

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



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

The Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) have completed analysis of 2010 NMFS trawl survey results for the Saint Matthew Island Section. Blue king crab biomass estimates were calculated using the catch-survey analysis model.

ADF&G model estimates indicate that the 2010 mature male abundance increased 28% percent from the 2009 estimate and mature male biomass is above the minimum required to open the fishery. The federal overfishing level (OFL) for this stock is 2.29-million pounds of male blue king crab taken as directed harvest and bycatch mortality during all fisheries. To account for projected bycatch mortality, uncertainty in the biomass estimate, and lower than expected fishery landings during the 2009/2010 season, the 2010/2011 Saint Matthew Island Section blue king crab total allowable catch (TAC) will be 1.60-million pounds and apportioned as follows:

Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ)	1,440,000 pounds
Community Development Quota (CDQ)	160,000 pounds
Total	1,600,000 pounds

The 2010/2011 Saint Matthew Island Section blue king crab fishery will open at 12:00 noon on October 15, 2010 and will remain open through February 1, 2011.

The pot limit for the Saint Matthew Island blue king crab fishery 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 fishery and pots used to take blue king crabs must have eight 5.8 inch inside diameter escape rings positioned 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 inch 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 11, 2010 in Dutch Harbor, Akutan and King Cove. Vessel registration will begin at noon of October 12, 2010. An individual holding a 2010 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 Saint Matthew Island Section 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 must 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. Unbaited gear may be stored outside of designated storage areas after fishing is completed for up to 14-days. 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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