RC 34

Subject: Alternate to Proposal 273

Submitted By: Northern Norton Sound Fish and Game Advisory Committee at the request of Board Member X

Provided is alternative language for Proposal 273.

5AAC 34.910. Fishing Seasons for Registration Area Q.

(d) in the Norton Sound Section of the Northern District, **from March 15, 2020 to December 31, 2020, east of 167 W. Longitude king crab fishing is closed, west of 167 W. Longitude**, male red king crab, male blue king crab, and male Hanasaki king crab may be taken only as follows:

This language would close the Norton Sound red king crab commercial fishery for one year. A majority of red king crab stakeholders are in support of a one-year closure to the commercial red king crab fishery. The one-year fishery moratorium will allow evaluation of male recruitment, female ovigerity, viable economic market scenarios, and sustainable CPUE. Additionally, we anticipate that the closure period would allow stakeholders and the department to reengage on an appropriate harvest strategy to rebuild the stock to return to a sustainable fishery. For the long term, stakeholders have initiated the process of a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) to examine alternative harvest control rules for the Norton Sound Red King Crab stock in order to avoid similarly undesirable management outcomes. However, we contend that this one-year closure is urgently needed and in alignment with the board's *Policy on King and Tanner Crab Resource Management* in several ways, including:

1) When the stock approaches minimum stock size threshold (MSST) the fishery should be closed and remain closed until there is adequate brood stock. The past two years, the ADF&G trawl survey area swept estimate for mature males have been below this level.

2) It would conserve the little remaining mature male brood stock we have. Mature male brood stock is at very low levels and needs to be conserved in order to maintain the long-term reproductivity viability of the stock and reduce dependency on annual recruitment. The 2019 trawl estimate of pre-recruit 1 male crab is the lowest on record. The large pulse of pre-recruit 2 male crab won't be available to the fishery in large numbers until 2022 because many are skipmolting (because of reduced competition with large males). This situation has resulted in our mature male crab stock being comprised almost entirely of one size cohort of crab and makes subsequent year crab fisheries completely dependent on recruitment of this particular year class. Multiple age and size classes of males are required to sustain a healthy crab fishery

and avoid selective pressures that would reduce average size and insulate the fishery from episodic and cyclic recruitment.

3) Address the need to reestablish a populations of reasonable size that would sustain a viable market. This means a CPUE in an historic range. The 2019 CPUE of 5 is well below historic levels and it is believed a CPUE above 10 is need to maintain an economically viable fishery.

4) The Management Policy measurement of reproductivity viability, the bottom line of stock health, can be evaluated using trends in ovigerity as an index. In 2019, fifty percent of mature females had empty egg clutches, conversely, only 15% of mature females had full clutches, both the poorest indecies in the record of observations.

5) Product quality requires multiple legal size cohorts to meet the demand for minimum size clusters and consistent supply from year to year. The reliance of a single size cohort works against consistent brand quality in that this would result in years of small crab and years of old shell grade discounts.