

**PROPOSAL 69**

**5 AAC 35.308. Registration Area E Tanner crab harvest strategy.**

Modify criteria for opening commercial Tanner crab fishery in Prince William Sound, as follows:

We propose to add a back-up trigger for the tanner crab fishery that does not depend solely on a trawl survey. This would enable management to prosecute a fishery to utilize the fleet as an assessment tool and prevent the fishery from being closed for another 30 years. Trawl surveys have failed us for the last 30 years and we need another option to assess stock levels in the event of a prolonged closure -- as was accomplished most recently by the successful Tanner Crab Commissioner's Permit fishery and provided important data to the Department.

We propose including the following language to the department's new harvest strategy under 5 AAC 35.310:

**"Any district in Area E that is closed to the commercial taking of Tanner crab for five or more years will be eligible to open under conditions of a permit issued by the commissioner."**

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** ADFG is currently developing a new harvest strategy for the commercial taking of Tanner crab in Area E. The previous management plan relied on trawl surveys for assessment, and unfortunately the fishery was then closed for 30 years. We have concerns that trawl surveys are not reliable in Prince William Sound given the variability in habitat and seafloor conditions, and do not give an adequate view of the true biomass in the way that catch data can. This was evidenced by the discrepancies between survey estimates and fishery results from recent years.

The tanner crab fishery was only able to be opened in recent years through a Commissioner's Permit fishery, and we would like to ensure that this remains a valuable assessment tool in the new management plan.

Further, ADFG continually faces budget cuts, and if the management plan relies solely on survey results, we lose the opportunity for a fishery at all if the trawl survey is cut.

**PROPOSED BY:** Cordova District Fishermen United

(HQ-F20-026)

\*\*\*\*\*