

PROPOSAL 263

5 AAC 35.506. Area J registration.

Allow retention of incidentally harvested Bering Sea District *C. bairdi* during directed a *C. opilio* season, as follows:

5 AAC 35.XXX. Possession limits for Registration Area J.

Add a small possession limit for *C. bairdi* crab taken incidentally during *C. opilio* crab fishing after the season for *C. bairdi* crab has closed, as follows:

“In the Bering Sea District, a vessel operator that is registered to fish for *C. opilio* Tanner crab may also possess *C. bairdi* Tanner crab taken incidentally during *C. opilio* Tanner crab fishing after the season *C. bairdi* crab has closed in amount not to exceed [INSERT VALUE BETWEEN 2 TO 5] percent of the weight of *C. opilio* Tanner crab on board the vessel and reported on an ADF&G fish ticket. Any *C. bairdi* Tanner crab on board the vessel at the time of landing will not accrue toward quota and will be forfeited.”

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? *C. bairdi* crab and *C. opilio* crab co-occur on the fishing grounds and even interbreed creating hybrids. Meaning while fishing for one species, it is inevitable that some of the other species will also be caught. In addition, the seasons for these two species largely overlap, with *C. bairdi* crab season closing first (on March 31) while the *C. opilio* crab season lasts longer (closing May 15 in the Eastern Subdistrict and May 31 in the Western Subdistrict). Fishermen sort the crab at sea to retain the intended target species. However, there may be a small amount of the non-target species that are mis-identified or cling on to the target species going in the vessel’s holding tank. A regulation already exists to allow up to 35% of *C. opilio* crab to be retained during the season while fishing *C. bairdi* crab (5 AAC 35.506(j)). This proposal would allow a small amount (between two to five percent) of non-target species (*C. bairdi* crab) caught incidentally when targeting *C. opilio* crab after the season for *C. bairdi* crab has closed without being subject to a penalty or violation. This proposal would formalize in writing an existing agency practice/policy. The *C. bairdi* crab would have to be forfeited at the time of landing and would not accrue toward quota in the crab rationalization program.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers

(EF-F19-086)
