

PROPOSAL 271 – 5 AAC 34.2xx. Commissioner’s permits for king crab in Prince William Sound and 5 AAC 35.3xx. Commissioner’s permits for Tanner crab in Prince William Sound. Allow the department to issue commissioner’s permits for king and Tanner crab fisheries in Prince William Sound that have been closed for more than four years, as follows:

In order to accurately cross check Department data, the Commissioner of ADF&G shall be empowered to issue commissioners permits for crab fisheries for any and all districts of PWS which have heretofore been closed either by Emergency Order or regulation for any period of which exceeds 4 years.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) has by regulation blocked any commercial fishing of crab since 1999. From 1988-1999 commercial fishing was closed by Emergency Orders. Under current regulations, no commercial harvest can occur until the Department develops a harvest strategy. The Department has failed to develop a strategy for 18 years. At long last the Department will produce a harvest strategy for the 2017 Board of Fisheries (BOF) meeting; which apparently does not include commercial fishing. The Department’s stance appears to contradict BOF Tanner and King crab policy which states as one of its goals: *“providing a sustained and reliable supply of high quality product to the industry and consumers which will provide substantial and stable employment in all sectors of the economy and relating to these fisheries.”* In its proposed harvest strategy the Department appears to base its threshold abundance level based on an average of statistics and catch figures compiled over thirty years ago in a commercial crab fishery, combined with statistics and catch figures compiled over thirty years ago in a commercial crab fishery, combined with statistics gathered in the Department’s trawl survey. Due to budgetary constraints the Department has no plans to continue its trawl survey. A survey which by the way is destructive of habitat, and widely viewed as not indicative of actual crab stocks. Subsistence catches indicate a level of abundance that does not appear to mesh well with the thought processes of the Department. Under current regulations the Commissioner cannot issue a Commissioners permit to conduct a fishery to provide the Department with a more accurate assessment of both Tanner and King crab stocks.

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