PROPOSAL 35

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

Modify the harvest strategy for Prince William Sound Tanner crab, as follows:

5 AAC 35.308 Registration Area E Tanner Crab harvest strategy

(a) Fishery performance based on logbook and inseason reported CPUE of legal male crab will be used to manage fishery area in season and postseason to set GHL. The following reference points will be used to make these management decisions

1. Target CPUE of 15.25 legal male Tanner Crab

   Trigger CPUE of 11.5 legal male Tanner Crab

   Limit CPUE of 7.5 legal male Tanner Crab

(b) In Registration Area E, the GHL will be set at 100,000 lbs but will be adjusted based on fishery performance determined from commercial fishermen logbook CPUE of legal male crab as follows:

1. The GHL will be increased for the following season for any of the following reasons:
    1. If the most recent season CPUE is > than the most recent previous season and is > Target CPUE the GHL will increase by 20% the following season.
    2. If the most recent logbook CPUE is > than the most recent previous season and ≤ Target CPUE legal male crab and > Trigger the GHL will increase by 10% the following season.
    3. If the most recent logbook CPUE is > than the most recent previous season and is ≤ Trigger and > Limit the GHL may increase up to a maximum of 5% the following season
2. The GHL will be decreased for the following season for any of the following reasons:
    1. If CPUE is < than the most recent previous season and is > Limit CPUE and ≤ Trigger CPUE GHL may be reduced up to a maximum of 40% the following season
    2. If CPUE is < than the most recent previous season and is > Trigger Cpue and ≤ Target CPUE the GHL may be reduced up to a maximum of 20% the following season

(c) Fishery performance by statistical area will be assessed inseason with a minimum requirement of 300 pot lifts per statistical area before taking management action under the following guidelines:

1. If logbook CPUE is ≥ Target manage to GHL.
2. If logbook CPUE is ≥ Trigger but < Target manage to GHL and monitor closely
3. If logbook CPUE is ≥ Limit and < Trigger close statistical area for remainder of season.
4. If logbook CPUE is < Limit close fishery statistical area remainder of season and subsequent closure of statistical area of 1 year for commercial fisheries the following season, depending upon a postseason review.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Create an Area E Tanner Crab harvest strategy with a conservative GHL that incorporates fishery performance to allow a fishery for the coming years much like the Commissioner's permit fisheries that occurred from 2018-2021. This harvest strategy is very similar to the one presented by the department for Southeast Golden King Crab in "Recommended Harvest Strategy for Southeast Alaska Golden King Crab". The Commissioner's permit fisheries in southwest PWS conducted from 2018-2021 and the test fisheries in 2020, 2021 and 2022 were successful in discovering new Tanner Crab populations and a much needed winter fishery for the boats of Prince William Sound. Those fisheries, although limited in area and harvest allowance, resulted in an average harvest of 103,234 lbs per year with an average CPUE of 13 for the Commissioner's permit fishery and 15.25 for the test fisheries. These CPUE's compare well with the historic fisheries' catch rates. For the 1987 and 1988 years, the CPUE for the commercial fleet was 16 and 17 respectively for the western district and 11 and 17 for the northern district. With the larger 75 pot limit that was being fished in the 1980's, we can assume longer soak time is most of the contributing factor to the slightly hirer CPUE seen then. These are also very similar to the CPUE seen in the southeast Tanner Crab fishery which over the last 10 years has had an average CPUE range of 12-16.

We believe that CPUE is the only consistent data point the department has at this time to estimate population size and therefore must incorporate it into the harvest strategy. This proposed harvest strategy recommends a very conservative GHL of 100,000 lbs based on the average harvest during the Commissioner's permit fishery and test fisheries. It also incorporates a CPUE target level based on the average CPUE for the PWS test fisheries that occurred in 2020, 2021, and 2022 of 15.25 and the Trigger and limit levels were set at 75% and 50% of the target rounded to the nearest quarter.

This low GHL combined with the CPUE trigger results in extremely low risk of harm to the stock but will allow a fishery to continue to be executed to the coming years and grow or shrink as we develop a better understanding of Tanner Crab populations in PWS.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU) (EF-F24-121)

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