

PROPOSAL 253

5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area; and 5 AAC 58.035. Methods, means, and general provisions – Shellfish.

Allow crab rings in the Cook Inlet Area Tanner crab sport fishery, as follows:

5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet - Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area

(a) Except as provided in (b) and (c) of this section, and unless otherwise specified in this chapter, the following are the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and special provisions for finfish and shellfish in the Cook Inlet - Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area:

...

(11) Tanner crab: may be taken as follows:

(A) only from July 15 - March 15, except as specified under 5 AAC 35.410(c); bag and possession limit of five male crab; minimum size is four and one-half inches across the widest part of the shell, including spines; a shellfish harvest recording form is required as specified in 5 AAC 58.026;

(B) notwithstanding the provisions of (a)(11)(A) of this section, if the provisions of 5 AAC 35.408(d) apply then male Tanner crab may be taken only from October 1 through the last day of February; bag and possession limit of three male crab; minimum size is four and one-half inches across the widest part of the shell, including spines; no more than one pot **or crab ring** per person with a maximum of one pot **or crab ring** per vessel; a shellfish harvest recording form is required as specified in 5 AAC 58.026;

5 AAC 58.035. Methods, means, and general provisions - Shellfish

(a) Unless otherwise specified in 5 AAC 58.022 or by an emergency order issued under AS 16.05.060, the provisions of this section apply to shellfish sport fishing in the Cook Inlet - Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area.

...

(d) Notwithstanding 5 AAC 75.035(3), no more than two pots **or crab rings or combination thereof** per person, regardless of type, with a maximum of two **pots or crab rings or combination thereof** per vessel, regardless of type, may be used to take shellfish at any time, except that in the waters between the longitude of Gore Point (150_ 57.85' W. long.) and the longitude of Cape Fairfield (148_ 50.25' W. long.), no more than two pots **or crab rings or combination thereof** per person with a maximum of six pots **or crab rings or combination thereof** per vessel may be used to take Tanner crab.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The new Cook Inlet Tanner Crab Sport fishery has regulations wording that inadvertently left out the use of crab rings as legal gear. The regulations establishing this fishery were written defining the limit of pots per person, and pots per vessel with no reference to the allowance of crab rings which are also typical legal gear in all sport, personal use, and subsistence crab fisheries around the state. This proposal addresses this 'technical' omission which has currently prevented the use of crab rings in this fishery.

The smaller sport fishing boats and even kayakers are not equipped with pot pullers for handling tanner size crab pots and therefore have been excluded from participating in this winter fishery. The statewide sport crab fishery regulations allow pots and crab rings, or a combination of both when a fishery allows more than one piece of gear for harvest. Correcting the wording to include the use of a crab ring(s) along with crab pots will standardize the regulations to conform with the traditional gear and allow more participants to engage in this limited winter fishery. Even kayakers are capable of deploying and retrieving a crab ring from their vessel.

PROPOSED BY: Gary Barnes

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