

PROPOSAL 260

5 AAC 32.310. Fishing Seasons for Registration Area H, 5 AAC 32.325. Lawful Gear for Registration Area H, 5 AAC 32.306. Area H Registration and 5 AAC 32.340. Registration Area H Inspection Points.

Establish a commercial Dungeness crab fishing season in Cook Inlet, modify lawful gear for Dungeness crab in the Southern District and establish lawful gear for Dungeness crab in Cook Inlet. establish Registration Area H as an exclusive registration area for Dungeness crab, and modify Registration Area H inspection points, as follows:

5 AAC 32.310. Fishing Seasons.

Male Dungeness Crab may be taken only as follows:

(1) Southern District:

(A) Subdistrict 1: From 12:00 noon June 1 to 12:00 noon on July 31;

(B) Subdistrict 2: From 12:00 noon June 1 to 12:00 noon on September 30;

(2) In the remaining waters of Statistical Area H, from 12:00 noon June 1 to 12:00 noon on September 30.

[THERE IS NO OPEN FISHING SEASON FOR DUNGENESS CRAB IN THE COOK INLET AREA.]

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5 AAC 32.325. Lawful Gear.

(a) In the Southern District,

(1) no more than an aggregate of 50 [150] Dungeness crab pots may be operated from a vessel registered to take Dungeness crab;

(2) no more than 25 [50] of the 50 [150] pots described in (1) of this subsection may be operated in Subdistrict 1 from a vessel registered to take Dungeness crab; only a pot with a buoy tag number of 1 – 25 [50] may be operated in Subdistrict 1;

(3) the buoy for each Dungeness crab pot must have an identification tag issued by the department, as follows:

(A) the identification tag must be placed on a buoy that is marked with the ADF&G number of the vessel operating the gear, as required by 5 AAC 32.051;

(B) new identification tags must be obtained annually, before each fishing season;

(C) the department shall issue identification tags before each fishing season; the tags must be uniquely numbered for each registration year;

(D) except as provided in (E) of this paragraph, the department may issue identification tags only to a person who is registering a vessel under 5 AAC 32.020 and only at the time of vessel registration; a person registering a vessel shall apply for identification tags at the department office designated to issue tags; a person who wishes to apply for identification tags may register only one vessel;

(E) the department may issue replacement tags for identification tags lost during the season if the vessel operator submits a sworn statement or affidavit describing how the tags were lost and listing the number of the lost tags;

(4) all crab pot buoys operated under a single ADF&G number must be identically marked and the color and design must be registered with the department before fishing.

(b) In the remaining waters of Cook Inlet no more than 50 pots may be operated in the aggregate.

(1) [(3)] the buoy for each Dungeness crab pot must have an identification tag issued by the department, as follows:

(A) the identification tag must be placed on a buoy that is marked with the ADF&G number of the vessel operating the gear, as required by 5 AAC 32.051;

(B) new identification tags must be obtained annually, before each fishing season;

(C) the department shall issue identification tags before each fishing season; the tags must be uniquely numbered for each registration year;

(D) except as provided in (E) of this paragraph, the department may issue identification tags only to a person who is registering a vessel under 5 AAC 32.020 and only at the time of vessel registration; a person registering a vessel shall apply for identification tags at the department office designated to issue tags; a person who wishes to apply for identification tags may register only one vessel;

(E) the department may issue replacement tags for identification tags lost during the season if the vessel operator submits a sworn statement or affidavit describing how the tags were lost and listing the number of the lost tags;

(2) [(4)] all crab pot buoys operated under a single ADF&G number must be identically marked and the color and design must be registered with the department before fishing.

(c) No portion of the line attaching a pot or ring net buoy or buoys to the trap or ring may float on the surface of the water at any time, except for that portion of the line connecting the main buoy to any auxiliary buoy or buoys.

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5 AAC 32.306. Area H Registration. Registration Area H is **an exclusive** [A NONEXCLUSIVE] registration area.

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5 AAC 32.340. Registration Area H Inspection Points. The inspection points for Registration Area H are at Homer [SELDOVIA,] and Seward, and at other locations that may be specified by the commissioner.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Dungeness Crab stocks seem to have recovered substantially in Cook Inlet and are now being seen and caught in other fisheries at relatively high numbers. I would like the Board to consider the 4 proposals submitted by me as a group to reopen the limited entry commercial Dungeness Crab fishery in Registration Area H, using the regulation changes as amended as appropriate developing a fishery using size, sex and season restrictions as is done in many other management areas. This fishery would be conducted as a test fishery reduced to 1/3rd of the former legal gear, become an exclusive fishery and have a shorter season. The open season would also be reduced in much of the area to allow a very

conservative fishery to develop to see how the stocks have recovered. The permit holders can be responsible to collect whatever fishery data the department needs such as number of pots, duration of soak and size, sex and number of crab kept and released. Without some sort of starting point this fishery with approximately 100 limited entry permits will never reopen. The fishery is already limited to male Dungeness Crab 6 1/4 inches or greater in shell width. This proposal eliminates ADF&G from traveling to Seldovia where there is no ADF&G office.

PROPOSED BY: Wes Humbyrd (HQ-F20-123, HQ-F20-124, HQ-F20-125, HQ-F20-126)
