

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



*Cora Campbell, Commissioner
Jeff Regnart, Director*



Contact:
Heather Fitch, BSAI Area Management Biologist
Phone: (907) 581-1239
Fax: (907) 581-1572

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

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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 2012 NMFS trawl survey results for the Saint Matthew Island Section. Area-swept estimates and model estimates indicate that the mature male biomass is above the threshold for a fishery opening.

The federal acceptable biological catch (ABC) for this stock is 2.028 million pounds of total male blue king crab mortality. To account for projected bycatch mortality and to avoid exceeding the ABC, the 2012/2013 Saint Matthew Island Section blue king crab total allowable catch (TAC) is 1.630 million pounds, apportioned as follows:

Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ)	1,467,000 pounds
Community Development Quota (CDQ)	163,000 pounds
Total	1,630,000 pounds

The 2012/2013 Saint Matthew Island Section blue king crab fishery will open at 12:00 noon on October 15, 2012 and will remain open through February 1, 2013.

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 Vessel Safety Decal is required before a vessel registration is issued. Vessels must also have an activated vessel monitoring system (VMS) 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: (907) 581-3466 ext. 1 or (907) 359-1575 (after hours).

Preseason gear inspections will be available beginning Thursday, October 11, 2012 in Dutch Harbor, Akutan and King Cove. Vessel registration will begin noon on October 12, 2012. An individual holding a 2012 Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) Bering Sea king crab interim use permit card (K91Q or K09Q) must be present during registration. Vessel operators may participate concurrently in IFQ and CDQ fisheries, but a separate registration and CFEC permit card are required for each fishery. At the time of registration, all pots on board the vessel and in wet storage must be in compliance with current Saint Matthew Island Section commercial blue king crab fishing regulations.

The pot limit for Saint Matthew Island blue king crab is 250 pots per vessel. Buoy tags are currently available for purchase and may be mailed. No groundfish pots may be operated from a vessel registered for the fishery. Vessel operators may register gear operation cooperatives with other registered vessels. A vessel operator may transport crab pot gear to the fishing grounds for another vessel operator; however, the crab pot gear's registered vessel operator has seven days to become active in the registration area where the gear is deployed. A vessel operator may make a one-time transfer of all pot gear to another vessel operator at the completion of fishing operations.

Vessel operators must notify ADF&G within 72 hours of completing fishing operations in a registration area or when departing the registration area with gear in long-term storage or transferred to another vessel. 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 14 days. 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 contact the ADF&G in Dutch Harbor at (907) 581-1239 or in Kodiak at (907) 486-1840.

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