

**PROPOSAL 240 - 5 AAC 77.518. Personal use clam fishery.** Reduce the personal use bag and possession limits for razor clams in eastern Cook Inlet, as follows:

I recommend limiting the daily harvest limit in eastern Cook Inlet, from the mouth of the Kenai River to the southernmost tip of the Homer Spit to 15 clams per day, and 15 clams in possession. The new regulation would read:

**“In the personal use taking of clams, there are no bag, possession, or size limits for clams, except that from the mouth of the Kenai River to the southernmost tip of the Homer Spit, the bag limit for razor clams is the first 15 clams harvested and the possession limit is 15 clams.”**

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** I would like the board to address the current Pacific razor clam harvest limit listed in 5 AAC 77.518(2)(A).

The regulation cited above reads, “In the personal use taking of clams, there are no bag, possession, or size limits for clams, except that from the mouth of the Kenai River to the southernmost tip of the Homer Spit, the bag limit for razor clams is the first 60 clams harvested and the possession limit is 120 clams.

On May 28, 2013, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) issued Emergency Order (EO) 2-RCL-7-13-13, which reduced the razor clam harvest limit to 25 clams per day, and 25 clams in possession from the mouth of the Kenai River to the southernmost tip of the Homer Spit. This EO expired on December 31, 2013. On March 11, 2014, the ADF&G issued EO 2-RCL-7-10-14, which closes Ninilchik Beach areas to the taking of clams from the north bank of Deep Creek north to a marker located approximately 3.2 miles north of the Ninilchik River. Additionally, the bag and possession limit for razor clams was again reduced to the first 25 razor clams harvested for the remaining eastside Cook Inlet beaches extending from the mouth of the Kenai River to the southernmost tip of the Homer Spit.

ADF&G staff has cited poor recruitment, low abundance, and few age classes at Ninilchik as motivating factors behind the EOs. ADF&G publications indicate that abundance at Ninilchik Beach was the lowest on record in 2013. The declining population at Ninilchik Beach cannot sustain the harvest rate currently cited in 5 AAC 77.518(2)(A), and will not be able to sustain it any time in the near future, especially if the ADF&G continues to observe a trend of low recruitment. The department’s own publication, “Recreational Fisheries in the Lower Cook Inlet Management Area, 2011–2013, with updates for 2010” states “Significant annual recruitment needs to occur for several years for the abundance to rebound at Ninilchik Area beaches.”

Historically, most razor clam harvest has occurred at Ninilchik Beach. Recreational diggers will move to other beaches in the region, which may not be able to sustain the harvest pressure. Reducing the razor clam harvest limit in the Alaska Administrative Code will help to protect and preserve declining razor clam populations in eastern Cook Inlet.

**PROPOSED BY:** Ivan Z. Encelewski (EF-C14-107)

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**PROPOSAL 241 - 5 AAC 77.518. Personal use clam fishery.** Reduce the personal use bag and possession limits for razor clams in eastern Cook Inlet, as follows:

5 AAC 77.518

(2) there are no bag, possession, or size limits of clams, except that

(A) from the mouth of the Kenai River to the southernmost tip of the Homer Spit, the bag limit for razor clams is the first **25** [60] clams **dug** [harvested] and the possession limit is **25 razor** [120] clams.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Reduce the personal use harvest and possession limits on razor clams because populations of humans and sea otters are increasing and the razor clam populations cannot support the liberal bag limit.

**PROPOSED BY:** Homer Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EF-C14-152)

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**PROPOSAL 242 - 5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet-Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area.** Reduce the sport bag and possession limits for razor clams in eastern Cook Inlet, as follows:

5 AAC 58.022(a)

(14) razor clams: may be taken from January 1-December 31 as follows:

(A) from the mouth of the Kenai River to the southernmost tip of the Homer Spit: the bag limit is the first **25 razor** [60] clams **dug** [harvested]; the possession limit is **25 razor** [120] clams.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Reduce the harvest and possession limits of razor clams because populations of humans and sea otters are increasing and the razor clam populations cannot support the liberal bag limit.

**PROPOSED BY:** Homer Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EF-C14-151)

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**PROPOSAL 243 - 5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet-Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area; and 5 AAC 77.518. Personal use clam fishery.** Close east Cook Inlet beaches to all razor clam harvest, as follows:

Close East Side beaches to all razor clam harvest until such time as the resource recovers.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** East Side beaches in Cook Inlet have a lack of razor clams due to over harvest.

**PROPOSED BY:** Jim St. Peter (HQ-F14-001)

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**PROPOSAL 244 - 5 AAC 77.518. Personal use clam fishery.** Establish personal use bag and possession limits for razor clams in West Cook Inlet, as follows:

I recommend implementing a baseline harvest limit of 60 clams per day and 120 clams in possession for West Cook Inlet. I also recommend that the Alaska Department of Fish and Game implement regular monitoring of this population.

The new regulation would read:

5 AAC 77.518 In the personal use taking of clams,

.....

(2) there are no bag, possession, or size limits for clams, except that

.....

(D) in West Cook Inlet [describe specific area] the bag limit for razor clams is the first 60 clams harvested and the possession limit is 120 clams.”

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** With regards to razor clam harvesting in West Cook Inlet, I would like the board to address the current regulation 5 AAC 77.518(2).

The regulation cited above reads, “In the personal use taking of clams, there are no bag, possession, or size limits for clams”.

There are currently no harvest limits in West Cook Inlet. This area has become very popular for recreational razor clam digging, as more people are accessing the area by private/chartered boat/plane than in the past. Reduced harvest limits and an emergency order closing Ninilchik Beach in East Cook Inlet may result in even more harvest in West Cook Inlet.

The ADF&G does not currently conduct regular monitoring of the West Cook Inlet razor clam population. Comprehensive data are lacking for growth, abundance, and fecundity. There is not enough information available to determine whether the West Cook Inlet razor clam population can sustain unlimited harvest.

Implementing a harvest limit for razor clams in West Cook Inlet will help to protect and preserve this highly exploited, unstudied population.

**PROPOSED BY:** Ivan Z. Encelewski (EF-C14-126)

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