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Advisory Announcement

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2026 NORTON SOUND WINTER AND SUMMER COMMERCIAL CRAB SEASON SUMMARY

The Norton Sound Section (Q3) consists of all waters in King Crab Registration Area Q north of the latitude of Cape Romanzof (61° 49' N latitude), east of the U.S.-Russia Maritime Boundary, and south of latitude 66˚ N (Figure 3).

Legal male biomass (LMB) was estimated to be 3.18 million pounds in 2026 based on results from the 2025 summer fishery and 2024 trawl survey. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council had set an acceptable biological catch (ABC) of 298,000 pounds for 2026, which includes: the winter and summer subsistence harvests, winter and summer commercial harvests, and incidental mortality of non-target crab discards. To not exceed the recommended ABC, the department applied a harvest rate of 8.4% to the LMB for the commercial red king crab fishery, yielding a total guideline harvest level (GHL) of 268,000 pounds. By regulation 8% of the GHL is allocated to the winter commercial fishery resulting in a 21,440-pound allocation. The Community Development Quota (CDQ) fishery is allocated 7.5%, resulting in a 20,100-pound allocation. Any remaining winter commercial GHL not taken during the winter fishery is rolled over into the summer commercial GHL.

Winter Fishery

Open Access Fishery

The open access winter commercial fishery opens yearly on February 1 and closes April 30. Commercial harvest primarily occurs within 15 miles of Nome, excluding closed waters roughly 1 mile west to 3 miles east of Nome and extending out to approximately 3.5 miles offshore (Figure 1). Commercial permit holders are limited to 20 pots with each pot requiring a current-year pot tag attached to the stake pot marker. Additionally, fisherman are prohibited from obtaining replacement tags beyond the 20 pot tags issued for the season to replace lost pots. Crab harvested during this fishery are generally sold directly to area residents in recent years.

Harvest Summary

The 2026 winter open access fishery opened the season with 19 fishermen registered as catcher-sellers. Of the 19 fisherman that registered, 17 reported harvest with 152 landings made. There were 56 pots reported as lost in the commercial winter fishery. All harvest occurred within five statistical areas: 656430, 636403, 646403, 616332 and 656403 (Figure 2). Harvest increased throughout the season with 13% of harvest taking place in February, 34% in March, and 53% in April. Based on fish tickets, 17,697 pounds (6,047 crab) were harvested, which is just over three quarters of the winter open access quota. Catch per unit effort (CPUE) was 5 crab/pot with an average weight of 2.9 lbs/crab (Table 1). The average price of crab was $12.28/lb, for a total exvessel value of $206,229, which is 33% of the peak value of $617,400 in 2015.

SUMMER FISHERY

Open Access Fishery

The 2026 open access summer commercial crab fishery opened by emergency order at noon on June 15 and closed by emergency order on June 25. There was one large scale buyer registered in Norton Sound, while five fishermen registered as a catcher-sellers.

For the summer 2026 king crab season, 31 vessels made 132 landings totaling 287,002 pounds (78,434 crab) 125% of the GHL (Table 3). Of the total open access harvest, 137 pounds were reported as deadloss and 677 pounds were reported as retained and not sold. The 2026 season length was 10 days with an average weight of 3.7 lbs/crabs, the highest average weight on record. Average daily CPUE was 16 crab/pot, down from 2023's record of 28 crab/pot since the fishery transitioned to a super exclusive area in 1994 (Table 3).

CDQ Fishery

The Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (NSEDC) and Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association (YDFDA) divide the CDQ allocation of 7.5% of the total GHL. Only fishermen designated by these two CDQ groups can participate in this portion of the king crab fishery. Fishermen are required to have a Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) CDQ king crab permit and be registered with the department before they make their first delivery. Fishermen operate under authority of the CDQ group and each CDQ group decides how their crab quota is harvested. In most years since the CDQ program started YDFDA has transferred their quota to NSEDC for harvest; however, in 2026, YDFDA did not transfer their quota to NSEDC and YDFDA's quota went unharvested.

From 2016 to 2018, the CDQ fishery was prosecuted during the winter season, but in 2019, NSEDC reverted to harvesting CDQ crab only in the summer season. In 2026, the CDQ fishery opened June 15 and the last landing occurred on June 20. Three CDQ-registered crabbers harvested NSEDC's total CDQ allocation of 10,050 pounds (2,570 crab) in 2026.

Harvest Areas and Sampling

There were 10 statistical areas fished during the summer season. The majority of harvest and effort came from statistical area 656401 (71%), south of Nome. The next highest harvests came from statistical area 636401, which is southeast of Nome (14%).

Carapace length (CL) measurements and shell ages were collected from 2,006 commercially caught crab during the summer season; 100% of the sampling goal. Since the summer of 2002, NSSP has operated a seafood processing plant in Nome, and all of the sampling data was collected from this plant, either as fishermen offloaded their catch or from live holding tanks. Carapace age was classified as new, old, or very old with new-shell crab making up 91% of the crab sampled.

HARVEST SUMMARY

Both the open access and CDQ fisheries in the Norton Sound Section had a combined GHL of 268,000 pounds of crab, including the unharvested portion of the winter open access quota. A total of 31 vessels and 32 permit-holders (CDQ permits function as a single permit that may be fished by multiple vessels) registered to fish during the summer crab season, including 3 fishermen that harvested both open access and CDQ fisheries (Table 3). The total summer harvest from fish ticket reports was 297,072 pounds (81,004 crab), 111% of the combined summer quota. The average price paid for red king crab was $11.80/lb. The total exvessel value of the summer commercial harvest, including CDQ was $3.5 million dollars (Table 2).

Table 1.–Historical winter commercial red king crab fishery catch statistics and economic performance, Norton Sound Section, Eastern Bering Sea, 1978-2026.

Year	Commercial harvest (lbs) [a]	Permits fished	Landings	Pot pulls	CPUE	Average weight (lb)	Exvessel price/lb	Fishery value ($)	Season dates [b]
1978	25,025	37	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]	0.90	28,800	1/01–4/30
1979	575	1	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]	1/01–4/30
1980	57	1	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]	1/01–4/30
1981	0	0	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]	1/01–4/30
1982	44	1	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]	1/01–4/30
1983	1,427	5	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]	1/01–4/30
1984	2,226	8	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]	[c]	1/01–4/30
1985 [c]	3,042	10	106	103	11	2.6	5.56 [d]	6,494 [d]	1/01–4/30
1986 [c]	5,015	6	64	[c]	[c]	2.3	5.40 [d]	11,707 [d]	11/15–5/15
1987	2,590	7	51	55	19	2.5	2.60	6,734	11/15–5/15
1988	980	10	56	148	3	2.3	2.33	2,283	11/15–5/15
1989 [c]	1,045	5	59	[c]	[c]	[c]	5.40 [d]	2,210 [d]	11/15–5/15
1990 [c]	9,792	12	199	257	14	2.8	5.33 [d]	19,327 [d]	11/15–5/15
1991 [c]	10,064	11	187	609	6	2.7	5.00 [d]	19,000 [d]	11/15–5/15
1992	21,177	13	287	1,823	4	2.8	3.60	76,283	11/15–5/15
1993 [c]	4,926	8	66	[c]	[c]	2.8	2.84 [c]	14,000 [d]	11/15–5/15
1994	17,214	25	183	1,018	6	3.0	3.01	51,709	11/15–5/15
1995	21,813	42	345	3,302	2	2.9	3.09	66,190	11/15–5/15
1996	5,064	9	68	292	7	2.5	3.16	14,838	11/15–5/15
1997	[e]	2	[e]	[e]	[e]	[e]	2.81	[e]	11/15–5/15
1998	2,349	5	31	749	1	2.4	3.57	8,168	11/15–5/15
1999	7,041	5	61	425	6	2.6	3.69	24,777	11/15–5/15
2000	7,894	10	90	1,230	2	2.6	3.72	29,300	11/15–5/15
2001	2,943	3	21	534	2	2.7	3.60	10,582	11/15–5/15
2002	6,860	11	68	1,247	2	2.7	3.53	22,682	11/15–5/15
2003	16,827	13	128	1,960	3	2.5	3.52	57,577	11/15–5/15
2004 [f]	1,293	2	16	397	1	2.5	3.95	5,110	11/15–5/15
2005	5,619	4	51	1,076	2	2.7	4.52	25,054	11/15–5/15
2006	[e]	1	[e]	[e]	[e]	[e]	3.98	[e]	11/15–5/15
2007	8,023	8	106	926	4	2.4	3.06	24,464	11/15–5/15
2008	14,676	9	129	1,008	6	2.5	3.03	43,664	11/15–5/15
2009	12,348	7	130	1,282	4	2.5	3.01	32,649	11/15–5/15
2010	12,028	10	184	1,848	3	2.5	3.54	41,265	11/15–5/15
2011	8,669	5	129	1,747	2	2.6	3.59	30,776	11/15–5/15
2012	24,142	35	319	1,668	5	2.6	6.47	150,569	11/15–5/15
2013	62,179	26	495	6,093	4	2.8	6.73	402,256	11/15–5/15
2014	34,587	21	323	4,037	4	2.3	6.94	234,291	11/15–5/15
2015	98,750	44	664	7,314	6	2.4	6.57	617,434	11/15–4/30
2016 [g]	79,986	48	471	5,459	5	2.7	7.22	559,803	2/15–4/21
2017 [g]	77,843	88	435	3,225	8	3.0	6.73	483,797	2/07–3/22
2018 [g]	29,118	43	322	2,566	4	3.2	6.95	186,044	3/03–4/30
2019	3,295	6	21	195	5	3.1	6.97	20,699	2/25–4/30
2020	223	1	[e]	[e]	[e]	[e]	[e]	1,616	2/29-4/30
2021	922	3	18	89	3	2.9	6.77	4,471	2/01-4/30
2022	7,683	8	86	765	3	2.8	8.25	55,614	2/01-4/30

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Year	Commercial harvest (lbs) [a]	Permits fished	Landings	Pot pulls	CPUE	Average weight (lb)	Exvessel price/lb	Fishery value ($)	Season dates [b]
2023	10,013	7	90	659	5	2.8	8.84	84,815	2/01-4/30
2024	13,675	9	149	1,593	3	2.8	8.86	110,855	2/01-4/30
2025	8,218	7	92	1050	2	2.8	10.86	79,931	2/01-4/30
2026	17,697	17	152	1011	5	2.9	12.28	206,229	2/01-4/30
5-year Ave	8,102	7	87	831	3	2.8	8.72	67,137	
10-year Ave	23,098	22	187	1,733	4	2.9	7.94	158,765	

[a] Deadloss included in total.

[b] From 1986 to 2014, season dates were from November 15 of the previous year to May 15 of the current year. In 2015, season dates were from November 15, 2014, to April 30, 2015. Starting in 2016, the season is opened by emergency order anytime on or after January 15 and closes by regulation on April 30 or earlier by EO.

[c] Prior to the 1985 season, no crab fish ticket data were entered into the fish ticket database. Some data for years 1985-86, 1989-91, and 1993 were missing from the fish ticket database. Some information were found in the text of the annual management report for the respective year.

[d] Value given is price per crab. Fishery value was derived by multiplying price per crab by number of crab harvested.

[e] Information is confidential

[f] Confidentiality was waived by the fishermen.

[g] Includes catch information and values from the winter CDQ fishery.

Table 2.–Historical summer commercial red king crab fishery economic performance, Norton Sound Section, Eastern Bering Sea, 1977–2026.

Year	Guideline harvest level (lbs) [b]	Legal male pop est (lbs) [b]	Commercial harvest (lbs) [a,b] open access	Commercial harvest (lbs) [a,b] CDQ	Exvessel price/lb	Fishery value (millions $)	Season length days	Season length dates open access	Season length dates CDQ
1977	[c]	15.2	0.52	[d]	0.75	0.229	60	[c]	[d]
1978	3.00	14.8	2.09	[d]	0.95	1.897	60	6/07–8/15	[d]
1979	3.00	10.9	2.93	[d]	0.75	1.878	16	7/15–7/31	[d]
1980	1.00	6.0	1.19	[d]	0.75	0.890	16	7/15–7/31	[d]
1981	2.50	3.9	1.38	[d]	0.85	1.172	38	7/15–8/22	[d]
1982	0.50	2.7	0.23	[d]	2.00	0.405	23	8/09–9/01	[d]
1983	0.30	3.4	0.37	[d]	1.50	0.537	4	8/01–8/05	[d]
1984	0.40	3.9	0.39	[d]	1.02	0.395	14	8/01–8/15	[d]
1985	0.45	4.3	0.43	[d]	1.00	0.427	22	8/01–8/23	[d]
1986	0.42	4.7	0.48	[d]	1.25	0.600	13	8/01–8/25 [e]	[d]
1987	0.40	4.7	0.33	[d]	1.50	0.491	11	8/01–8/12	[d]
1988	0.20	4.9	0.24	[d]	[c]	[c]	10	8/01–8/11	[d]
1989	0.20	4.9	0.25	[d]	3.00	0.739	3	8/01–8/04	[d]
1990	0.20	4.7	0.19	[d]	[c]	[c]	4	8/01–8/05	[d]
1991	0.34	4.4	No Summer Commercial Fishery						
1992	0.34	4.2	0.07	[d]	1.75	0.130	2	8/01–8/03	[d]
1993	0.34	3.8	0.33	[d]	1.28	0.430	52	7/01–8/28 [f]	[d]
1994	0.34	3.2	0.32	[d]	2.02	0.646	31	7/01–7/31	[d]
1995	0.34	2.6	0.32	[d]	2.87	0.926	67	7/01–9/05	[d]
1996	0.34	2.2	0.22	[d]	2.29	0.519	57	7/01–9/03 [g]	[d]
1997	0.08	2.1	0.09	[d]	1.98	0.184	44	7/01–8/13 [h]	[d]
1998	0.08	2.4	0.03	[d]	1.47	0.041	65	7/01–9/03 [i]	[d]
1999	0.08	3.3	0.02	[d]	3.08	0.073	66	7/01–9/04 [j]	[d]
2000	0.33	3.9	0.29	0.01	2.29	0.715	91	7/01–8/29	9/01–9/29
2001	0.30	3.6	0.28	0.00	2.34	0.674	97	7/01–9/01	9/01–9/09
2002	0.24	3.4	0.24	0.01	2.81	0.729	77	7/01–8/06	6/15–28; 8/9–9/3
2003	0.25	3.5	0.25	0.01	3.09	0.823	68	7/01–8/13	6/15–28; 8/15–24
2004	0.35	3.9	0.34	0.03	3.13	1.038	53	7/01–8/08	6/15–6/28
2005	0.37	3.9	0.37	0.03	3.18	1.264	72	7/01–8/15	6/15–28; 8/17–27
2006	0.45	3.6	0.42	0.03	2.26	1.021	67	7/01–8/22	6/15–6/28
2007	0.32	3.5	0.29	0.02	2.84	0.750	52	7/01–8/17	6/15–6/28
2008	0.41	3.8	0.36	0.03	3.20	1.231	73	6/23–8/18	8/17–9/03
2009	0.38	4.1	0.37	0.03	3.17	1.225	98	6/15–9/20 [k]	6/15–7/28 [k]
2010	0.40	4.5	0.39	0.03	3.73	1.528	58	7/01–8/24	6/28–7/16
2011	0.36	4.5	0.37	0.03	5.23	2.016	33	6/28–7/30	6/28–7/08
2012	0.47	4.0	0.44	0.03	5.41	2.556	72	6/29–8/11	6/29–9/08

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Year		Guideline harvest level (lbs) [b]	Legal male pop est (lbs) [b]	Commercial harvest (lbs) [a,b] open access	Commercial harvest (lbs) [a,b] CDQ	Exvessel price/lb	Fishery value (millions $)	Season length days	Season length dates open access	Season length dates CDQ
2013		0.50	3.5	0.37	0.02	5.63	2.165	74	7/03–9/14	7/03–9/14 [i]
2014		0.38	3.5	0.36	0.03	5.12	1.960	52	6/25–8/02	6/25–8/15
2015		0.39	4.3	0.37	0.03	5.40	2.130	26	6/29–7/24	6/29–7/24 [l]
2016	[m]	0.52	4.4	0.42	0.04	6.50	2.713	25	6/27–7/21	3/23–4/21; 6/27–7/9
2017	[m]	0.50	3.8	0.41	0.04	6.25	2.560	30	6/26–7/25	2/28–3/22
2018	[m]	0.32	3.0	0.30	0.02	6.25	1.846	35	6/24–7/28	3/03–4/14
2019	[m]	0.15	2.5	0.07	0.00	6.98	0.514	71	6/25–9/03 [n]	6/25–9/03 [n]
2020		0.17	2.4	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.000	0	6/15-9/03	none
2021		0.29	3.9	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.000	0	6/15-9/03	none
2022		0.34	4.3	0.30	0.03	12.00	3.708	40	6/15-7/24	7/08-7/20
2023		0.35	4.4	0.39	0.03	6.50	2.688	29	6/21-7/19	7/06-7/17
2024		0.48	4.9	0.42	0.04	7.42	3.23	29	6/15-7/13	6/15-7/08
2025		0.41	4.6	0.34	0.02	10.21	3.54	16	6/15-6/26,7/11-7/12	6/17-6/18
2026		0.27	3.2	0.23	0.02	11.80	3.5	10	6/15-6/25	6/15-6/20
5-year Ave		0.37	4.4	0.29	0.02	7.22	2.63	23		
10-year Ave		0.35	3.82	0.27	0.02	6.21	2.08	28		

[a] Deadloss and personal use included in total.
[b] Millions of pounds.
[c] Information not available.
[d] No CDQ harvest was allocated until 1998, and no harvest occurred until 2000.
[e] Fishing began 8/12.
[f] Fishing began 7/8.
[g] Fishing began 7/9 due to fishermen's strike.
[h] First delivery was made 7/10.
[i] First delivery was made 7/16.
[j] The season was extended 24 hours due to bad weather.
[k] NSSP stopped buying crab from 6/29 to 7/6 due to poor meat fill.
[l] Final delivery was made 7/17.
[m] GHL includes 8% that was allocated to the winter commercial fishery; the fishery value does not include amount from the winter CDQ fishery, if any; and number of season days does not include the winter CDQ fishery, if any.
[n] Season ended by regulation on September 3, but NSSP stopped buying crab on 8/25 due to slow catch rate and soft shell crab.

Table 3.–Historical summer commercial red king crab annual harvest, Norton Sound Section, Eastern Bering Sea, 1977–2026.

Year	Number vessels (open access only)	Number permits (open access only)	Number landings (open access only)	Number crab	Harvest (lbs) [a] open access	Harvest (lbs) [a] CDQ [b]	OA+CDQ CPUE	OA+CDQ Pot pulls	Average weight (lbs)
1977	7	7	13	195,877	517,787		36	5,457	2.7
1978	8	8	54	660,829	2,091,961		64	10,817	3.0
1979	34	34	76	970,962	2,931,672		28	34,773	3.0
1980	9	9	50	329,778	1,186,596		29	11,199	3.6
1981	36	36	108	376,313	1,379,014		11	33,745	3.7
1982	11	11	33	63,949	228,921		6	11,230	3.6
1983	23	23	26	132,205	368,032		12	11,195	2.8
1984	8	8	21	139,759	387,427		14	9,706	2.8
1985	6	6	72	146,669	427,011		11	13,209	2.9
1986	3	3	[c]	162,438	479,463		38	4,284	2.9
1987	9	9	[c]	103,338	327,121		10	10,258	3.2
1988	2	2	[c]	76,148	236,688		32	2,350	3.1
1989	10	10	[c]	79,116	246,487		15	5,149	3.1
1990	4	4	[c]	59,132	192,831		19	3,172	3.1
1991[d]	No Summer Commercial Fishery								
1992	27	27	[c]	24,902	74,029		4	5,746	3.0
1993	14	20	208	115,913	335,790		16	7,063	2.9
1994	34	52	407	108,824	327,858		9	11,729	3.0
1995	48	81	665	105,967	322,676		6	18,782	3.0
1996	41	50	264	74,752	224,231		7	10,453	3.0
1997	13	15	100	32,606	92,988		11	2,982	2.8
1998	8	11	50	10,661	29,684		7	1,639	2.8
1999	10	9	53	8,734	23,553		5	1,630	2.7
2000	14	17	202	108,249	297,654	14,870	18	6,345	2.7
2001	30	37	320	98,321	288,199	0	8	11,928	2.9
2002	28	32	164	86,666	244,376	15,225	14	6,491	3.0
2003	24	30	219	88,518	253,284	13,923	11	8,494	2.8
2004	26	29	208	120,289	314,472	26,274	15	8,066	2.8
2005	30	32	227	128,405	370,744	30,060	16	8,867	2.9
2006	28	29	224	139,131	419,191	32,557	17	8,695	3.0
2007	30	30	234	101,672	289,264	23,611	12	9,118	2.8
2008	23	23	230	132,295	364,235	30,900	16	8,721	2.8
2009	22	23	333	133,498	369,462	28,125	12	11,934	2.8
2010	23	25	256	139,014	387,304	30,000	16	9,698	2.8
2011	24	25	173	132,030	373,990	26,850	21	6,808	2.8
2012	29	29	289	149,604	441,080	34,910	16	10,041	2.9
2013	33	33	435	124,485	373,278	18,585	9	15,058	3.0
2014	33	35	281	120,385	360,860	28,148	13	10,127	3.0
2015	36	36	231	133,531	371,520	29,595	17	8,356	2.8
2016	36	37	227	137,774	416,576	38,790 [e]	17	8,009	3.0
2017	36	36	270	135,323	411,739	37,232 [f]	14	9,440	3.0
2018	33	33	256	89,613	298,396	23,957 [f]	10	8,797	3.3
2019	24	26	146	24,504	73,784	1,239	5	5,436	3.0
2020	[d]	[d]	[d]	[d]	[d]	[d]	[d]	[d]	[d]
2021	[d]	[d]	[d]	[d]	[d]	[d]	[d]	[d]	[d]
2022	27	26	153	115,079	291,553	25,620	24	5,154	2.5

-continued-

Table 3. Page 2 of 2

Year	Number vessels (open access only)	Number permits (open access only)	Number landings (open access only)	Number crab (open access only)	Harvest (lbs) [a] open access	Harvest (lbs) [a] CDQ [b]	OA+CDQ CPUE	OA+CDQ Pot pulls	Average weight (lbs)
2023	25	24	142	137,110	387,031	29,438	28	5,085	2.8
2024	31	28	95	136,889	421,301	36,224	40	3,691	3.1
2025	31	30	145	99,559	343,372	15,375	16	6,242	3.5
2026	31	32	132	78,434	287,022	10,050	15	5,077	3.7

[a] Deadloss included in total.
[b] No CDQ fishery harvest prior to the 2000 season.
[c] Data not available.
[d] No summer commercial fishery.
[e] 35,207 pounds were harvested during the winter CDQ fishery.
[f] All CDQ harvest occurred during the winter.

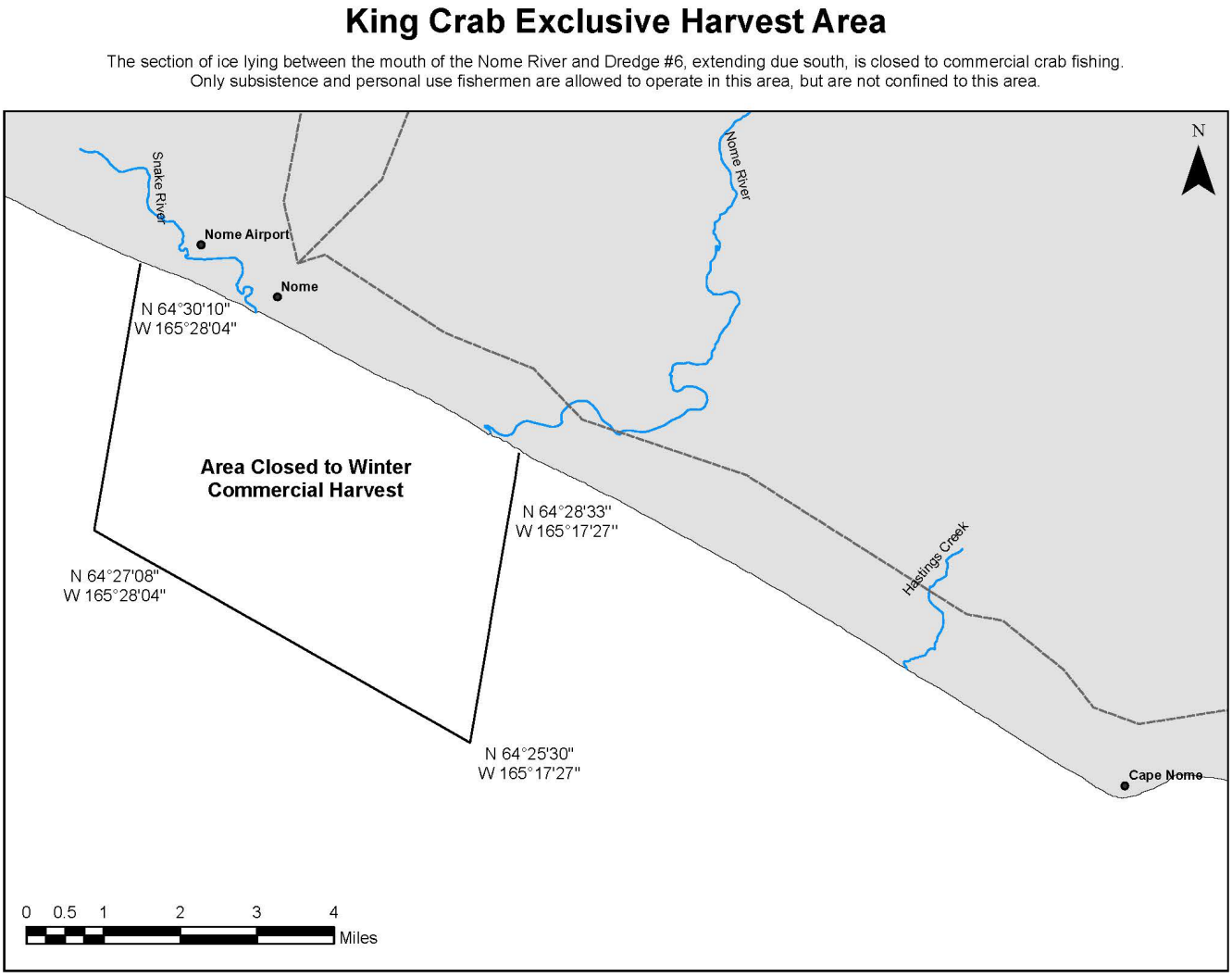

Figure 1.–Closed waters area in effect for the Norton Sound winter commercial crab fishery.

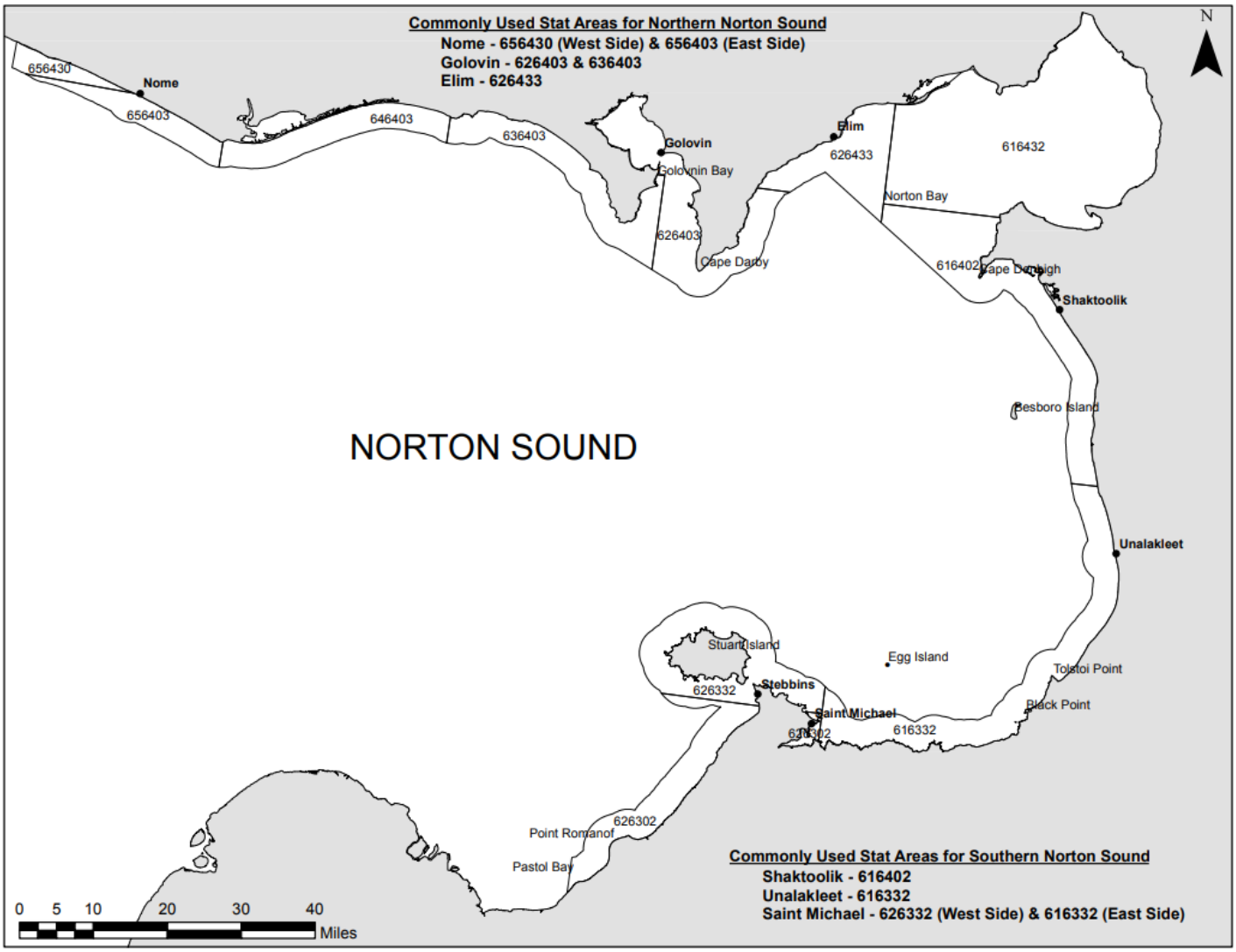

Figure 2.–Statistical areas in effect for the Norton Sound winter commercial crab fishery.

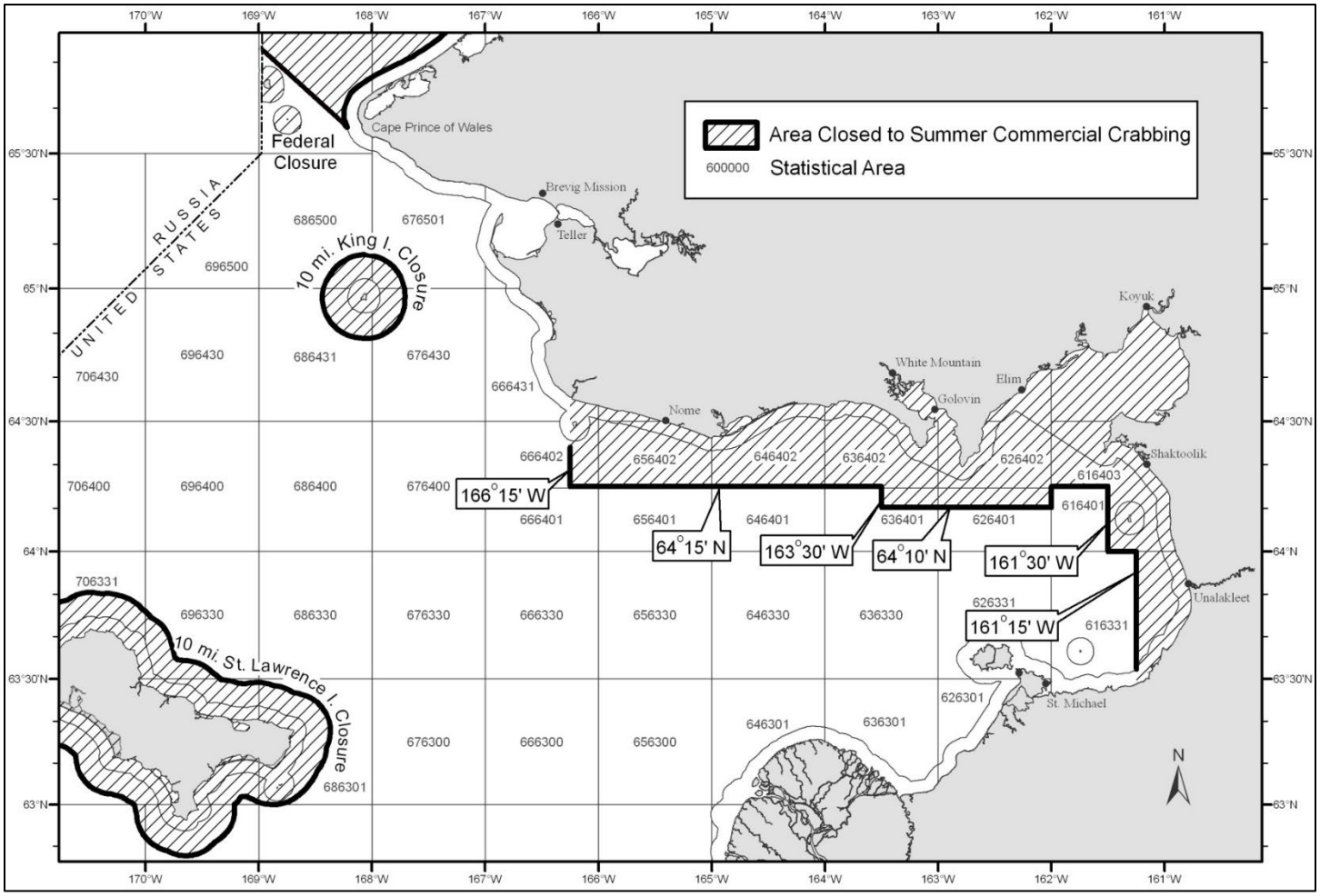

Figure 3.–Statistical areas and close-waters area in effect for the Norton Sound summer commercial crab fishery. *Note*: Line drawn around the coastline delineates the 3-mile state waters zone.