

Fishery Management Report No. 25-09

Annual Management Report for Shellfish Fisheries in the Kodiak, Chignik, and South Peninsula Districts, 2023

by

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Divisions of Sport Fish and Commercial Fisheries



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Weights and measures (metric)		General		Mathematics, statistics	
centimeter	cm	Alaska Administrative Code		all standard mathematical signs, symbols and abbreviations	
deciliter	dL		AAC		
gram	g	all commonly accepted abbreviations	e.g., Mr., Mrs., AM, PM, etc.	alternate hypothesis	H _A
hectare	ha			base of natural logarithm	<i>e</i>
kilogram	kg	all commonly accepted		catch per unit effort	CPUE
kilometer	km	professional titles	e.g., Dr., Ph.D., R.N., etc.	coefficient of variation	CV
liter	L			common test statistics	(F, t, χ^2 , etc.)
meter	m	at	@	confidence interval	CI
milliliter	mL	compass directions:		correlation coefficient (multiple)	R
millimeter	mm	east	E	correlation coefficient (simple)	r
Weights and measures (English)		north	N	covariance	cov
cubic feet per second	ft ³ /s	south	S	degree (angular)	°
foot	ft	west	W	degrees of freedom	df
gallon	gal	copyright	©	expected value	<i>E</i>
inch	in	corporate suffixes:		greater than	>
mile	mi	Company	Co.	greater than or equal to	≥
nautical mile	nmi	Corporation	Corp.	harvest per unit effort	HPUE
ounce	oz	Incorporated	Inc.	less than	<
pound	lb	Limited	Ltd.	less than or equal to	≤
quart	qt	District of Columbia	D.C.	logarithm (natural)	ln
yard	yd	et alii (and others)	et al.	logarithm (base 10)	log
Time and temperature		et cetera (and so forth)	etc.	logarithm (specify base)	log ₂ , etc.
day	d	exempli gratia (for example)	e.g.	minute (angular)	'
degrees Celsius	°C	Federal Information Code	FIC	not significant	NS
degrees Fahrenheit	°F	id est (that is)	i.e.	null hypothesis	H ₀
degrees kelvin	K	latitude or longitude	lat or long	percent	%
hour	h	monetary symbols (U.S.)	\$, ¢	probability	P
minute	min	months (tables and figures): first three		probability of a type I error (rejection of the null hypothesis when true)	α
second	s	letters	Jan,...,Dec	probability of a type II error (acceptance of the null hypothesis when false)	β
Physics and chemistry		registered trademark	®	second (angular)	"
all atomic symbols		trademark	™	standard deviation	SD
alternating current	AC	United States (adjective)	U.S.	standard error	SE
ampere	A	United States of America (noun)	USA	variance	
calorie	cal	U.S.C.	United States Code	population sample	Var var
direct current	DC	U.S. state	use two-letter abbreviations (e.g., AK, WA)		
hertz	Hz				
horsepower	hp				
hydrogen ion activity (negative log of)	pH				
parts per million	ppm				
parts per thousand	ppt, ‰				
volts	V				
watts	W				

FISHERY MANAGEMENT REPORT NO. 25-09

**ANNUAL MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR SHELLFISH FISHERIES IN
THE KODIAK, CHIGNIK, AND SOUTH PENINSULA DISTRICTS, 2023**

by
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ABSTRACT

This management report summarizes 2023 shellfish fisheries in the Kodiak, Chignik, and South Peninsula Districts of Registration Area J. During 2023, commercial fisheries occurred for Tanner crab *Chionoecetes bairdi*, Dungeness crab *Metacarcinus magister*, giant Pacific octopus *Enteroctopus dofleini*, red sea cucumber *Apostichopus californicus*, green sea urchin *Strongylocentrotus droebachiensis*, and weathervane scallop *Patinopecten caurinus*.

Keywords: Tanner crab, *Chionoecetes bairdi*, Dungeness crab, *Metacarcinus magister*, red sea cucumber, *Apostichopus californicus*, weathervane scallop, *Patinopecten caurinus*, red king crab, *Paralithodes camtschaticus*, golden king crab, *Lithodes aequispinus*, giant Pacific octopus, *Enteroctopus dofleini*, Pandalid shrimp, *Pandalus*, *Pandalopsis*, catch per unit effort, CPUE, Exclusive Economic Zone, EEZ, guideline harvest level, GHL, Alaska Board of Fisheries, BOF, Kodiak, Chignik, South Peninsula

INTRODUCTION

This management report provides information on Kodiak, Chignik, and South Peninsula commercial shellfish fisheries, including fishery-specific harvest, effort, and exvessel value. Kodiak, Chignik, and South Peninsula shellfish fisheries occur in the Gulf of Alaska south of Cape Douglas, west of long 149°W, and east of Scotch Cap Light (Figure 1). Most shellfish fisheries are managed by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G or department) in both state waters (0–3 nmi) and the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ; 3–200 nmi), except for giant Pacific octopus *Enteroctopus dofleini*, which is managed by ADF&G only in state waters, and weathervane scallops *Patinopecten caurinus*, which are jointly managed by state and federal governments according to a federal fishery management plan (FMP). Tanner crab *Chionoecetes bairdi*, Dungeness crab *Metacarcinus magister*, Pandalid shrimp *Pandalus* spp. and *Pandalopsis* spp., and miscellaneous invertebrate fisheries are managed by district (e.g., Kodiak, Chignik, and South Peninsula Districts), whereas red king crab *Paralithodes camtschaticus* and weathervane scallops are managed by area (e.g., Kodiak and Alaska Peninsula Areas; Figure 2).

Historically, Kodiak, Chignik, and South Peninsula waters supported substantial red king crab, Tanner crab, and Pandalid shrimp fisheries (for more details on historical commercial shellfish fisheries, see Spalinger 2017). Since the early 1980s, red king crab stocks have not supported commercial fisheries, Tanner crab stocks have supported modest commercial fisheries with periodic closures, and Pandalid shrimp stocks have supported only negligible harvests. In recent years, most commercial shellfish effort has been directed toward Tanner crab, Dungeness crab, red sea cucumber *Apostichopus californicus*, weathervane scallops, and giant Pacific octopus.

ADF&G issues emergency orders to enact regulatory action to open, close, and modify fishing periods, areas, and legal gear. Some regulatory seasons extend across 2 calendar years (e.g., weathervane scallops, red sea cucumber); harvest information for those fisheries are reported by regulatory season as 2023/24. In total, 16 emergency orders were issued during 2023/24 for Kodiak, Chignik, and South Peninsula shellfish fisheries (Table 1).

TANNER CRAB

BACKGROUND

Tanner crab fisheries developed in the 1970s and were managed by ADF&G until December 1978 when an FMP was adopted. Under the FMP, ADF&G managed Tanner crab in waters 0–3 nmi offshore and the federal government managed Tanner crab in waters 3–200 nmi offshore. Joint jurisdiction occurred until 1987 when the state again assumed full management authority.

In the early 1980s, Tanner crab abundance and commercial harvests began a decline that continued through the 1990s. In response, ADF&G developed new harvest strategies with conservative management measures aimed at preventing overharvest and localized depletion. In 1999, the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) adopted 5 AAC 35.507 *Kodiak, Chignik, and South Peninsula Districts C. bairdi* Tanner crab harvest strategies, which currently guides the fisheries.

In March 2022, the BOF adopted revisions to the harvest strategies, pot limits, escape mesh size requirements, and regulatory season closure dates that were implemented beginning with the 2023 season;¹ the revised harvest strategies updated the abundance assessment time series and apply a new harvest control rule that incorporates both mature male and mature female abundance when determining maximum legal male exploitation rates. A full description of the analytical approach, results, and department recommendations can be found in Spalinger et al. (2021).

The harvest strategies in effect during 2023 Tanner crab fisheries specify biological and management thresholds. The biological threshold requires mature male abundance within the district, or sections within a district, to meet or exceed 50% or 100% of the long-term average abundance of mature male crab, depending on the district/section. The management threshold requires guideline harvest levels (GHLs) to meet section and/or district minimum GHL thresholds. If mature male abundance and minimum GHL thresholds are met, a commercial fishery may occur in that management unit (Table 2).

Tanner crab stock information is collected annually in the summer during an ADF&G bottom trawl survey on the R/V *Resolution*. In addition to providing Tanner crab stock abundance information used to determine GHLs for the subsequent winter fishery, trawl survey results and information on other shellfish and groundfish from Kodiak, Chignik, and South Peninsula waters are published annually by ADF&G (Spalinger and Silva 2023).

Biological data from Tanner crab, including carapace width (CW), average weight, and shell condition, are collected on survey and during the fishery by the Kodiak dockside sampling program. Shell condition is assessed by evaluating characteristics of shell wear such as scratches, discoloration, and the accumulation of epibionts,² and can be used along with size information as a measure of relative age differences among mature crab. Biological fishery data and confidential skipper interviews are utilized for inseason management and in conjunction with ADF&G trawl survey data when determining fishery openings and GHLs.

The Kodiak District for Tanner crab is subdivided into 8 sections: Northeast, Eastside, Southeast, Southwest, Semidi Island Overlap, Westside, North Mainland, and South Mainland (5 AAC 35.505(a)(1–8); Figure 3). The South Peninsula District is divided into 2 sections, Eastern and Western, by long 162°W (5 AAC 35.505(b)(1 and 2); Figure 4). The Chignik District is managed as a single unit (5 AAC 35.505(f); Figure 4).

Tanner crab seasons in the Kodiak, Chignik, and South Peninsula Districts open on January 15, unless delayed by weather as specified in 5 AAC 35.510(a)(2), (b)(2), and (c)(2).

¹ ADF&G. 2023. 2023–2024 Statewide King and Tanner Crab Commercial Fishing Regulations. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Juneau.

² ADF&G. 2009. Westward Region Chionoecetes Shell Condition Standard. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Kodiak. (Accessed October 16, 2023). [URL not publicly available as some information is confidential.]

KODIAK DISTRICT 2023 TANNER CRAB FISHERY

The 2022 Kodiak District survey estimate of mature male Tanner crab abundance was above the regulatory threshold in the Eastside, Southeast, and Southwest Sections, and calculated section GHGs met the 100,000-pound minimum GHG requirement (Table 2). The 2023 Kodiak District GHG was 5,800,000 pounds, the Eastside Section GHG was 4,000,000 pounds, the Southeast Section GHG was 950,000 pounds, and the Southwest Section GHG was 850,000 pounds (Tables 3 and 4).

The Kodiak District opened to commercial Tanner crab fishing on January 15, 2023 (Table 1); however, the fleet stood down for price negotiations and did not begin fishing until January 30, 2023. Once fishing began, the GHG was fully harvested in 10 days. A total of 133 vessels participated and total harvest, including deadloss and personal use, was 5,897,298 pounds from 280 landings (Table 3). The estimated exvessel value was approximately \$19.6 million based on an average price of \$3.33 per pound; this was the highest exvessel value in the time series (Table 3).

The Semidi Island Overlap Section (SIOS) opens when either the Southwest Section of the Kodiak District or the Chignik District opens; therefore, the SIOS opened in 2023 to both Kodiak District and Chignik District permit holders (5 AAC 35.507(b)(2)(A)). The SIOS is not surveyed for Tanner crab; therefore, due to a lack of stock status information, no GHG was established for the 2023 season. The section was open to exploratory fishing and was managed in season based on fishery performance. The SIOS remained open until the regulatory closure date of February 28, 2023.

Kodiak dockside staff sampled 97 Tanner crab deliveries, conducted 76 confidential skipper interviews, and collected biological data from 9,111 crab.

Eastside Section

The 2022 survey indicated legal males were distributed throughout the surveyed portions of the Eastside Section, and the distribution of sublegal males and mature females did not indicate localized concentrations of nontarget crab. Therefore, the entire Eastside Section was open for fishing with no partial section or inner bay closures; a GHG of 4,000,000 pounds was established (Table 4).

The section closed to commercial fishing at 2:00 PM February 5, resulting in a 6-day fishery (Table 1). Ninety-eight vessels made 209 landings; the average landing was 19,184 pounds. Total harvest was 4,009,545 pounds (100% of the GHG), and average harvest was 40,913 pounds per vessel (Table 4). The section catch per unit effort (CPUE) was 82 legal crab per pot, which was more than double the 2022 fishery CPUE of 35 legal crab per pot (Table 4). Harvest was well distributed, with the majority of harvest occurring in Ugak Bay, Kiliuda Bay, and adjacent offshore waters (Figure 5).

The average CW of Tanner crab sampled from the Eastside Section during the 2023 fishery was 149 mm, the average weight was 2.36 pounds per crab, and 87% of crab were new shell condition. Shell condition and crab size indicates that the 2022 and 2023 fisheries were prosecuted on the same cohort of crab.

Southeast Section

The 2022 survey indicated legal males were well distributed throughout the surveyed portions of the Southeast Section, and no distinct concentration of females or juvenile males were identified that warranted preseason inner bay or subsection closures; therefore, the entire Southeast Section was open for fishing, and a GHL of 950,000 pounds was established (Table 4).

The section closed to commercial fishing at 5:59 PM February 6, resulting in a 7.5-day fishery. Twenty-two vessels made 38 landings; the average landing was 24,450 pounds. Total harvest was 929,100 pounds (98% of the GHL), with an average harvest of 42,232 pounds per vessel (Table 4). The section CPUE was 69 legal crab per pot, which was higher than the 2022 fishery CPUE of 45 legal crab per pot (Table 4). Harvest in the section was concentrated nearshore, south of Sitkalidak Island (Figure 5).

The average CW of Tanner crab sampled from the Southeast Section during the 2023 fishery was 149 mm, the average weight was 2.38 pounds per crab, and 80% of crab were new shell condition. Shell condition and crab size indicates that the 2022 and 2023 fisheries were prosecuted on the same cohort of crab.

Southwest Section

The 2022 survey indicated legal males were well distributed throughout the surveyed portions of the Southwest Section, and no distinct concentration of females or juvenile males were identified that warranted preseason inner bay or subsection closures; therefore, the entire Southwest Section was open for fishing, and a GHL of 850,000 pounds was established (Table 4).

The section closed at 1:00 PM February 9, resulting in a 10-day fishery. Eighteen vessels made 27 landings; the average landing was 34,826 pounds. Total harvest was 940,311 pounds (111% of the GHL), with an average harvest of 52,240 pounds per vessel (Table 4). The section CPUE was 78 legal crab per pot, which was more than double the 2022 fishery CPUE of 30 legal crab per pot (Table 4). Most of the harvest in the section occurred in Alitak Bay (Figure 5).

The average CW of Tanner crab sampled from the Southwest Section during the 2023 fishery was 149 mm, the average weight was 2.40 pounds per crab, and 91% of crab were new shell condition. Shell condition and crab size indicates that the 2022 and 2023 fisheries were prosecuted on the same cohort of crab.

Semidi Island Overlap Section

The SIOS opened in conjunction with the other sections of the Kodiak District. The entire section remained open until the regulatory closure on February 28, resulting in a 29-day fishery.

Five vessels made 6 landings in the SIOS (Table 4); the average landing was 3,057 pounds. Total harvest was 18,342 pounds with an average harvest of 3,668 pounds per vessel (Table 4). The section CPUE was 7 legal crab per pot, which was less than half the 2022 fishery CPUE of 18 legal crab per pot (Table 4). Harvest in the section was concentrated nearshore in Chiginagak and Nakalilok Bays; all other harvest locations are confidential (Figure 6).

The average CW of Tanner crab sampled from the SIOS Section during the 2023 fishery was 147 mm, the average weight was 2.32 pounds per crab, and 54% of crab were new shell condition.

CHIGNIK DISTRICT 2023 TANNER CRAB FISHERY

The 2022 Chignik District survey estimate of mature male Tanner crab abundance was above the regulatory threshold, and the calculated district GHL met the 200,000-pound minimum GHL requirement (Table 2). Legal males were well distributed throughout the surveyed portions of the Chignik District, and no distinct concentration of females or juvenile males were identified that warranted preseason inner bay or subsection closures. The Chignik District opened to commercial Tanner crab fishing on January 15, 2023; however, the fleet stood down for price negotiations and didn't begin fishing until January 19, 2023 (Table 1). Once fishing began, the GHL was fully harvested in 25.5 days (closed at 5:59 PM February 13).

Thirteen vessels made 53 landings in the Chignik District; the average landing was 7,469 pounds (Table 5). Total harvest was 395,859 pounds (99% of the GHL), with an average harvest of 30,451 pounds per vessel (Table 5). The estimated exvessel value was approximately \$1.3 million based on an average price of \$3.26 per pound. The 2023 Chignik District CPUE was 22 legal crab per pot, which was higher than the 2022 fishery CPUE of 14 legal crab per pot (Table 5). Harvest was concentrated nearshore with the majority of harvest occurring near Ivanof and Chignik Bays (Figure 7).

Kodiak dockside staff sampled 3 Tanner crab deliveries, conducted 1 confidential skipper interview, and collected biological data from 417 crab. The average CW of Tanner crab sampled from the Chignik District during the 2023 fishery was 149 mm, the average weight was 2.34 pounds per crab, and 89% of crab were new shell condition. Shell condition and crab size indicates that the 2022 and 2023 fisheries were prosecuted on the same cohort of crab.

SOUTH PENINSULA DISTRICT 2023 TANNER CRAB FISHERY

The 2022 South Peninsula District survey estimate of mature male Tanner crab abundance was above the regulatory threshold in the Eastern and Western Sections, and calculated section GHLs met the 200,000-pound minimum GHL requirement (Table 2). The 2023 South Peninsula District GHL was 1,000,000 pounds, the Eastern Section GHL was 525,000 pounds, and the Western Section GHL was 575,000 pounds (Tables 6 and 7).

The South Peninsula District opened to commercial Tanner crab fishing on January 15, 2023; however, the fleet stood down for price negotiations and didn't begin fishing until January 19, 2023 (Table 1). Once fishing began, the GHL was fully harvested in 8.5 days. A total of 50 vessels participated; total harvest, including deadloss and personal use, was 1,151,132 pounds from 96 landings (Table 6). The estimated exvessel value was approximately \$3.7 million based on an average price of \$3.25 per pound (Table 6).

Kodiak dockside staff sampled 35 Tanner crab deliveries, conducted 27 confidential skipper interviews, and collected biological data from 2,480 crab.

Eastern Section

During the 2022 survey, the majority of legal males were found in Pavlof Bay and near the Dolgoi Islands, which is not unusual for the Eastern Section. Legal males in Pavlof Bay and Dolgoi Islands area were well distributed, and no distinct concentration of females or juvenile males were identified to warrant preseason inner bay or subsection closures; therefore, the entire Eastern Section was open for fishing, and a GHL of 525,000 pounds was established (Table 7).

The section closed to commercial fishing at 5:59 PM January 27, resulting in an 8.5-day fishery. Thirty-two vessels made 40 landings; the average landing was 14,258 pounds. Total harvest was 570,318 pounds (109% of the GHL), with an average harvest of 17,822 pounds per vessel (Table 7). The section CPUE was 57 legal crab per pot, which was higher than the 2022 fishery CPUE of 32 legal crab per pot (Table 7). Harvest in the section was concentrated in Pavlof Bay and near the Dolgoi Islands (Figure 8).

The average CW of sampled Tanner crab from the Eastern Section during the 2023 fishery was 149 mm, the average weight was 2.28 pounds per crab, and 83% of crab were new shell condition. Shell condition and crab size indicates that the 2022 and 2023 fisheries were prosecuted on the same cohort of crab.

Western Section

The 2022 survey found most of the legal male abundance in Morzhovoi Bay, which is not unusual for the Western Section. Legal males were well distributed throughout Morzhovoi Bay, and no distinct concentration of females or juvenile males were identified that warranted preseason inner bay or subsection closures; therefore, the entire Western Section was open for fishing, and a GHL of 575,000 pounds was established (Table 7).

The section closed to commercial fishing at 5:59 PM January 24, resulting in a 5.5-day fishery. Thirty-three vessels made 56 landings; the average landing was 10,372 pounds. Total harvest was 580,814 pounds (101% of the GHL) with an average harvest of 17,600 pounds per vessel (Table 7). The section CPUE was 58 legal crab per pot, which was more than double the 2022 fishery CPUE of 24 legal crab per pot (Table 7). Harvest was well distributed with the largest portion of harvest between Morzhovoi and Ikatan Bays (Figure 8).

The average CW of sampled Tanner crab from the Western Section during the 2023 fishery was 150 mm, the average weight was 2.38 pounds per crab, and 87% of crab were new shell condition. Shell condition and crab size indicates that the 2022 and 2023 fisheries were prosecuted on the same cohort of crab.

DUNGENESS CRAB

BACKGROUND

Dungeness crab fisheries in the Kodiak, Chignik, and Alaska Peninsula Districts are part of Registration Area J (Figure 1). Prior to 2002, the Chignik District was part of the Alaska Peninsula District, but in 2002, the BOF created a separate Chignik District (Figure 9). There is no stock assessment for Dungeness crab and GHLs are not established. The commercial fishery is managed by regulating size, sex, and season (3-S management). Under 3-S management, only male crab 6.5 inches in CW or larger may be retained during the open fishing season. All 3 districts are open-access fisheries but require superexclusive vessel registrations.

Historically, there are no pot limits or vessel size restrictions for Dungeness crab fisheries in the Kodiak, Chignik, or Alaska Peninsula Districts. However, in March 2022, the BOF adopted pot limits for the Kodiak and Alaska Peninsula Districts that were implemented beginning with the 2023 season. The pot limits are 700 pots/vessel in the Kodiak District and 500 pots/vessel in the Alaska Peninsula District; no pot limit was established for the Chignik District.