

News

First Release of Hatchery-Raised Crab Coming This Fall

Fishermen's News Alaska Bureau

An experimental release of hatchery-raised juvenile Kodiak red king crab larvae is planned near Old Harbor on Kodiak Island this fall, to measure effects of release density on the growth and survival of juvenile crab in their first year.

The announcement in late March came from biologists with the Alaska King Crab Research, Rehabilitation and Biology program, regarding thousands of crab larvae reaching the last larval stage, known as glaucothoe, at the Alutiiq Pride Shellfish Hatchery in Seward, Alaska.

Field sites are to be monitored by scientists from the Kodiak laboratory of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, who will be trying to determine the best density for potential future releases.

Trawls will also be done in these areas to estimate predator abundance, and tethering experiments will help determine relative predation risks to the juvenile crab.

Densities of benthic (bottom) animals will be monitored to ensure that the crab are not having a detrimental effect on the ecosystem.

Biologists said this would be the first year of a planned multiyear set of experiments designed to develop optimal release strategies for red king crab, and to estimate the economic efficiency of a possible wild release program.

The broodstock females were captured in pots in Alitak Bay with help from the community of Old Harbor, and transported to the NOAA lab at Kodiak

before being shipped to Seward.

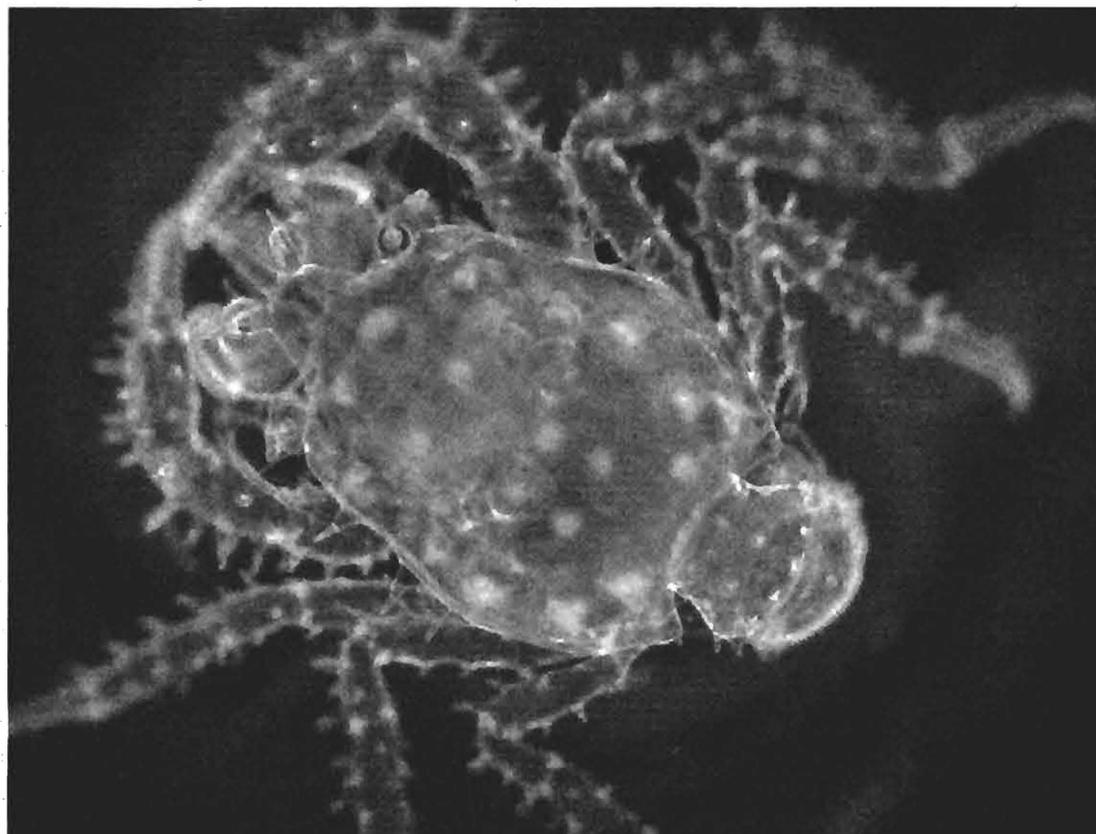
Hatching began on Feb. 18 and 360,000 larvae were stocked in six 1,200-liter tanks.

The larvae are being fed a diet of enriched *Artemia* and microalgae that yield the highest hatchery survivals in previous years of research, biologists said.

The Alaska King Crab Research, Rehabilitation and Biology program, also known as AKCRRAB, is a research and rehabilitation project sponsored by community groups, industry members, NOAA Fisheries, the Alutiiq Pride Shellfish Hatchery, the University of Alaska Fairbanks School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences, and the Alaska Sea Grant College Program. Its goal is to enhance depressed king crab populations throughout Alaska.

Partners also include the Aleutian Pribilof Island Community Development Association, the Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association, Chugach Regional Resources Commission, Norton Sound Economic Development Corp., and the United Fishermen's Marketing Association at Kodiak.

Other supporters and sponsors include Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers, the



Thousands of Kodiak red king crab larvae being raised in a hatchery in Seward, Alaska, are to be released into the natural environment near Old Harbor on Kodiak Island in the fall. The larvae are now reaching the last larval stage, known as glaucothoe, as shown in this photo, courtesy of the Alaska King Crab Research, Rehabilitation and Biology program.

Alaska Legislature, Bering Sea Fisheries Research Foundation, the Groundfish Forum, Gulf of Alaska Coastal Communities Coalition, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Kodiak Island Borough, the cities of Kodiak and Seward, the Pribi-

lof Island communities of St. Paul and St. George, Santa Monica Seafoods, and United Fishermen of Alaska.

More information is at <http://seagrant.uaf.edu/research/projects/initiatives/king-crab/general/>.