

**PROPOSAL 281 – 5 AAC 35.508. Bering Sea District *C. bairdi* Tanner crab harvest strategy.** Review the Bering Sea District Tanner crab harvest strategy, as follows:

5 AAC 35.508 states, in pertinent part:

(a) In the Bering Sea District, the commercial *C. bairdi* Tanner crab fishery may open only if an analysis of preseason survey data indicates that the population at the time of the survey is at or above 40 percent of the long-term average (1975 - 2010) of mature female crab biomass in the Eastern Subdistrict.

(b) If preseason survey data indicates that the population at the time of the survey is at or above 40 percent of the long-term average of mature female crab biomass in the Eastern Subdistrict for the second consecutive year, the department shall establish a separate total allowable catch level for that portion of the Bering Sea District that is east of 166° W. long. and for that portion that is west of 166° W. long. under the provisions of (c) and (d) of this section. If the commercial *C. bairdi* Tanner crab fishery in the Bering Sea District did not open in the previous season because the threshold requirements specified in (a) of this section were not met, the total allowable catch level for that portion of the Bering Sea District that is east of 166° W. long. and for that portion that is west of 166° W. long., as computed under (c) and (d) of this section, shall be reduced by one-half.

...

(g) In this section,

...

(7) "mature female crab" means for

(A) that portion of the Bering Sea District that is east of 166° W. long., a female *C. bairdi* Tanner crab that is more than 84 millimeters in carapace width; and

(B) that portion of the Bering Sea District that is west of 166° W. long., a female *C. bairdi* Tanner crab that is more than 79 millimeters in carapace width.

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** The Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) developed this proposal as an opportunity for consideration of changes to the Bering Sea District *C. bairdi* Tanner Crab Harvest Strategy (harvest strategy). The board, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department), and fishing industry began discussing the harvest strategy in fall 2016, and through a series of meetings in early 2017 agreed on harvest strategy elements that could be analyzed and potentially amended prior to fishery status and total allowable catch (TAC) determination for the 2017/2018 fishing season. RC 35, submitted at the March 2017 Statewide King and Tanner Crab board meeting, provides a description of harvest strategy elements considered highest priority for possible amendment prior to TAC setting for the 2017/2018 fishing season. Based on RC 35, the department agreed analysis of potential amendments to the following four harvest strategy elements could be completed for a May 2017 board meeting:

- Criteria used to determine mature female Tanner crab (female size-at-maturity);
- Area used to estimate biomass expanded to consider area west of 173° W. long. and other surveyed areas where biomass estimates are consistently available and areas closed to commercial crab fishing;
- Years used to estimate long-term average mature female Tanner crab biomass;

- Provision that TAC is reduced 50% in any year succeeding a year in which the mature female Tanner crab biomass falls below 40% of its long-term average.

**PROPOSED BY:** Alaska Board of Fisheries

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