

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



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**PETREL BANK RED KING CRAB
COMMERCIAL FISHERY TO REMAIN CLOSED FOR 2007/08 SEASON**

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has completed a review of data collected during the November 2006 Petrel Bank red king crab survey. Data from the 2006 survey was compared to information from the 2001 industry survey and the 2002 and 2003 commercial fisheries to evaluate current stock status. The Petrel Bank red king crab fishery was closed from 2004 to 2006 to protect the reproductive potential of the stock.

Because of differences in fishing practices between the 2001 survey, the 2002 and 2003 commercial fisheries, and the 2006 survey, a direct catch per unit effort (CPUE) comparison cannot be made. However, legal male red king crab catch rate during the 2006 survey was lower than during the 2001 survey and recent commercial fisheries. The 2006 survey CPUE of legal males was 1.2 crabs per pot from 170 stations fished. Red king crabs captured during the survey were predominately larger, mature-sized crabs, and the size distribution of surveyed crabs provides no expectation for significant recruitment of legal males in the immediate future. Although males that were estimated to be new recruits to legal size accounted for 36% of the 2006 survey catch of legal crabs, recruitment occurring since the 2001 survey has been insufficient to rebuild legal male abundance to levels of the early 2000s.

Spatial distribution of legal males during the 2006 survey decreased from the 2001 survey distribution and was limited to the northwestern portion of Petrel Bank. Overall, red king crabs in 2006 appeared to be absent or at very low densities in areas where they were captured during the November 2001 industry survey. Distribution of red king crabs was also restricted relative to harvest location during the last two commercial fisheries.

Given the limited distribution and low relative abundance of legal male red king crab on Petrel Bank and the lack of projected recruitment to the legal size class in the near future, a harvestable surplus of red king crab is not available and the commercial fishery will remain closed for the 2007/08 season. In order to build upon the relative abundance survey data collected in 2006, the department intends to conduct another red king crab survey of Petrel Bank in November 2007.

For further information please contact the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Dutch Harbor at (907) 581-1239.

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