

PROPOSAL 304

5 AAC 55.055 Prince William Sound Noncommercial Shrimp Fishery Management Plan, 5 AAC 55.022 General Provisions for Seasons, Bag, Possession, and Size Limits, and Methods and Means for the Prince William Sound Area, 5 AAC 31.210 Shrimp Pot Fishing Seasons for Registration Area E.

Delay the season opening by two weeks in the noncommercial and commercial shrimp fisheries, as follows:

A delayed opening of two weeks would bring the percentage of egg-bearing shrimp to the target 5% ratio. This would allow more shrimp eggs to be released, enhance recruitment and increase brood stock, thereby improving the shrimp fishery. This opening date would apply to all user groups to avoid the harvest of egg bearing shrimp. To achieve this, open all pot shrimp fisheries in Prince William Sound on May 1st by regulation.

5 AAC 55.055(a)(3)(A) only from May 1st [APRIL 15] through September 15;

5 AAC 55.022(b)(5)(A) may be taken from May 1st [APRIL 15] - September 15;

5 AAC 31.210(a) ..., shrimp may be taken from May 1st [APRIL 15] through September 15,

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The current regulatory shrimp season opening date of April 15 allows a significant number of egg-bearing females to be harvested early in the season. This practice may be a significant contributor to the current declines of PWS spot shrimp numbers.

Field observations show a high percentage of egg-bearing shrimp are caught early in the season and late in the season. The data shows a significant harvest of egg-bearing shrimp in the beginning of the season that exceeds the desired levels. A two-week delay will bring this number down to a target level of less than 5% ratio, as a suggested guideline. Supporting this proposal will create an increased shrimp spawn release before the shrimp fishing season opens by regulation. This provides increased biomass of shrimp over time by not harvesting the spawning females.

Without implementing this change, there will be continued harvest of egg-bearing female shrimp, thereby reducing the amount of shrimp that would ever be able to be harvested.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. ShrimpPros Association members have worked independently and with Department of Fish and Game staff to verify the sampling methods, collect samples and compile data about the number of egg-bearing shrimp that are being harvested. As long term participants in this fishery, ShrimpPros has taken a leadership role and supports regulatory protection for this resource by working with ADF&G staff, and other stakeholders, encouraging changes that demonstrate good resource stewardship and conservation.

PROPOSED BY: ShrimpPros Association

(HQ-F24-050)
