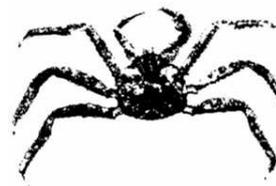


**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES
NEWS RELEASE**



*Denby S. Lloyd, Commissioner
John Hilsinger, Director*



Contact:
Forrest R. Bowers, BSAI Area Management Biologist

Dutch Harbor Office
P.O. Box 920587
Dutch Harbor, AK, 99692

Phone: (907) 581-1239
Fax: (907) 581-1572

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**2009/10 SAINT MATTHEW ISLAND SECTION BLUE KING CRAB
SEASON OPENS OCTOBER 15
TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH ANNOUNCED**

The Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) have completed analysis of 2009 NMFS trawl survey results for the Saint Matthew Island Section (SMIS). Blue king crab biomass estimates were calculated using the catch-survey analysis model.

ADF&G model estimates indicate that the 2009 mature male abundance increased 39% percent from the 2008 estimate and mature male biomass is above the minimum required to open the fishery. The federal overfishing level (OFL) for this stock is 1.72 million pounds of male blue king crab taken as directed harvest and bycatch mortality during all fisheries. To account for projected bycatch mortality, and remain below the OFL, the 2009/10 SMIS blue king crab TAC will be 1,167,000 pounds and is apportioned as follows:

IFQ	1,050,300 pounds
CDQ	116,700 pounds
Total	1,167,000 pounds

The 2009/10 Saint Matthew Island blue king crab fishery will open at 12:00 noon on October 15 and will remain open through February 1, 2010.

Approximately 75% of the male blue king crab abundance estimate in the SMIS is composed of sublegal males. Because of the high proportion of sublegal males in the population and the requirement that all male blue king crab mortality accrue against the federal OFL, fishermen are advised to conduct fishing operations in such a way that bycatch of non-retained blue king crabs is minimized.

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The pot limit for the SMIS is 250 pots per vessel. Buoy tags are currently available for purchase and are available by mail. No groundfish pots may be operated from a vessel registered for the Saint Matthew Island Section blue king crab fishery. Pots used to take king crab in the SMIS must have eight 5.8" diameter escape rings position within one mesh measurement of the bottom of the pot with four rings on each of two sides of the pot or one half of one vertical surface of the pot composed of not less than 8" stretched mesh webbing. Fishermen are reminded that all state waters surrounding Saint Matthew, Hall, and Pinnacle Islands are closed to commercial fishing.

A valid United States Coast Guard (USCG) Commercial Fisheries Safety Decal is required before a vessel registration is issued. Participating vessels must also have an activated vessel monitoring system approved by NMFS. The operator of a vessel participating in IFQ, or CDQ crab fisheries must notify the USCG at least 24-hours prior to departing port when carrying crab pot gear. USCG can be contacted at: 1-800-478-5555.

Preseason gear inspections will be available beginning on October 10, 2009 in Dutch Harbor, Akutan and King Cove. Vessel registration will begin at noon of October 12, 2009. An individual holding a 2009 Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) Bering Sea king crab interim use permit card (K91Q or K09Q) must be aboard the vessel when it is registered. Vessel operators may fish concurrently for IFQ and CDQ crab, but a separate registration and CFEC permit card is required for each fishery. At the time of registration, all pots onboard the vessel or in wet storage must be in compliance with current SMIS commercial blue king crab fishing regulations.

Vessel operators participating in IFQ or CDQ fisheries may form gear operation cooperatives with other registered vessels. Each vessel operator must specifically list those vessels authorized to operate the vessel's gear at the time of vessel registration. A vessel operator may transport crab pot gear to the fishing grounds for another vessel operator, however, the registered vessel operator of the crab pot gear has seven days to be active in the registration area where the gear was deployed. A vessel operator may make a one time transfer of all registered pot gear to another vessel operator at the completion of fishing operations.

Vessel operators shall notify the department within 72-hours of completing fishing operations in a registration area or when departing the registration area with gear in long-term storage. The Board of Fisheries established a 14-day period when unbaited gear may be stored outside of designated storage areas after fishing is completed. Pots must be removed from the water or placed in long-term storage if left unattended in a registration area for more than a 14-day period. Additionally, a vessel operator's registration will be invalidated after 14-days of inactivity in a registration area.

For questions regarding issuance of quota share and IFQ/IPQ, contact NOAA Fisheries RAM Division at 1-800-304-4846 (option #2). For questions regarding federal Crab Rationalization Program regulations, contact NOAA Fisheries Sustainable Fisheries Division at (907) 586-7228 or the NOAA Office of Law Enforcement in Kodiak at (907) 486-3298 or Dutch Harbor at (907) 581-2061. For further information on state management contact the Alaska Department of Fish & Game in Dutch Harbor at (907) 581-1239 or in Kodiak, at (907) 486-1840.

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