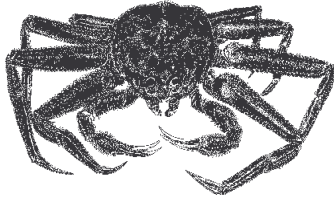


ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
COMMERCIAL FISHERIES
NEWS RELEASE



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ADF&G ANNOUNCES FISHERY CLOSURES
SURROUNDING THE *SELENDANG AYU* OIL SPILL

The Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) are working with the *Selendang Ayu* oil spill Unified Command and subcontractors to determine the extent of oiling in the area along the western shore of Unalaska Island. Information is being collected to determine location of oil onshore, in the water, and if oil will likely contact fishing gear and fishery resources.

The State of Alaska has a "Zero Tolerance Policy" with respect to oil contamination of seafood. If ADEC finds that an oil spill threatens to contaminate a body of water or management area, fishing vessels, tenders, and seafood processors must be inspected before, during, and after conducting fishing activities or receiving seafood products (18 AAC 34.600-625). Moreover, under authority of AS 16.05.060, the Department of Fish and Game will close fisheries in areas where there is a likely threat of contamination.

Based on information collected to date, undetermined amounts of oil are present in the Makushin and Skan Bay areas. Because oil is present and poses a threat of contamination to fishing gear, fishery resources, and potential fishery harvests, effective at 12:01 AM January 1, 2005, the department will close state-waters between Cape Kovrizhka (53 degrees, 50.67 minutes N lat.; 167 degrees, 09 minutes W long.) and Spray Cape (53 degrees, 36.83 minutes N lat.; 167 degrees, 09.33 minutes W long.) to all commercial fishing.

Closure of this area will specifically affect that portion of the upcoming Eastern Aleutian District Tanner crab (*C. bairdi*) fishery planned for the Makushin/Skan Bay area beginning January 15, 2005. Also closed will be fishing in these state waters for Pacific cod, black rockfish and other

groundfish species that would otherwise have been open on January 1, 2005. The Makushin/Skan Bay area will remain closed to all commercial fishing until further notice, pending monitoring and assessment indicating that the threat of contamination is eliminated. The closed area may be enlarged if the threat of contamination expands to adjacent bays and fishing grounds.

However, given the observed, limited distribution of oil to areas in the vicinity of the *Selendang Ayu*, there is as yet no apparent need to close that portion of the Eastern Aleutian District Tanner crab fishery planned for state waters of Unalaska Bay. Therefore, unless conditions change, that portion of the fishery will open as scheduled at NOON on January 15, 2005, with a guideline harvest level of 35,304 pounds. The fishery-wide pot limit of 300 pots will apply, as does the previously announced preseason registration deadline of 5:00 PM December 27, 2004.

The department currently has no plans to close or delay the Bering Sea snow crab (*C. opilio*) fishery scheduled to open on January 15, 2005. The snow crab resource and fishing grounds are substantially distant from the spill-impacted area. If the extent of oil contamination increases to threaten areas near or including fishing grounds for snow crab, or transit routes from the grounds to shoreside and floating processors, a subsequent closure, delay, or modification of the fishery may result.

Waters of the Port of Dutch Harbor and Unalaska Bay will be closely monitored. These waters support several local fisheries and are important transit and offloading areas for many vessels and seafood processors. While at this time no fishery closures for Unalaska Bay are announced, a threat of oil contamination in the area may also result in subsequent restrictions.

For up-to-date information on the *Selendang Ayu* oil spill, visit http://www.state.ak.us/dec/spar/perp/response/sum_fy05/041207201/041207201_index.htm

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