

PROPOSAL 3

5 AAC 28.647. Aleutian Islands Subdistrict Pacific Cod Management Plan.

Change season start date from March 15 to March 1 for trawl gear vessels over 60 feet in length, as follows:

Amend as follows:

(c) The commissioner shall open and close, by emergency order, a state-waters season in the Aleutian Islands Subdistrict as follows:

(1) the Adak Section shall open January 1;

(2) all waters of the Aleutian Islands Subdistrict shall open as follows:

(A) for nonpelagic trawl gear, pot gear, longline gear, hand troll gear, and mechanical jigging machines four days after the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands parallel "A" season for the catcher-vessel greater than or equal to 60 feet in overall length pot gear fishery is closed;

(B) for vessels over 100 feet in overall length using potgear, at 12:00 noon on March 15,

(C) for vessels over 60 feet in overall length using trawl gear, at 12:00 noon on March 1

...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The AI subdistrict Pacific Cod Fishery has historically included trawl vessels. The trawl vessels that have participated in the AI P Cod fishery have both developed and relied upon the fishery. The March 15th opening of the fishery to trawl boats 60' OAL and greater has negatively impacted vessels that have previously been important participants and have relied on this fishery.

Trawl vessels are only successful at P Cod fishing in the AI when the fish are aggregated. This happens very quickly and in late winter. Limiting entrance of historic trawl participants to a start date of March 15th has resulted in the vessels missing the cod aggregations and therefore missing fishing opportunities; in years where other gear types are less successful, this could result in a poorly executed fishery. Allowing a start date of March 1 for trawl vessels 60' OAL and greater would both allow a reasonable amount of time for vessels under 60' OAL (and pot vessels under 100' OAL) to fish alone and allow a little extra time for trawlers to be able to fish while the important cod aggregations are occurring. (Trawl vessels over 100' OAL are never allowed in the AI P Cod fishery)

All recent scientific evidence indicates changing ocean conditions and changing P Cod migration patterns. During times of such flux, limiting the fisheries by gear type has the potential to impact the execution of the fishery. Allowing trawl vessels that are historical participants to fish beginning March 1 will help execute the fishery and avoid leaving potentially stranded fish in the water.

The BOF proposal which led to this regulation states that the intent is to "Give fishermen operating vessels 60 feet or less overall length (OAL) for trawl, jig, and pot gear and 58 feet or less OAL for

vessels operating longline gear, more opportunity to harvest Pacific cod in the Adak Section of the AIS prior to larger vessels entering the fishery.” However, pot vessels of 100’ OAL are now allowed an earlier start date than trawl vessels 60’ OAL and, as such, LARGER vessels are in fact starting earlier than many trawl vessels that are SMALLER. Further, regardless of the OAL of a vessel, ALL vessels are limited to the 150,000 lb trip limit. The regulation, as it stands, was adopted by the BOF out of cycle at a meeting that very few cod trawl participants could attend because the meeting occurred right as the federal BSAI cod trawl season was opening; these fishermen had to get prepared to go fishing. This resulted in little to no advocacy for the trawl fleet at the time the proposal was adopted.

The F/V Miss Leona is an example of a cod trawl vessel that has extensive fishing history in Adak and has been fishing the state AI fishery since its inception. We are a family owned and operated 87’ vessel that has fished in Alaska since the 1970’s. The owner began working on the vessel as a deckhand and eventually purchased the vessel; he spent 40 years on this vessel. The vessel is now run by the owner’s son, who lives in Alaska, and has Alaskan residents as crew, all of whom have been hurt by this regulation. The vessel has slips in Dutch Harbor and Kodiak where it stays year round, purchases all food and supplies in these two ports and has repair and maintenance done in Alaska. In the last few years alone, the vessel has done a several month long shipyard project in Dutch Harbor and has been hauled out in Kodiak. We support Alaskan fishing communities and have always delivered shoreside in Adak when a plant was available. We embody the ideals that the BOF and ADF&G attempt to support when supporting “small” fishing vessels..

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