

PROPOSAL 263 - 5 AAC 39.645. Shellfish onboard observer program. Reduce onboard observer coverage rates and change observer deployment periods for the Aleutian Islands golden king crab fishery, as follows:

The best solution would be for the onboard observer requirement to be determined annually by the department in consultation with the fleet such that the total coverage is 30 to 50% of the total weight of golden king crab harvested. The following regulatory language is suggested:

5 AAC 39.645 (d)(4)(A)(ii) **the department in consultation annually with the fleet will determine the most effective means to observe the harvest of 30-50% of the total golden king crab weight harvested by each catcher vessel while operating fishing gear east of 174 degrees W. Long., during each of the three trimesters dated August 1 through October 31, November 1 through January 31, and February 1 through April 30, during each registration year.** [DURING THE HARVEST OF 50 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL GOLDEN KING CRAB WEIGHT HARVESTED BY EACH CATCHER VESSEL WHILE OPERATING FISHING GEAR EAST OF 174 DEGREES W. LONG., DURING EACH OF THE THREE TRIMESTERS DATED AUGUST 15 THROUGH NOVEMBER 15, NOVEMBER 16 THROUGH FEBRUARY 15, AND FEBRUARY 16 THROUGH MAY 15, DURING EACH REGULATORY YEAR; AND]

5 AAC 39.645 (d)(4)(A)(iii) **the department in consultation annually with the fleet will determine the most effective means to observe the harvest of 30-50% of the total golden king crab weight harvested by each catcher vessel while operating fishing gear west of 174 degrees W. Long., during each of the three trimesters dated August 1 through October 31, November 1 through January 31, and February 1 through April 30, during each registration year.** [DURING THE HARVEST OF 50 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL GOLDEN KING CRAB WEIGHT HARVESTED BY EACH CATCHER VESSEL WHILE OPERATING FISHING GEAR EAST OF 174 DEGREES W. LONG., DURING EACH OF THE THREE TRIMESTERS DATED AUGUST 15 THROUGH NOVEMBER 15, NOVEMBER 16 THROUGH FEBRUARY 15, AND FEBRUARY 16 THROUGH MAY 15, DURING EACH REGULATORY YEAR;]

This approach would allow the department to adjust the observer coverage requirement as needed based on periodic review of the observer program as well as changes to the fishery over time.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Current requirements governing onboard observers in the Aleutian Islands golden king crab fishery are specified in regulation and are therefore not readily subject to change as changing conditions may require. For example, current regulations call for observer coverage during the harvest of 50% of the total golden king crab weight harvested by catcher vessels during each trimester. Because of the way the regulations are written and the fishery is conducted, the actual observer coverage for each vessel has been nearer to 70 percent, rather than 50 percent.

This extra coverage costs money that could be better used to fund additional research. This is especially true since this fishery has very low bycatch of female or sublegal crabs or other species. These regulations were adopted after crab rationalization when observer data was the primary source of data for the fishery and stock. The department and the fleet are currently conducting a golden king crab survey (carried out by the fleet with ADF&G scientists onboard) that should

decrease the need for data collected by observers. Additionally, the trimesters dictated in the regulation no longer match the season opening and closing dates of the fishery.

Ideally, new regulations would give the department the flexibility to work with the fleet on an annual basis to establish observer requirements that provide the needed information without the unnecessary cost of observing a larger proportion of the harvest.

PROPOSED BY: Aleutian King Crab Research Foundation (EF-F16-102)
