

PROPOSAL 36

5 AAC 35.325. Lawful gear for Registration Area E.

Increase the pot limit in the Prince William Sound Tanner crab fishery, as follows:

Reinstate the historic pot limit of 75. This pot limit is reasonable for the size of area and density of crab found in PWS and comparable to southeast Alaska's pot limit of 80.

5 AAC 35.325(d) is amended to read:

(d) The number of Tanner Crab pots that may be operated from a vessel will be established by emergency order before the opening of each commercial Tanner Crab season, not to exceed [30] **75** Tanner Crab pots per vessel

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The current pot limit was put into place in 2017 as part of the department's new Tanner Crab harvest strategy. In 2017 the department also created regulation allowing a Commissioner's permit fishery with a limit of 50 pots. The historic pot limit for this fishery before 2017 was 75 pots. A larger pot limit combined with reduced hauling hours will result in less handling of female and undersized crab because each pot is hauled less in any given time period. These longer soak times give small crab time to escape out of the pots on their own. When the department reopened this fishery, it did not enforce the daylight hauling hours regulation and drastically lowered the pot limit. This lower pot limit resulted in participants running their pots 2-3 times a day, which increased the handling of juvenile and female crab and lowered the economic viability of the fishery. The biomass of Tanner Crab in PWS is very spread out. It requires a lot of prospecting, which is extremely costly and time consuming with a small pot limit. In the 2022 commercial fishery the fleet was unable to harvest the GHF because it was not economically viable to prospect large areas in central PWS during small weather windows with only 25 pots.

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-F24-122)
