

PROPOSAL 267 – 5 AAC 02.220. Subsistence Tanner crab fishery; 5 AAC 35.306. Area E registration; 5 AAC 35.310. Fishing seasons for Registration Area E; 5 AAC 35.320. Size limits for Registration Area E; 5 AAC 35.325. Lawful gear for Registration Area E; 5 AAC 35.327. Tanner crab pot storage for Registration Area E; 5 AAC 35.340. Registration Area E inspection points; 5 AAC 35.345. Inspection requirements for Registration Area E; 5 AAC 35.3XX. Operation of other gear in Registration Area E; 5 AAC 35.3XX. Logbooks; 5 AAC 35.3XX. Reporting requirements for Registration Area E; and 5 AAC 35.3XX. Prince William Sound Tanner Crab Harvest Strategy. Create a harvest strategy and amend regulations for Tanner crab in Prince William Sound specifying conditions under which the commercial fishery may occur and reduce the legal size limit in the subsistence Tanner crab fishery, as follows:

5 AAC 02.220(2) is amended to read:

5 AAC 02.220. Subsistence Tanner crab fishery.

(2) only male Tanner crab five [AND ONE-HALF] inches or greater in width of shell may be taken or possessed;

5 AAC 35.306(b) is amended to read:

5 AAC 35.306. Area E registration.

(b) A Tanner crab vessel must be registered under 5 AAC 35.020 no later than 30 days [FOR REGISTRATION AREA E] before the scheduled opening date of the commercial Tanner crab season.

5 AAC 35.310 is amended to read:

5 AAC 35.310. Fishing seasons for Registration Area E. In the Northern District and Hinchinbrook District, pots may be operated to take Tanner crab only from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., with a soak time of 14 hours, between 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m., from 12:00 noon January 15 until 12:00 noon March 31. The commissioner may, by emergency order, increase the daily fishing period specified in this section based on the department's assessment of efforts, manageability, and harvest rate [THE COMMERCIAL HARVEST OF TANNER CRAB IN THE PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND AREA IS CLOSED UNTIL THE BOARD OF FISHERIES HAS ADOPTED A HARVEST STRATEGY IN THIS CHAPTER].

5 AAC 35.320 is amended to read:

5 AAC 35.320. Size limits for Registration Area E. Only male Tanner crab 5.0 [5.3] or greater in width of shell may be taken or possessed.

5 AAC 35.325 is amended to read:

5 AAC 35.325. Lawful gear for Registration Area E. (a) Tanner crab may be taken only with Tanner crab pots as defined in 5 AAC 35.050 [AND RING NETS]. Tanner crab taken by other means must be returned to the water without further harm.

(b) Repealed / /2017 [IN THE EASTERN DISTRICT, TANNER CRAB MAY BE TAKEN WITH POTS THAT HAVE TUNNEL EYE OPENINGS THAT EXCEED FIVE INCHES (13 CM) IN ONE DIMENSION].

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(d) The number of Tanner crab pots that may be operated from a vessel will be announced before the opening of each commercial Tanner crab season, not to exceed 30 Tanner crab pots per vessel. In determining the annual pot limit, the department will consider the

(1) total number of registered vessels;

(2) estimated catch per unit effort; and

(3) size of the guideline harvest level [DURING THE COMMERCIAL TANNER CRAB SEASON IN PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND MANAGEMENT AREA, AN AGGREGATE OF NO MORE THAN 75 KING AND TANNER CRAB POTS MAY BE OPERATED FROM A VESSEL REGISTERED TO FISH FOR TANNER CRAB].

5 AAC 35.327(a) is amended to read:

5 AAC 35.327. Tanner crab pot storage for Registration Area E. (a) Cone or pyramid Tanner crab pots with all bait and bait containers removed and all doors not secured closed, and rectangular Tanner crab pots with all bait and bait containers removed and with all doors secured fully open, may be stored in the water only from 30 days before the scheduled opening date of the commercial Tanner crab season in Registration Area E until 30 days after the closure of that season.

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5 AAC 35.340 is repealed:

5 AAC 35.340. Registration Area E inspection points. ~~Repealed~~ / /2017 [REGISTRATION AREA E INITIAL INSPECTION AND REINSPECTION POINTS ARE LOCATED IN CORDOVA, VALDEZ, AND SEWARD OR AT OTHER LOCATIONS SPECIFIED BY THE DEPARTMENT].

5 AAC 35.345 is amended to read:

5 AAC 35.345. Inspection requirements for Registration Area E. (a) Unless required by the commissioner under (b) of this section, a vessel fishing for Tanner crab in Registration E is not required to undergo an inspection.

(b) The commissioner may, by public announcement, require that vessels fishing for Tanner crab in Registration E be inspected within [WITHIN] 24 hours before the scheduled opening date of the commercial Tanner crab season in Registration Area E or at any time during the open season [, A TANNER CRAB VESSEL REGISTERED FOR REGISTRATION AREA E MUST HAVE ALL HOLDS, LIVE TANKS, AND FREEZERS INSPECTED] by a local representative of the department at an inspection point specified by the department [IN 5 AAC 35.340. TANNER CRAB MAY NOT BE ON BOARD THE VESSEL AT THE TIME OF INSPECTION. THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS SECTION DO NOT APPLY TO A REGISTERED TANNER CRAB VESSEL THAT DOES NOT HAVE A SALTWATER CIRCULATION SYSTEM IN ITS HOLDS OR LIVE TANKS].

5 AAC 35 is amended by adding new sections to read:

5 AAC 35.3XX. Operation of other gear in Registration Area E. A person or vessel that operates commercial, subsistence, sport, or personal use pots during the 30 days immediately before the scheduled opening date of the commercial Tanner crab season in Registration Area E may not participate in that commercial Tanner crab fishery.

5 AAC 35.3XX. Logbooks. (a) An operator of a vessel registered to fish using pot gear in the commercial Tanner crab fishery shall complete logbooks provided by the department.

(b) A logbooks described in (a) of this section shall be

(1) updated daily;

(2) sealed in envelopes provided by the department to maintain confidentiality; and

(3) submitted to the primary processor or buyer for attachment to fish ticket; the processor or buyer shall forward fish tickets with the attached, sealed envelopes containing logbooks to the department in accordance with 5 AAC 39.130.

(c) A catcher-seller described in 5 AAC 39.130 shall attach logbooks described in this section to the department copy of fish tickets.

(d) A person may not make a false entry in the logbook required in (a) of this section.

5 AAC 35.3XX. Reporting requirements for Registration Area E. (a) A validly registered Tanner crab vessel must report each day to the department:

(1) the number of pot lifts;

(2) the number of crab retained for the 24-hour fishing period preceding the report;

and

(3) any other information that the commissioner requests as is necessary for the management and conservation of the fishery, as specified in the vessel registration certificate issued under 5 AAC 35.306.

5 AAC 35.3XX. Prince William Sound Tanner Crab Harvest Strategy. (a) If adequate data are available, the department shall estimate the abundance of preferred legal male Tanner crab in Prince William Sound and establish a guideline harvest level for legal male Tanner crab for each fishery if that abundance is above the threshold for opening a fishery. The department will not allow fishing that causes abundance to fall below the threshold level.

(b) The minimum stock threshold for the commercial fishery is 200,000 (50 percent of the long-term average abundance) preferred legal male Tanner crab. The commercial fishery may open only if the estimated abundance is greater than or equal to 200,000 preferred legal male Tanner crab. In addition, if the commercial fishery has been closed for more than two consecutive years, then the estimated abundance must be greater than or equal to 200,000 preferred legal male Tanner crab for more than one year before the commercial fishery may open. The commercial guideline harvest level will be determined as follows:

(1) the guideline harvest level for legal male Tanner crab may not exceed 15 percent of the estimated abundance of preferred legal male Tanner crab if the estimated abundance is greater than or equal to 200,000 (50 percent of the long-term average abundance), but less than 300,000 (75 percent of the long-term average abundance) preferred legal male Tanner crab;

(2) the guideline harvest level for legal male Tanner crab may not exceed 20 percent of the estimated abundance of preferred legal male Tanner crab if the estimated abundance is greater than or equal to 300,000 (75 percent of the long-term average abundance), but less than 400,000 (long-term average abundance) preferred legal male Tanner crab;

(3) the guideline harvest level for legal male Tanner crab may not exceed 25 percent of the estimated abundance of preferred legal male Tanner crab, if the estimated

abundance is greater than or equal to 400,000 (long-term average abundance) preferred legal male Tanner crab;

(4) the guideline harvest level for legal male Tanner crab may be reduced or the commercial fishery closed if the estimated commercial harvest would cause the estimated abundance of preferred male Tanner crab to fall below the minimum stock threshold.

(c) In this section,

(1) "legal male" means male Tanner crab that are 127 mm (5.0 inches) or greater in carapace width, including the lateral spines, which is the legal size crab allowed to be retained for harvest;

(2) "preferred legal male" means male Tanner crab that are 135 mm (5.3 inches) or greater in carapace width, including the lateral spines, for which the abundance is used to estimate the abundance and threshold levels of legal male crab.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? There is no Tanner crab harvest strategy or management plan in regulation for Prince William Sound (PWS). Using historical harvest and survey information, the department developed a commercial/noncommercial management plan and harvest strategy. Components of the new harvest strategy and management plan include provisions for new male legal size, fishing hours, season dates, lawful gear, and pot storage. Other proposed elements include registration, logbook and reporting requirements.

The commercial harvest of Tanner crab in the PWS area is closed by regulation until the board has adopted a harvest strategy.

According to the statewide regulation 5 AAC 35.080, the department shall establish an annual harvest strategy for each Tanner crab stock that is consistent with the board's *Policy on King and Tanner Crab Resource Management*. If adequate data are available (estimates of recruitment, threshold level of abundance, acceptable biological catch, historical fishery performance data and reproductive potential), the department shall establish a threshold level of abundance of each stock and may not allow fishing on any stock that is below its threshold level of abundance.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

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