# ADF&G STAFF COMMENT FOR BRISTOL BAY RED KING CRAB ACR 11

**PRESENT SITUATION:** The federal *Fisheries Management Plan for the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs* (FMP) establishes a state/federal cooperative management regime that defers management of the Bristol Bay red king crab fishery to the State of Alaska with federal oversight.

Under the FMP, the State of Alaska has authority to establish harvest levels for crab stocks. Harvest levels are a category two management measure in the FMP. The state may change how harvest levels are set as long as the harvest level is in compliance with the FMP.

The Bristol Bay red king crab fishery regulatory harvest strategy contains a minimum total allowable catch (TAC) threshold; the applicable portion of the regulation is italicized below:

> 5 AAC 34.816. Bristol Bay Red King Crab Harvest Strategy
>
> (a)(1) the threshold level of abundance is 8,400,000 mature female red king crab and 14,500,000 pounds of effective spawning biomass; the Bristol Bay red king crab season may open only if analysis of preseason survey data indicates that the population of red king crab is more than both of these indices of stock reproductive potential; the Bristol Bay red king crab season will not open if preseason survey data indicates that the population is at or below either of these two indices of stock reproductive potential; *the minimum total allowable catch threshold (not including the CDQ quota) for the commercial red king crab fishery is 4,000,000 pounds; neither the commercial red king crab fishery or the CDQ fishery under 5 AAC 39.690 will open if the minimum total allowable catch threshold is not met.*

**WHAT THE AGENDA CHANGE REQUEST SEEKS TO CHANGE:** The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) is requesting to remove the minimum TAC from the harvest strategy regulation, 5 AAC 34.816, because the minimum TAC no longer serves the purpose it was originally developed for.

The minimum harvest level was utilized to minimize the risk of the fishery exceeding harvest targets when the fishery was managed inseason under a guideline harvest level. Since the 2005/06 fishing season, the Bristol Bay red king crab fishery has been included in the federal crab rationalization program and managed under a TAC. Inseason management is no longer conducted by ADF&G under a guideline harvest level.

If ADF&G determines a harvestable surplus of Bristol Bay red king crab is available that is less than the minimum TAC specified under 5 AAC 34.816, the fishery would be closed when a harvestable surplus could be taken without the risk of exceeding the harvest target.

## STAFF ASSESSMENT OF THE AGENDA CHANGE REQUEST:

1) **Is there a fishery conservation purpose or reason?** No.

2) **Does the agenda change request correct an error in regulation?** No.

3) **Does the agenda change request address an effect of a regulation on a fishery that was unforeseen when that regulation was adopted?** Yes.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** The Bristol Bay red king crab TAC for the 2012/13 season will be determined early October, 2012. If the red king crab TAC is less than the minimum TAC in regulation, the Bristol Bay red king crab season would not open, although a harvestable surplus may be available. The next regularly-scheduled Board of Fisheries meeting for Bering Sea crab will not occur until 2013/14.

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