

*Bering Sea-Aleutian Islands and South Alaska Peninsula Area Legal Gear, Landing Requirements, and Season Dates (2 proposals)*

PROPOSAL 7

**5 AAC 28.629. Lawful gear for the Bering Sea–Aleutian Islands Area and 5 AAC 28.681. Landing Requirements for the Bering Sea–Aleutian Islands Area.**

Clarify gear marking and landing requirements for groundfish fisheries in the Bering Sea-Aleutian Islands area, as follows:

**5 AAC 28.629 is amended by adding new subsections to read:**

**(h) At least one buoy on each groundfish pot must be legibly marked with the permanent ADF&G vessel license plate number of the vessel operating the gear. The buoy may bear only the number of the vessel operating the gear. The number must be placed on the top one-third of the buoy in numerals at least four inches high, one-half inch wide, and in a color that contrasts with the color of the buoy. The buoy markings must be visible on the buoy above the water’s surface when the buoy is attached to the groundfish pot.**

**(i) A groundfish pot may not be attached to a line connected to another groundfish pot, except that, in the Aleutian Islands Subdistrict Pacific cod and Aleutian Islands-Western District sablefish fisheries, groundfish pots may be connected if each end of the buoy line is marked as specified in (j) of this section.**

**(j) Each end of a groundfish pot longline must have a buoy attached and each buoy must be marked with the permanent ADF&G vessel plate number of the vessel operating the groundfish longlined pot gear and the letters GFL to designate the gear as longlined groundfish pot gear; the numbers and letters must be marked on the top one-half of the buoy in numbers and letters that are at least four inches high, one-half inch wide, and in a color that contrasts with the color of the buoy; the buoy markings must be visible on the buoy above the water’s surface when the buoy is attached to the longlined pot gear; for the purposes of this paragraph, "longlined" means more than one groundfish pot is attached to a stationary, buoyed, and anchored line;**

5 AAC 26.681 is amended to read:

**(a) The landing requirements for sablefish in the Aleutian Islands District are specified in 5 AAC 28.640.**

**(b) After 72 hours following the closure of any directed groundfish season within the Bering Sea-Aleutian Islands Area, a vessel that participated in that fishery may not have that species of groundfish on board unless,**

**(1) that species has been designated as bycatch for another directed fishery and the amount on board is permissible under retained bycatch restrictions specified in regulation;**  
**or**

**(2) the vessel has been delayed due to extraordinary circumstances beyond the control of the vessel operator, and the vessel operator has contacted a local representative of the department within 72 hours following the closure of the season and the representative has**

**granted a reasonable amount of time for the vessel to reach the port of delivery or processing location; any amount of additional time shall be determined under the assumption that the vessel departed the fishing grounds immediately after the closure and proceeded directly to the port of delivery or processing location.**

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** State-waters Pacific cod fisheries in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands have recently developed into the largest Pacific cod fisheries managed by the department. While fishery management plans have advanced with development of these fisheries, other areawide regulations, such as gear marking and landing requirements, have yet to be updated. The proposed changes would align the Bering Sea–Aleutians Area regulations with most other groundfish fisheries around the state and reflect current management practices.

**PROPOSED BY:** Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F22-045)  
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**PROPOSAL 8**

**5 AAC 28.577. South Alaska Peninsula Area Pacific Cod Management Plan.**

Amend South Alaska Peninsula season opening weather delay criteria, as follows:

5 AAC 28.577(*l*) is amended to read:

(*l*) The opening of the state-waters season for vessels using pot gear will be delayed for 24 hours if the National Weather Service marine forecast issued at 4:00 a.m. on the scheduled opening date specified in (e)(1) of this section [FOR THE CURRENT DAY AND NIGHT OR THE FOLLOWING DAY AND NIGHT FOR THE STATE WATERS BETWEEN CASTLE CAPE AND CAPE SARICHEF] contains a gale warning. If, after the initial weather delay, the following day's 4:00 a.m. National Weather Service marine forecast [FOR THE CURRENT DAY AND NIGHT OR THE FOLLOWING DAY AND NIGHT] contains a gale warning, the opening of the state-waters season will be delayed an additional 24 hours. The season opening delays may continue on a rolling 24-hour basis for seven days beyond the initial opening date, when the season will open regardless of any gale warning forecast. **For the purposes of this subsection, the corresponding National Weather Service marine forecast area for the South Alaska Peninsula Area is Area PKZ155.**

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** Regulations established to delay opening of the South Alaska Peninsula Area state-waters commercial Pacific cod season is based on National Weather Service (NWS) marine weather forecasts. However, existing regulations do not reflect current NWS forecasting areas and practices. The state-waters Pacific cod season in the South Alaska Peninsula Area is delayed if a gale warning is forecasted during the 48-hour period beginning the day the fishery is scheduled to start. However, current NWS marine warnings only extend 36 hours beyond the initial forecast. Additionally, forecasting areas have been redefined since these regulations were established. This proposal aligns weather delay regulations with current NWS forecasting areas and practices.

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

(HQ-F22-047)

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