

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES
October 2003
PRIBILOF ISLANDS BLUE KING CRAB REBUILDING PLAN

The following proposal will be considered at the end of the board's work session meeting in October 2003.

PROP

NO. SUBJECT

1 Rebuilding plan for blue king crab in the Pribilof Islands area.

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PROPOSAL 1 - 5 AAC 34.9XX. Pribilof District Blue King Crab Harvest Strategy.
Establish a harvest strategy for the Pribilof blue king crab stock as follows:

Establish a harvest strategy for the Pribilof blue king crab stock with four components: 1) a minimum stock threshold criteria for opening the fishery; 2) specified exploitation rates on mature-sized males that vary with stock level; 3) a maximum allowable harvest rate on legal-sized males; and 4) a minimum fishery guideline harvest level for a fishery opening.

PROBLEM: The Pribilof District blue king crab stock has been managed according to a harvest strategy that was reviewed by the board in 1990, but which was not adopted in regulation. The Pribilof blue king crab fishery has been closed since 1999 due to the stock being below the threshold established in the harvest strategy currently used by the department. The stock has been in decline since 1995 and continued to decline after closure of the fishery in 1999. Results of the 2002 National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) eastern Bering Sea trawl survey showed that the Pribilof blue king crab stock was below the minimum stock size threshold (MSST) established in the Fishery Management Plan for Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs and the stock was declared “overfished” by NMFS in September 2002. Under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA), a rebuilding plan for this stock must be adopted by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council within one year of the overfished declaration. A regulatory harvest strategy for this stock that promotes stock rebuilding is an important and necessary component of the council’s rebuilding plan.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF NOTHING IS DONE? Management of the Pribilof District blue king crab fishery would not be in compliance with the MSFCMA.

WILL THE QUALITY OF THE RESOURCE HARVESTED OR PRODUCTS PRODUCED BE IMPROVED? No.

WHO IS LIKELY TO BENEFIT? Fishers and the crab industry will benefit by any measures which can be taken to aid recovery of the Pribilof blue king crab stock to levels which will once again support a commercial fishery.

WHO IS LIKELY TO SUFFER? No one.

OTHER SOLUTIONS CONSIDERED? None.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game HQ-03-F-196
