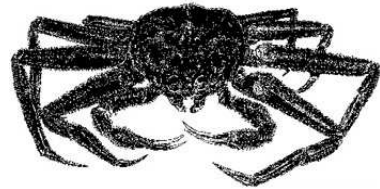


**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME  
DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES  
NEWS RELEASE**



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**BERING SEA SNOW CRAB FISHERY OPENS OCTOBER 15  
TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH ANNOUNCED**

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) have completed analysis of NMFS trawl survey data for the Bering Sea snow crab stock. The 2009/10 total allowable catch (TAC) is based on abundance and biomass estimates using the NMFS stock assessment model.

The 2009/10 total mature biomass (TMB) estimate for Bering Sea snow crabs is 553.1-million pounds which is above the harvest strategy minimum threshold of 230.4 million pounds that must be met prior to opening the fishery. The TAC for 2009/10 Bering Sea District snow crab fishery is 48.02-million pounds and is apportioned as follows:

IFQ	43,215,300 pounds
CDQ	4,801,700 pounds
Total	48,017,000 pounds

The eastern Bering Sea snow crab stock was declared overfished by NMFS on September 24, 1999. A rebuilding plan that specified a maximum 10-year period in which to rebuild the stock was adopted by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) in June 2000 and approved as FMP Amendment 14 by NMFS on December 28, 2000. Amendment 14 consists of a framework that references and uses the harvest strategy for Bering Sea snow crab in State of Alaska regulations (**5 AAC 35.517**) as the rebuilding harvest strategy. In order for the stock to be considered rebuilt according to the FMP, stock biomass must be estimated to be above the MSY biomass ( $B_{MSY}$ ) for two consecutive years. On September 24, 2009 NMFS determined that the eastern Bering Sea snow crab stock had not made adequate progress towards rebuilding within the specified rebuilding period and that the stock will not be rebuilt within the maximum 10-year time period.

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Under the NMFS guidelines for National Standard 1 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, total fishing mortality on an overfished stock that has failed to rebuild within the maximum period specified for rebuilding should not exceed that resulting from the rebuilding plan harvest strategy or that resulting from 75% of the overfishing rate, whichever is less.

NMFS analysts have estimated that the total catch of snow crabs (the retained catch plus the fishery mortality to non-retained bycatch of snow crabs in all fisheries) resulting from 75% of the overfishing rate during the 2009/10 season is 59.9-million pounds. Computation of the 2009/10 TAC according to **5 AAC 35.517** is 57.522-million pounds. Although the computed TAC is less than 59.9-million pounds, that amount does not include losses due to bycatch, the majority of which occurs during the directed snow crab fishery. In fact, NMFS analysts estimated that, if the TAC for 2009/10 was set according to **5 AAC 35.517**, the total catch for the season would exceed 69-million pounds. Hence a total catch of 59.9-million pounds of snow crabs, after accounting for all sources of fishery mortality, corresponds to the default catch limit specified in the National Standard 1 Guidelines.

NMFS analysts estimated that a TAC of 50.5-million pounds would result in a total catch of 59.9-million pounds, after accounting for all sources of bycatch mortality projected to occur during the fishery year. From that analysis NMFS has suggested that a TAC of 50.5-million pounds would equate to the default total catch limit. However, the TAC of 50.5-million pounds does not account for the uncertainty on bycatch of snow crabs that could occur during the 2009/10 fishery year. For that reason, ADF&G does not find a TAC of 50.5-million pounds to be sufficiently precautionary to avoid exceeding the default limit specified in the National Standard 1 Guidelines.

The TAC of 48.02-million pounds was established by ADF&G to minimize the risk of exceeding a total catch of 59.9-million pounds by accounting for the uncertainty on the bycatch that could occur in addition to the retained catch. That TAC was determined by considering the range of volumes, rates, and sources of bycatch of snow crabs that have occurred during the directed fishery, other crab fisheries, and groundfish fisheries during the last 10 years (as are documented in the 2009 Crab Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation reviewed by the NPFMC Crab Plan Team on 14–16 September 2009) and applying the bycatch mortality rates assumed by the Crab Plan Team when computing total catch.

The 2009/10 Bering Sea snow crab fishery will open at 12:00 noon October 15, 2009 and will remain open through May 15, 2010 in the Eastern Subdistrict and through May 31, 2010 in the Western Subdistrict. The snow crab fishery will not open in waters enclosed by 168° W longitude to 170° W longitude and 57° N latitude to 58° N latitude (ADF&G statistical areas 685700, 685730, 695700, and 695730) to protect the Pribilof blue king crab stock. The majority of blue king crabs captured during the 2009 survey were found in this area.

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: Unalaska/Dutch Harbor, (907) 581-6738, and Kodiak, (907) 654-5588.

Preseason gear inspections will be available in Dutch Harbor, Akutan and King Cove beginning on October 10, 2009. Vessel registration will begin at 12:00 noon on October 13, 2009. An individual holding a current Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) Bering Sea Tanner crab interim use permit card (T91Q or T09Q) must be onboard 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 Bering Sea commercial snow crab fishing regulations.

Fishermen 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. Fishermen 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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