

**PROPOSAL 269**

**5 AAC 58.026. Shellfish harvest recording form required. and 5 AAC 77.507. Shellfish harvest recording form required.**

Implement a permit for harvesting razor clams in Cook Inlet sport and personal use fisheries as follows:

5 AAC 58.026 is amended to read:

...

(a) Before harvesting shellfish with pots **or razor clams**, a person must obtain a sport fishing shellfish harvest recording form, described in 5 AAC 75.016 and provided by the department. Upon taking shellfish with pots, and before concealing the shellfish from plain view or removing the shellfish from the fishing site, the person must enter the harvest and catch information requested on the form. A person who fails to comply with the requirements of this subsection or 5 AAC 75.016, including any requirement to return harvest and catch information to the department, may be ineligible to obtain a shellfish harvest recording form during the following season in the fishery for which the form was required, unless the permit applicant demonstrates to the department that failure to report was due to unavoidable circumstances.

5 AAC 77.507 is amended to read:

...

**5 AAC 77.507. Shellfish harvest recording form required.** A person must obtain a personal use shellfish permit described in 5 AAC 77.015, from the department before harvesting shellfish with pots **or razor clams** in the Cook Inlet Area. Upon taking shellfish and before concealing the shellfish from plain view or removing the shellfish from the fishing site, the person must enter the catch information requested on the personal use permit. **A person who fails to comply with the requirements of this subsection or 5 AAC 77.015, including any requirement to return harvest and catch information to the department, may be ineligible to obtain a shellfish harvest recording form during the following season in the fishery for which the form was required, unless the permit applicant demonstrates to the department that failure to report was due to unavoidable circumstances.**

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** The sport and personal use Cook Inlet razor clam fisheries are concurrent and identical in regulation and managed in unison except that only Alaska residents can participate in the personal use fishery. Because of this, only sport harvest data is collected. Currently, harvest data for razor clam sport fisheries in Cook Inlet is available from the Statewide Harvest Survey (SWHS), but the number of responses for shellfish fisheries in the SWHS has been low, which results in imprecise harvest estimates. Implementing a razor clam harvest reporting form would be consistent with other sport shellfish fisheries such as Prince William Sound shrimp and Cook Inlet Tanner crab and would provide more accurate and timely harvest information. The east Cook Inlet razor clam fishery was closed from 2015 through 2022 and opened in 2023 to a limited fishery in the Ninilchik area, requiring intensive creel surveys to provide timely harvest estimates. A permit would also provide more robust harvest data for the razor clam fisheries open in the remainder of Cook Inlet year-round, which are difficult to monitor

given their remote locations in west Cook Inlet. Requiring a permit for harvesting razor clams in Cook Inlet is a precautionary management approach that is appropriate given the decline in Cook Inlet shellfish stocks.

**PROPOSED BY:** Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F24-181)

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