

PROPOSAL 174

5 AAC 31.110. Shrimp pot fishing seasons and periods for Registration Area A and 5 AAC 31.145. Southeastern Alaska Area Pot Shrimp Fishery Management Plan.

Change the pot shrimp season in Districts 2 and 6 from a fall/winter season to spring/summer season, as follows:

5 AAC 31.110(#) Shrimp pot fishing seasons and periods for Registration Area A:

Except as provided in 5 AAC 31.145(d) and Districts 2 and 6, in Registration Area A, shrimp may be taken by pots only from October 1 through February 28, unless closed by emergency order. In district 2 and 6, shrimp may be taken by pots only from May 15th through July 31st, unless closed earlier by emergency order.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Currently shrimp season is managed with a fall opener for a small percentage of fishermen and overseas markets. Shrimp in Southeast Alaska are harvested during the fall while the shrimp are bearing eggs. The shrimp stocks continue to decrease and most commercial shrimpers agree shrimp need to be caught during the spring and early summer.

Directly to our south, British Columbia has a sustainable spot prawn fishery. British Columbia has a few similarities with Alaska concerning their commercial fishery. They have a limited entry program to restrict the numbers of permit holders fishing commercially. They restrict the number of pots a vessel can fish and the size volume of the pots. They also have specific sections set aside for recreational fishermen. Harvest logs are required and seasons are closed when a certain catch level has been met.

British Columbia manages their commercial shrimp fishery differently from Alaska several different ways. Fishermen can only haul each shrimp pot once per day. All female shrimp with eggs must be released as well as all shrimp under a certain size. Pots have a minimum mesh size restriction to allow escapement of undersized shrimp. Their shrimp season opens in May and last through the mid to later part of June. The reason for a May opener is to allow “spawners” to release their eggs. Recreational shrimp closures will often occur during winter months to allow “spawners” to release their eggs.

Southeast Alaska waters are directly north of British Columbia. British Columbia has a sustainable fishery. The fishery is recognized by the David Suzuki Foundation/Seachoice program as a BEST CHOICE, the Vancouver Aquarium Vancouver Aquarium’s Ocean Wise program as GREEN, and the Monterey Bay Aquarium’s Seafood Watch as a BEST CHOICE. Southeast Alaska shrimp fishery is only known as a depleted fishery.

The East POW AC would like our represented commercial fishing districts of 2 and 6 to be the turning point for Alaska to have a sustainable shrimp fishery. As British Columbia has proven, shrimp stocks remain sustainable only if the egg bearing females are allowed to release their eggs prior to an open commercial season. Having a spring season will allow for local sales of the shrimp and a product which is more desirable to the local market. Shrimp with eggs are not desired by the local consumer. At the same time, 90% of British Columbia’s shrimp sales are to overseas

consumers. When asked, a large percentage of the commercial shrimp fishermen support a spring shrimp fishery in Alaska.

PROPOSED BY: East Prince of Wales Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EF-F20-094)
