**Bitter Crab Syndrome in North Pacific snow crab, *Chionoecetes* *opilio***

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Survey: 2015 St Matthew Island Blue King Crab Pot Survey

**General Description and Justification**

Bitter crab syndrome (BCS) is a potentially fatal disease of commercially important *Chionoecetes* spp. in the eastern Bering Sea (EBS) and is an emerging disease worldwide in other decapod hosts. The disease is caused by a parasitic dinoflagellate, *Hematodinium* sp., that renders the meat inedible and unmarketable, thus making BCS an industry concern. The mortality rate from *Hematodinium* and the progression of BCS in snow crabs is not well understood. In the fall, we will be conducting experiments at the AFSC Kodiak Laboratory with *Hematodinium*-infected crabs to improve our understanding of mortality due to the parasite and disease progression in *C. opilio*.

The goal of this request is to collect 1) blood samples from approximately 200 randomly selected snow crabs for use in determining the prevalence of *Hematodinium* sp. in the St Matthew area snow crabs and 2) 200 visually BCS positive *C. opilio* (any size/sex) for experimental work in Kodiak. At the end of the survey, the blood samples will be sent to Seattle for diagnostic testing for BCS and the live crabs will be delivered to Dutch Harbor for air transport to the Kodiak Laboratory.