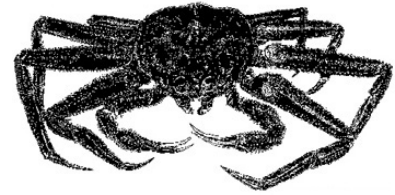


**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES
NEWS RELEASE**



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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 and of stock abundance and biomass indices estimated by the area-swept method and by the 2006 snow crab assessment model.

The total mature biomass (TMB) of male and female snow crabs in the Bering Sea is estimated to be above the harvest strategy minimum threshold for a fishery opening. The 2006/07 snow crab total allowable catch (TAC) is summarized as follows:

IFQ	32,909,400 pounds
CDQ	3,656,600 pounds
Total	36,566,000 pounds

The 2006/07 snow crab TAC was calculated using an exploitation rate of 14.88% applied to the mature male biomass. This calculation resulted in a TAC greater than the harvest strategy cap of 58% of the exploited legal male abundance. Therefore the 2006/07 TAC was set using a 58% harvest rate on the exploited legal male abundance. Exploited legal males are defined as all new-shell male snow crabs greater than or equal to four inches carapace width (CW) and 25% of old-shell male snow crabs greater than or equal to four inches CW.

The 2006/07 Bering Sea snow crab fishery will open at 12:00 NOON October 15, 2006 and will remain open through May 15, 2007 in the Eastern Subdistrict and through May 31, 2007 in the Western Subdistrict. The snow crab fishery is open in all waters of the Bering Sea District west of 166° W long., except for ADF&G statistical area 695700 which lies between 169° W long. and 170° W long. and 57° N lat. and 57° 30' N lat. ADF&G statistical area 695700 will be closed to commercial fishing for snow crabs to protect the Pribilof blue king crab stock. The majority of blue king crabs captured during the

2006 survey were found in or in close proximity to this statistical area. This closure reduced snow crab TAC calculations for 2006/07 by 0.248 million lbs.

The pot limit for this fishery is 450 pots per vessel. Buoy tags are currently available for sale at the Dutch Harbor and Kodiak ADF&G offices.

Regulations require proof of a current valid United States Coast Guard (USCG) Commercial Fisheries Safety Decal before a vessel registration is issued. Participating vessels must also have an activated vessel monitoring system approved by National Marine Fisheries Service (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: (907) 463-2000 or (800) 478-5555.

Preseason gear inspections will be available in Dutch Harbor beginning on October 9, 2006 and in Akutan, and King Cove beginning on October 10, 2006. Vessel registration will begin at 12:00 NOON on October 13, 2006. An individual holding a current Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) Bering Sea Tanner crab interim use permit card (T91Q or T09Q) must be aboard the vessel when it is registered. Vessels 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.

Vessels participating in IFQ and CDQ fisheries may form gear operation cooperatives. Each vessel must register those vessels authorized to operate the vessel's gear at the time of registration. When a vessel transports crab pot gear to the fishing grounds for another vessel, the vessel owning the crab pot gear must be active within seven days in the registration area where the crab pot gear is deployed.

Vessel operators may harvest Tanner crab and snow crab concurrently. Each vessel operator is restricted to a single species allocation of crab pot gear (450 pots) and must designate at the time of registration the quantity of pot gear registered and the quantity of pot gear configured for each species.

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'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.