

PROPOSAL 257

5 AAC 58.0xx and 5 AAC 77.5xx. East Cook Inlet Razor Clam Sport and Personal Use Fishery Management Plan.

Create a management plan for east Cook Inlet sport and personal use fisheries, as follows:

- (a) **The purpose of this plan is to direct the department in the management of sport and personal use razor clam fisheries in east Cook Inlet from the mouth of the Kenai River to the southernmost tip of the Homer Spit and to establish abundance thresholds for adult clams greater than or equal to 80 mm and stock productivity indices for the fisheries in the Clam Gulch and Ninilchik Areas.**
- (b) **In the Clam Gulch Area from the mouth of the Kenai River south to the latitude of 60° 5.54'N. lat.,**

 - 1) **if the estimated adult clam abundance is greater than or equal to the average 1989-2012 abundance, and adult clam recruitment replaces or exceeds harvest and natural mortality, and the size composition index of the harvest is equal to the 1989-2012 average, then the fisheries will be managed as provided in 5 AAC 58.022 (14)(A) and 5 AAC 77.511 (2)(A). The combined harvest rate of the sport and personal use fisheries are not expected to exceed 20% of the adult clam abundance.**
 - 2) **if the estimated adult clam abundance is greater than or equal to 50% of the average 1989-2012 abundance but the population does not meet the criteria outlined in (b)(1), then razor clams may be taken May 1 through September 30 and the bag and possession limit is the first 30 clams taken or possessed. The combined harvest rate of the sport and personal use fisheries is not expected to exceed 10% of the adult clam abundance.**
- (c) **In the Ninilchik Area from the southernmost tip of the Homer Spit north to the latitude of 60° 5.54'N. lat.,**

 - 1) **if the estimated adult clam abundance is greater than or equal to the average 1989-2012 abundance, and adult clam recruitment replaces or exceeds harvest and natural mortality, and the size composition index of the harvest is equal to the 1989-2012 average, then the fisheries will be managed as provided in 5 AAC 58.022 (14)(A) and 5 AAC 77.511 (2)(A). The combined harvest rate of the sport and personal use fisheries are not expected to exceed 20% of the adult clam abundance.**
 - 2) **if the estimated adult clam abundance is greater than or equal to 50% of the average 1989-2012 abundance but the population does not meet the criteria outlined in (c)(1), then razor clams may be taken May 1 through September 30 and the bag and possession limit is the first 30 clams taken or possessed. The combined harvest rate of the sport and personal use fisheries is not expected to exceed 10% of the adult clam abundance.**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The east Cook Inlet sport and personal use fisheries have been closed by emergency order annually since 2015 due to low abundance of adult clams. The department has annually surveyed the abundance of razor clams on

beaches in Ninilchik since 2011 and Clam Gulch since 2014. These surveys provide estimates of juvenile and adult clam abundances as well as estimates of natural mortality and recruitment. Recruitment of new cohorts of juvenile clams were detected in 2016 through 2019 at both Ninilchik and Clam Gulch beaches. Due to below average growth in 2017 and 2018 and a high natural mortality rate, adult abundances have not significantly improved since those recruitments. It is anticipated that these juvenile clam cohorts will recruit to the adult size at Ninilchik and Clam Gulch over the next few years, but the stock is not likely to rebuild to historical productivity. Currently, there is no management plan to structure razor clam fisheries once the stocks are sufficient to support harvest opportunity. Creating a management plan will allow for public and board input to structure sustainable razor clam fisheries.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

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