin prosecuting Bering Sea opilio crab and federal/state Pacific cod fisheries on January 1, 2013. State regulations requiring VMS are at 5 AAC 28.087 *Management Measures in Parallel Groundfish Fisheries for Protection of Steller Sea Lions* (c) and 5 AAC 39.670 *Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Crab Fisheries Management Plan* (c)(1). These state regulations, adopted specifically in response to the need for state and federal fishery coordination, require the use of VMS in parallel groundfish and all rationalized Bering Sea-Aleutian Islands crab fisheries. Access to VMS is necessary because management of the Bering Sea crab fisheries is deferred to the State of Alaska under the federal *Fishery Management Plan for Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs*. Harvests of Pacific cod in parallel and state waters fisheries utilize the same federal stock assessment process to

establish catch limits; therefore, it is important to ensure state managers are able to adequately control harvests in state waters. Real-time VMS access is vital to accomplishing this task.

ADF&G also relies upon the VMS database for inseason management of the Alaska scallop fishery. The scallop fishery in the exclusive economic zone off Alaska is jointly managed by the National Marine Fisheries Service and ADF&G under the federal *Fishery Management Plan for the Scallop Fishery off Alaska*. Inseason management of the scallop fishery is delegated to the State of Alaska in the federal fishery management plan.

In sum, real-time access to VMS data during multiple fisheries is critical to preventing over-harvest and localized depletion; ensuring that biological data, necessary for stock assessment and management purposes, is collected in a timely manner; and enforcing Steller sea lion protection measures.

Cooperation between our enforcement and management agencies has proven invaluable and will continue to be essential as staff and fiscal resources remain limited. We look forward to your response and resolution of this issue as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Cora Campbell  
Commissioner

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Tracy Dunn – Deputy Director, OLE Headquarters  
Ms. Kelly Spalding – VMS Management Analyst, OLE Headquarters  
Mr. Jim Balsiger – Regional Administrator, Alaska Region  
Ms. Sherrie Myers – Special Agent in Charge, Alaska Division  
Mr. Jeff Regnart – Director Commercial Fisheries, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

# STATE OF ALASKA

**SARAH PALIN, GOVERNOR**

**DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**  
**DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES**

P.O. BOX 115526  
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December 16, 2007

James W. Balsiger, Ph.D.  
Regional Administrator  
Alaska Region, NMFS  
P.O. Box 21668  
Juneau, AK 99802-1668

and

Mr. Jeff Passer  
Special Agent-In-Charge  
Alaska Region, NMFS  
Office of Law Enforcement  
709 West 9th Street, Room M09C  
Juneau, AK 99802-1767

Dear Dr. Balsiger and Special Agent-In-Charge Passer:

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (Department) requests real-time access to the vessel monitoring system (VMS) data now being collected under Steller sea lion mitigation measures and through several federally rationalized fisheries.

Department biologists statewide manage fisheries where VMS data could assist in fisheries decisions, improve protection of the resource, and optimize use of other data. Some regional Department personnel have already requested these data, but those requests were denied. Reasons for denial of access have not been clear or consistent. During discussions in the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) Enforcement Committee, Deputy Special Agent-In-Charge John Kingetter indicated that the Department needed to make a formal request in order to receive access to these data. Please consider this letter our formal request.

Throughout discussions and subsequent Council actions related both to Steller sea lions and fishery rationalization programs, it was understood that the state would have access to VMS data through the confidentiality agreements that currently exist between our two agencies. These confidential data sharing agreements and the cooperation between our agencies have long been a

cornerstone of making Alaska's fishery resources some of the best managed resources in the world.

Under the recently reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, section 109-479 (b) CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION (1)(C) "would permit the sharing of confidential information with State employees who have entered into a fishery enforcement agreement with the Secretary that is currently in effect." Hopefully, our long-standing confidentiality agreements with National Marine Fisheries Service are sufficient to allow access to these VMS data. If these agreements are not sufficient to allow our use of these data, please let us know so that proper agreements may be pursued.

While there are many potential uses of this data, a few examples are provided here to illustrate its value to the Department. The king and Tanner crab fisheries in the Bering Sea and Bristol Bay are managed by the Department. The fleet is required to have VMS and these data could assist the Department in determining where vessels are located in order to properly distribute our commercial catch samplers. In many areas of the state, determining specific vessel locations is an increasingly important piece of data for geospatial analysis. The state is currently researching Pacific cod stock structure, and location of fishing vessels could provide relevant information. In Southeast Alaska, fishing locations for groundfish could provide a better indication of catch-per-unit of effort and ultimately improve future stock assessments. In all areas around the state, there are instances when harvest locations on fish tickets are questionable and VMS data could be used to help verify the fishing location. Similarly, every fishery has boundaries to protect certain stocks or segments of stocks, and VMS data could assist the Department to ensure the fleet is fishing in the correct areas.

Please give this request your thoughtful consideration. We look forward to your response, and future access and use of these data.

Sincerely,

John Hilsinger  
Director

Cc: Commissioner Lloyd