

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
COMMERCIAL FISHERIES
NEWS RELEASE



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**2005/06 SAINT MATTHEW ISLAND SECTION AND PRIBILOF DISTRICT
KING CRAB SEASONS**

The Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) have completed analysis of 2005 NMFS trawl survey results for the Saint Matthew Island Section and Pribilof District of king crab Registration Area Q. King crab population and biomass estimates for these areas were made using survey data and catch-survey analysis model output. Based on survey results, the Saint Matthew Island Section blue king crab and the Pribilof District red and blue king crab fisheries will remain closed for the 2005/06 season.

Saint Matthew Island Section blue king crab: Survey estimates for Saint Matthew blue king crabs indicate continued low abundance of mature male and female crabs. The stock is above the mature male biomass threshold of 2.9 million pounds of mature males. However, the calculated total allowable catch (TAC) is only 0.45 million pounds, well below the harvest strategy minimum TAC of 2.5 million pounds. The minimum TAC plays an important role in promoting stock rebuilding and is an important determinant in the rebuilding schedule for this stock.

Pribilof District red and blue king crab: Survey results of Pribilof District blue king crabs indicate continued low abundance. The minimum threshold for a fishery opening is a total mature biomass (TMB) estimate of at least 13.2 million pounds of blue king crabs for two consecutive years.

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The 2005 estimate of TMB is 1.6 million pounds of mature blue king crabs, or approximately 12% of the threshold value and the second lowest on record. The Pribilof blue king crab stock has not achieved the minimum threshold for opening and will remain closed.

Estimates of TMB and mature male abundance for Pribilof District red king crab in 2005 continued a trend of declining estimates from previous years. Precision of the estimate for mature male abundance is poor, with a confidence interval of $\pm 64\%$ of the point estimate. Most males captured during the 2005 survey were post-recruit legal crabs and survey indication of future recruitment to the mature or legal male size class was poor. Due to the continued decline in the red and blue king crab stocks, the high degree of uncertainty surrounding the estimates of red king crab abundance, and concern for blue king crab bycatch, the red king crab fishery in the Pribilof District will remain closed for the 2005/2006 season.

For further information contact the Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game in Dutch Harbor at (907) 581-1239 or in Kodiak, at (907) 486-1840.

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