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Advisory Announcement

For Immediate Release: October 26, 2023

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Prince William Sound Area Longline Gear Closure Emergency Order # 2-GF-E-13-23

Effective 12:00 noon, October 28, 2023, the following groundfish statistical areas within Prince William Sound (PWS) will be closed to the use of longline gear: 466032, 476034, 476032, 476035, and 476006 (Figure 1).

The *Prince William Sound Rockfish Management Plan* (5 AAC 28.265) establishes a guideline harvest level (GHL) of 150,000 lb and requires full retention of all rockfish caught when participating in a directed groundfish or halibut fishery in the PWS Management Area. The plan also sets limits, by fishery, as a percentage of the round weight of the directed species on board the vessel. Any amount of rockfish that exceeds this bycatch limit is accounted for as overage and proceeds are surrendered to the state.

Despite reducing rockfish bycatch limits and not opening the parallel Pacific cod season in PWS, the PWS rockfish GHL has been exceeded this season. The department has growing concerns about the status of rockfish stocks in Prince William Sound and sought emergency authority from the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) to take additional measures to conserve rockfish. The closures in this announcement are implemented under the authority of the emergency regulation (5 AAC 28.050) *Lawful gear for groundfish* developed by the BOF at their October 13 meeting.

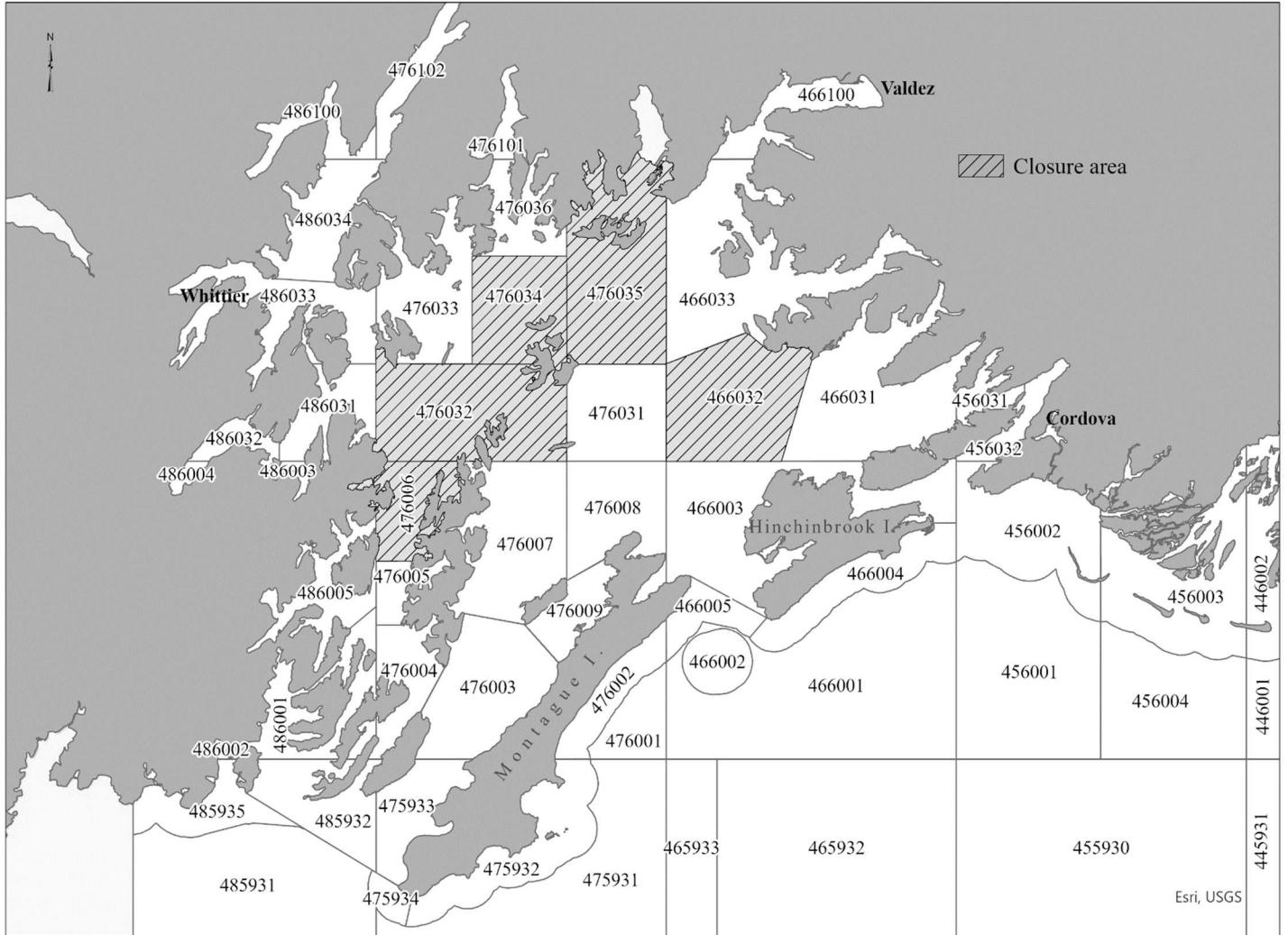


Figure 1.—Prince William Sound groundfish statistical areas closed to longline gear.