



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**Juneau, Alaska-** The Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers (ABSC), representing nearly 70% of the harvesters in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BSAI) crab fisheries, wish to commend the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) on its decision to extend the Bering Sea snow crab season from the currently scheduled May 31<sup>st</sup> regulatory closure to June 15, 2012. Without a doubt, the unprecedented ice event in the Bering Sea this year is a natural disaster worthy of the Department's attention. The foregone harvest, and the economic calamity that would have resulted had the season extension not been granted, would have adversely affected not only the harvest sector, but also CDQ groups, the processing sector, and crab-dependent Alaskan communities.

This years ice coverage and extent is, by far, the most severe on record. Sustained northerly winds combined with extremely cold air and water temperatures have kept the ice edge south of the Pribilof Islands for much of the winter. This has kept nearly all of the productive snow crab fishing grounds closed since early February. The most recent projections from the National Weather Service Ice Desk in Anchorage predict that this ice coverage may persist through the end of May. The Department's swift and decisive action will provide an opportunity to harvest and process the nearly 20 million pounds of snow crab that remain from this years Total Allowable Catch (TAC), but are still trapped under the ice.

For more information on the ice coverage, please visit the National Weather Service Ice Desk at: <http://pafc.arh.noaa.gov/ice.php>.

For additional information from the Alaska Department of Fish & Game, please see: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/home/news/pdfs/newsreleases/cf/129241542.pdf>.