

PROPOSAL 243

5 AAC 34.113. Southeast Alaska Red King Crab Management Plan; 5 AAC 34.125. Lawful gear for Registration Area A; 5 AAC 34.126. King crab pot marking requirements for Registration Area A; and 5 AAC 77.664 Personal use king crab fishery.

Adopt a biologically based harvest strategy for the commercial red and blue king crab fishery along with a bag and possession limit maximum for the personal use fishery and adopt new management measures for the red and blue king crab fishery, as follows:

5 AAC 34.113. Southeast Alaska Red King Crab Management Plan is repealed and readopted to read:

5 AAC 34.113. Southeast Alaska Red and Blue King Crab Harvest Strategy.

(a) The commissioner may, by emergency order, open the red and blue king crab fishery only if the department's preseason biomass estimate of legal male red and blue king crab equals at least 50 percent of the median biomass estimate of legal males.

(b) If the commercial red and blue king crab fishery is open under (a) of this section, and the preseason biomass estimate of legal males is:

(1) at least 50 percent but less than 100 percent of the median biomass estimate of legal males, then the biomass of legal males available for harvest will not exceed $0.1 \times LMB \times (LMB/LMB_{MED})$, where "LMB" is equal to the current year preseason biomass estimate of legal males, and " LMB_{MED} " is equal to the median biomass estimate of legal males;

(2) equal to or greater than the LMB_{MED} , the biomass of legal males available for harvest will not exceed 10 percent of the preseason estimate of LMB.

(c) In implementing this harvest strategy, the department shall consider the reliability of biomass estimates of red and blue king crab, the manageability of the fishery, and other factors the department determines important to manage the fishery consistent with sustained yield principles; and shall use the best scientific information available and consider all sources of uncertainty as necessary to avoid overfishing.

(d) In Registration Area A, the holder of a CFEC permit for red and blue king crab may not retain more king crab in the directed fishery than the annual amount of king crab individual catch limit (ICL) that is specified by the department. The department shall determine the annual amount of king crab ICL by dividing the annual total allowable catch by the number of CFEC permits eligible to be fished in the fishery. The department shall use the best available information, including harvest rate and biological data, to set the total allowable catch.

(e) Any commercial and personal use harvest that exceeds the permit holder's ICL established under (d) of this section will be reported as an overage on an ADF&G fish ticket at the time of delivery and immediately surrendered to the state. All proceeds from the sale of excess king crab shall be surrendered to the state.

(f) Except as provided in (a) – (e) of this section, when the biomass of legal males available for harvest is equal to or greater than 200,000 lb, a competitive fishery may open.

(g) If multiple CFEC permit holders are registered to fish from a vessel the maximum number of king crab pots that may be operated may not exceed pot limits as described in 5 AAC 34.125(b)(1).

(h) Based on inseason information, the commissioner may, by emergency order, close a fishing season.

(i) For the purposes of this section,

(1) “preseason biomass estimate” means the sum of surveyed and non surveyed biomass estimates of legal male red and blue king crab present at the time of the preseason survey as estimated directly by the catch survey analysis method from annual pot survey data;

(2) “legal males” means all male red and blue king crab at least 7 inches or greater in width of shell.

(2) “ICL” means individual catch limits.

(j) The provisions of this section do not apply after January 24, 2028.

5 AAC 34.113. Southeast Alaska Red King Crab Management Plan. Repealed __/__/__. [(a)

THE SOUTHEAST ALASKA RED KING CRAB FISHERY SHALL BE MANAGED CONSISTENTLY WITH THE BOARD’S “POLICY ON KING AND TANNER CRAB RESOURCE MANAGEMENT” (90-04-FB, MARCH 23, 1990), ADOPTED BY THIS REFERENCE, AND ACCORDING TO THE PRINCIPLES SET OUT IN THIS SECTION.

(b) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL CLOSE AN AREA IF THE ABUNDANCE OF VARIOUS SIZES OF MALE AND FEMALE CRABS IS INADEQUATE TO PROVIDE FOR A SUSTAINED HARVEST, OR WHEN POTENTIALLY HIGH EFFORT PRECLUDES AN ORDERLY FISHERY.

(c) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL CLOSE THE FISHERY IF THE DEPARTM’NT’S ESTIMATE OF THE AVAILABLE HARVEST IS BELOW THE MINIMUM THRESHOLD OF 200,000 POUNDS OF LEGAL MALE RED KING CRAB.

(d) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL DETERMINE AN APPROPRIATE HARVEST RATE BEFORE THE OPENING OF THE FISHERY. THE HARVEST RATE IS THE PERCENTAGE OF THE LEGAL MALES THAT CAN BE HARVESTED WHILE PROVIDING FOR THE LONG-TERM REPRODUCTIVE VIABILITY OF RED KING CRAB STOCKS. THE DEPARTMENT SHALL BASE THE HARVEST RATE ON ESTIMATES OF ABUNDANCE OF THE VARIOUS SIZE CLASSES OF MALE AND FEMALE CRABS, AND ON FACTORS AFFECTING THE REPRODUCTIVE VIABILITY OF THE STOCK.

(e) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL DETERMINE THE GUIDELINE HARVEST LEVEL BEFORE EACH FISHING SEASON. THE GUIDELINE HARVEST LEVEL IS THE SUM OF THE ESTIMATES OF SUSTAINABLE HARVEST FOR EACH FISHING DISTRICT. IF STOCK ASSESSMENT DATA ARE NOT AVAILABLE, THE GUIDELINE HARVEST LEVEL WILL BE BASED ON HISTORICAL FISHERY PERFORMANCE, CATCH, AND POPULATION INFORMATION. A LACK OF ADEQUATE INFORMATION WILL RESULT IN CONSERVATIVE MANAGEMENT.]

5 AAC 34.125(b)(1)(A) is amended to read:

5 AAC 34.125. Lawful gear for Registration Area A.

...

(b) The following king crab pot limits are in effect in Registration Area A:

(1) during the commercial red king crab season, the maximum number of king

crab pots that may be operated from a vessel registered to fish for king crab is as follows:

(A) **through January 24, 2028**, no more than 20 king crab pots when the guideline harvest level is less than 399,999 [AT LEAST 200,000 BUT NOT MORE THAN 399,999] lb;

5 AAC 34.126(b) is amended to read:

5 AAC 34.126. King crab pot marking requirements for Registration Area A.

...

(b) If multiple CFEC permit holders are registered to fish from a vessel simultaneously for **the red and blue king crab fishery**, [OR FOR] the golden king crab **fishery, or the** [AND] Tanner crab [FISHERIES] **fishery**, the tags are issued to the vessel for the duration of the fishing season.

5 AAC 77.664 Personal use king crab fishery.

...

(b) Except as specified in (e) of this section, and through January 24, 2028, the daily bag and possession limit is three male crab per person; if the **preseason biomass estimate of legal male** [REGIONWIDE HARVESTABLE BIOMASS OF MATURE] red and blue king crab is less than 50 percent of the **median** surveyed and non-surveyed biomass estimate of legal males [BELOW 200,000 POUNDS], the commissioner may, by emergency order, reduce the bag and possession limit of red and blue king crab.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Currently, a commercial red and blue king crab fishery will not open in Southeast Alaska if the estimated biomass of legal male red king crab is below 200,000 lb. This threshold was developed so that the department could manage the fishery without exceeding the guideline harvest level (GHL). At lower abundance levels, prosecuting a fishery where registered permit holders could not exceed an individual catch limit (ICL) would allow the department to conduct a modest fishery with little risk while targeting a GHL less than 200,000 lb; the GHL would continue to be developed from the annual crab surveys conducted around Southeast Alaska, which have been done for more than 40 years. In tandem with the commercial elements, the personal use fishery would not have a 200,000 lb trigger. This proposal seeks to provide the department with a mechanism to adjust the bag limit based on preseason estimates of biomass that are the same as used in the commercial fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

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