

## **PROPOSAL 263**

### **5 AAC 02.315. Subsistence Dungeness Crab Fishery.**

Open the Cook Inlet subsistence Dungeness crab fishery, as follows:

In that portion of the Cook Inlet Area outside the nonsubsistence area described in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3), in the subsistence taking of Dungenous crab, we propose opening the subsistence Dungenous crab fishery at a very small-scale with the following provisions:

- (1) male Dungenous crab may be taken only from July 1st through September 30th
- (2) before harvesting Dungenous crab, a person must obtain a subsistence permit; upon taking Dungenous crab, and before concealing the Dungenous crab from plain view or removing the Dungenous crab from the fishing site, the person must enter the catch information requested on the permit;
- (3) the daily bag and possession limit is five male Dungenous crab and the seasonal limit is 40 male Dungenous crab;
- (4) only male Dungenous crab six inches or greater in width of shell may be taken or possessed (or whatever size the department defines as a legal mature male in Lower Cook Inlet); no more than one pot or ring net per person with a maximum of three pots or rings net per vessel may be used to take Dungenous crab.

**\*We are requesting a summer Dungenous crab fishery because we consulted with knowledge bearers in Port Graham and Nanwalek and they have traditionally only harvested Dungenous crabs from July-Sept because 1) The Dungenous crab come closer to shore to feed on pink salmon eggs/carcasses and generally feed in shallower waters during this time and 2) the waters are safer for the smaller skiffs these communities own and are only able to drop crab pots during these months.**

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Section 5 AAC 02.315 - Subsistence Dungeness crab fishery

In the Cook Inlet Area, a person may not take Dungeness crab for subsistence purposes.

This fishery has been closed since 1998 but continues to be a very important subsistence resource for the Lower Cook Inlet Tribes: Specifically Nanwalek and Port Graham. These two small, remote Alaska Native communities that are in subsistence zoning and off the road system would like the opportunity to try and harvest Dungenous crab for subsistence purposes. There is limited data and information on the Dungenous crab population in Lower Cook Inlet. The last year Dungenous crab surveys were conducted is 2009 by the department. Currently the state has no program to assess Dungenous crab abundance, as stated by ADFG Fish Biologist Jan Rumble during her report of proposal 260 at the Cook Inlet, Kodiak, Westward, Arctic Shellfish and Shellfish General Provisions, and Prince William Sound Shrimp Board of Fish meeting (March 26 - April 2, 2022). Ms. Rumble also stated at this meeting that “the board should consider reopening a subsistence fishery before opening a commercial fishery for Dungenous crab in the Cook Inlet Southern Region” (03/29/22 meeting audio records). The subsistence Dungenous crab fishery is currently closed mostly due to a lack of survey information, but there was consideration at the same Statewide Shellfish Board of Fish meeting from past Board Member Israel Payton who stated that “even before these potential surveys get done, if the department feels they want to do some

exploring a little, it's up to the board but issuing subsistence permits through a strict permit tracking progress would be one way to gather some citizen science, and I would be supportive of that moving forward” (03/29/22 meeting audio records).

Since this board of fish meeting in 2022, the department has made no progress towards applying for grants with Chugach Regional Resources Commission (CRRC) as a partner to conduct Dungenous crab surveys in the Lower Cook Inlet, as proposed by the department as a solution during the 2022 meeting. CRRC is an organization that supports and protects the subsistence resources of Port Graham and Nanwalek, and we have limitations to our capacity to apply for grant funding for every subsistence resource. Therefore, we strongly agree with Mr. Payton that issuing subsistence permits that would collect data on the Dungenous crab fishery would be an efficient and effective way to fill in data gaps and inform the department with harvest data on the Lower Cook Inlet Dungenous crab population. We have spoken with the Chiefs and community members of Port Graham and Nanwalek to learn more about the local and traditional knowledge of the Dungenous crab populations in English Bay and Port Graham Bay. The Native Village of Nanwalek has reported an abundance of mature Dungenous crab returning to the shallow waters of English Bay. The Native Village of Port Graham reported that they are not seeing Dungenous crabs in the shallow waters near their beaches like they used to. Both communities have a long history of harvesting Dungenous crabs for subsistence use. Nanwalek and Port Graham would both like to have the regulations changed to open the Cook Inlet subsistence Dungenous crab fishery under specific guidelines, as listed below in question 3. Both communities are committed to participating in citizen science programs to collect survey data (e.g. size, sex, location) on Dungenous crabs to inform fisheries management in collaboration with Chugach Regional Resources Commission

**Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain.** We talked and worked with the Native Village of Port Graham and Native Village of Nanwalek. Chugach Regional Resources Commission worked with the ADFG Division of Subsistence to conduct subsistence household surveys in Port Graham where we asked household members questions about subsistence use of the Dungenous crab resource in Port Graham Bay (Jan 22-26,2024). CRRC also hosted a Board of Fish Proposal Writing workshop in Cordova (Feb 27-28, 2024) where the second Chief of Nanwalek and Nanwalek Tribal Members attended and discussed this proposal as a group.

**PROPOSED BY:** Chugach Regional Resources Commission (HQ-F24-075)

\*\*\*\*\*