

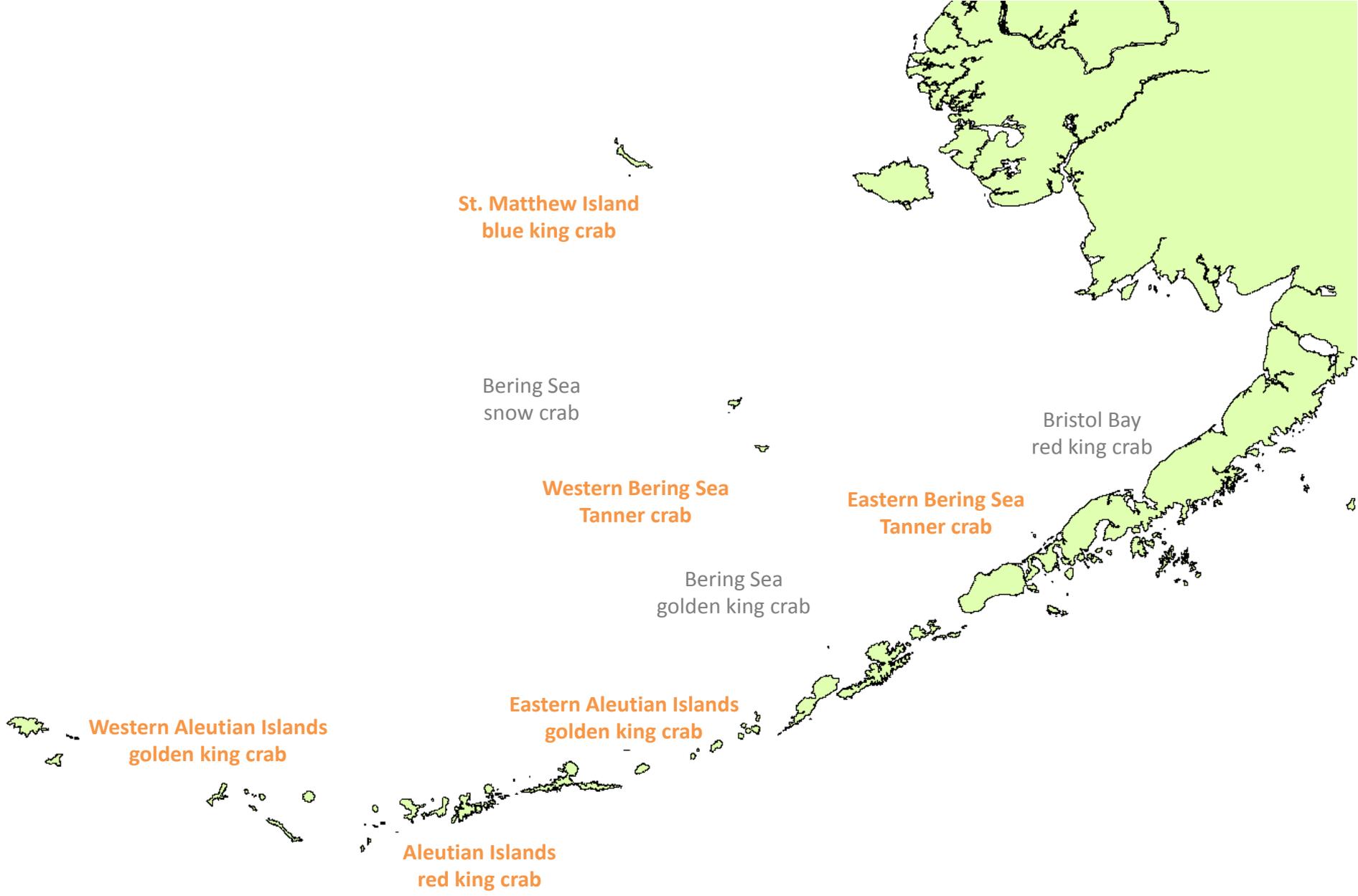
# Bering Sea-Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crab Fisheries

Alaska Board of Fisheries

March 2014, Anchorage

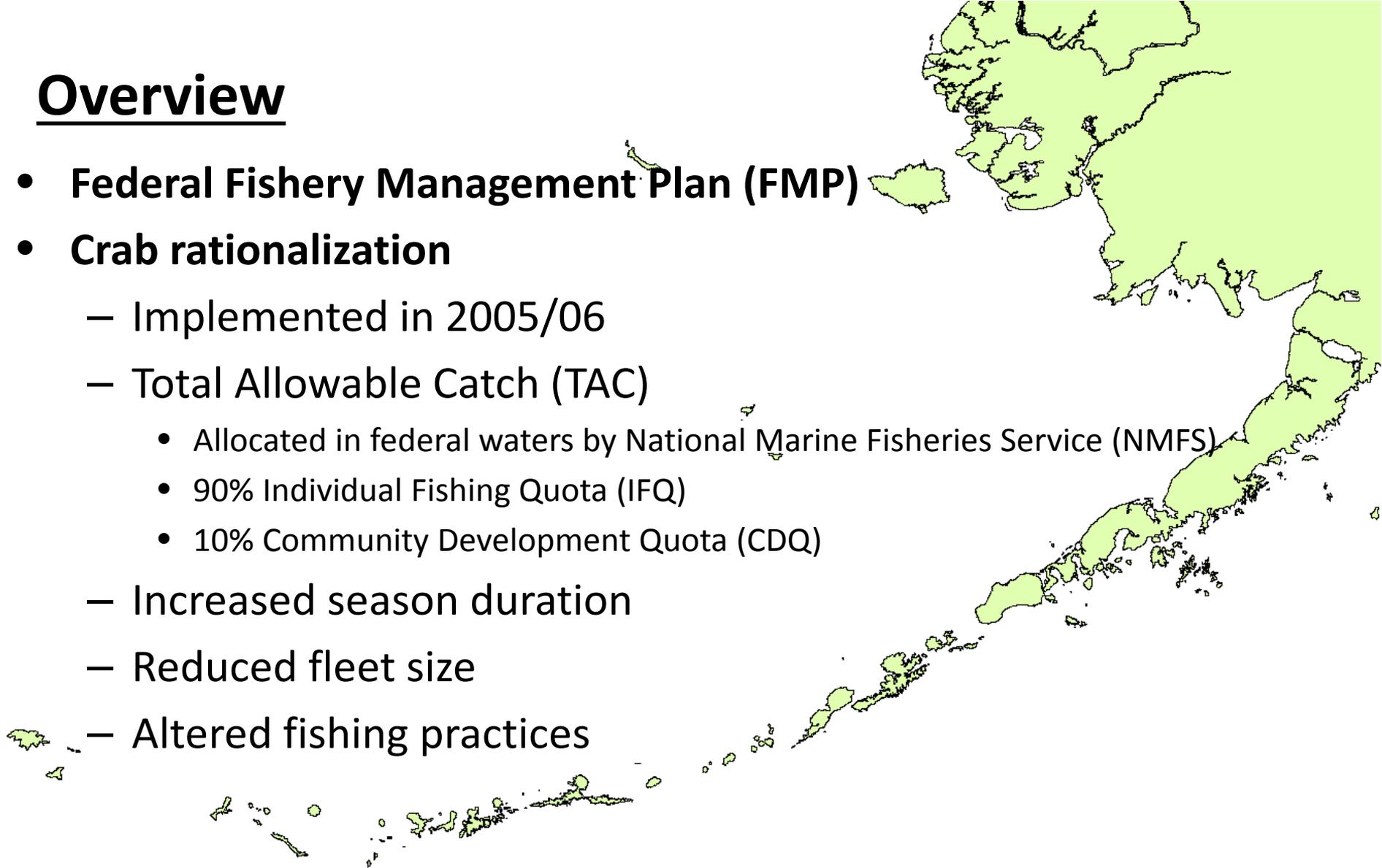
Heather Fitch





# Overview

- **Federal Fishery Management Plan (FMP)**
- **Crab rationalization**
  - Implemented in 2005/06
  - Total Allowable Catch (TAC)
    - Allocated in federal waters by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
    - 90% Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ)
    - 10% Community Development Quota (CDQ)
  - Increased season duration
  - Reduced fleet size
  - Altered fishing practices



# Proposals

## Aleutian Islands

- Golden king crab: proposals 348-349
- Red king crab: proposals 350-356
- Aleutian Islands boundary: proposal 357

## Bering Sea

- St. Matthew blue king crab: proposals 358-360
- Bering Sea golden king crab: proposal 361
- Bering Sea snow and Tanner crab: proposal 362

## Bering Sea-Aleutian Islands

- Rationalized fisheries: proposal 363
- Observer program: proposals 364-367

# Aleutian Islands golden king crab

Proposal 348 – Increase harvest levels

Proposal 349 – Modify season dates

- Managed under crab rationalization program
- Separate fisheries divided at 174° W long

# Aleutian Islands golden king crab Proposal 348 – Increase harvest levels

## Historical harvest levels

*Guideline Harvest Level (GHL) / Total Allowable Catch (TAC)*

Established in 1995/96

(based on historical harvest)

- 6% in 1997/98

(Eastern Aleutians only)

+ 5% in 2008/09

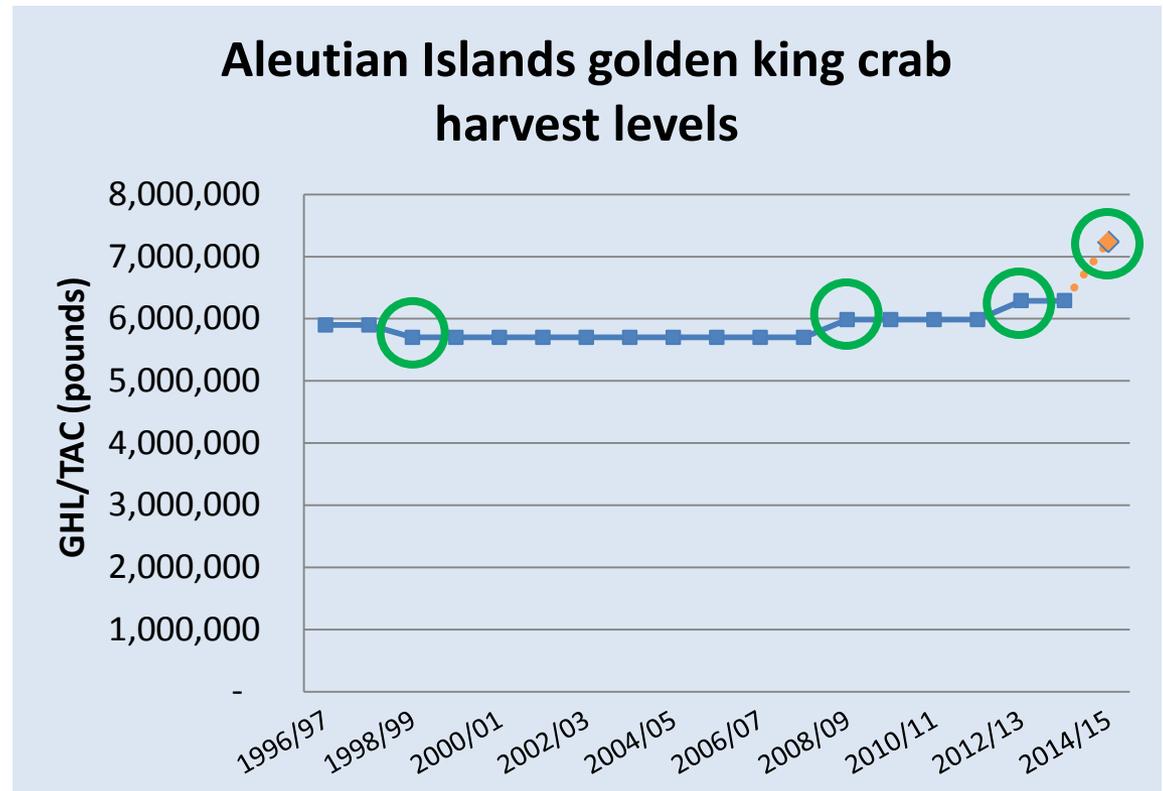
(Eastern and Western Aleutians)

+ 5% in 2012/13

(Eastern and Western Aleutians)

+ 15% proposed

(Eastern and Western Aleutians)

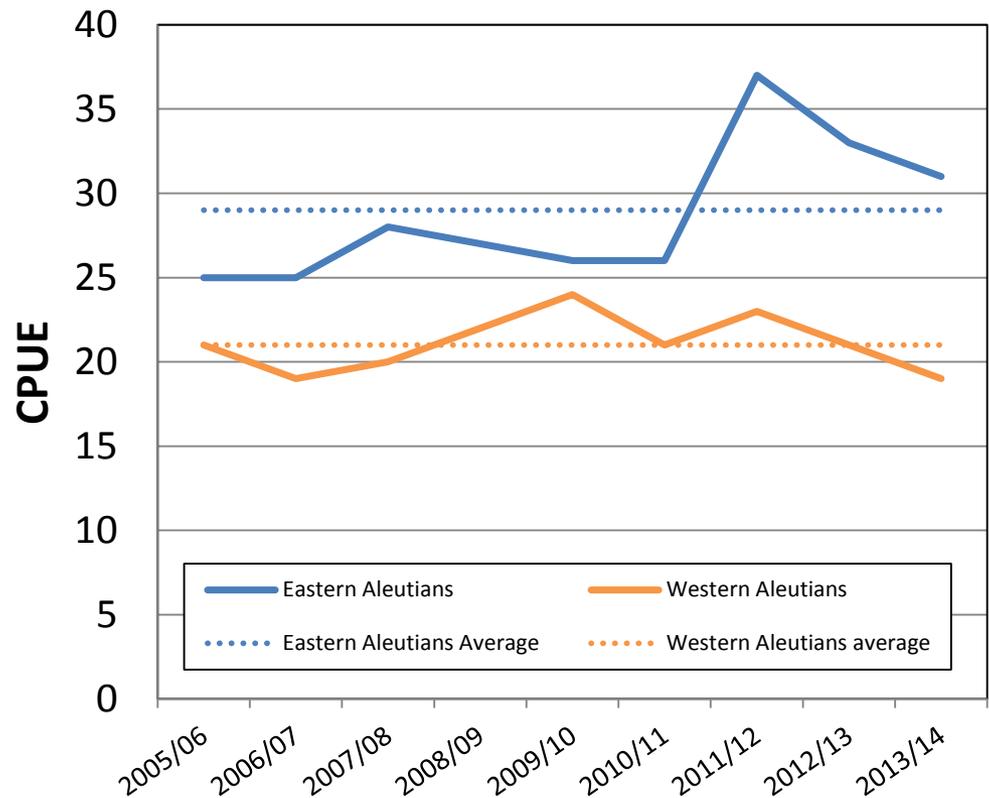


# Aleutian Islands golden king crab

## Proposal 348 – Increase harvest levels

- Trends in abundance not immediately detectable
  - No stock assessment survey
  - Data is fishery-dependent
- Catch per unit effort (CPUE) is only tool currently available
  - Influenced by factors unrelated to abundance
  - Standardization (pre/post rationalization)
  - May be 'hyperstable'
- Effects of recent TAC increases are unknown

### Legal male CPUE



# Aleutian Islands golden king crab

## Proposal 348 – Increase harvest levels

- Annual review of fishery data
- Stock assessment model development continues
- Department, NMFS, and industry working toward cooperative, fishery-independent research
- Constant-catch harvest strategy



# Aleutian Islands golden king crab

## Proposal 349 – Modify season dates

- No defined biological season
- Favorable weather
- Conflicts with federal regulations
- Overfishing level (OFL) set in May/June

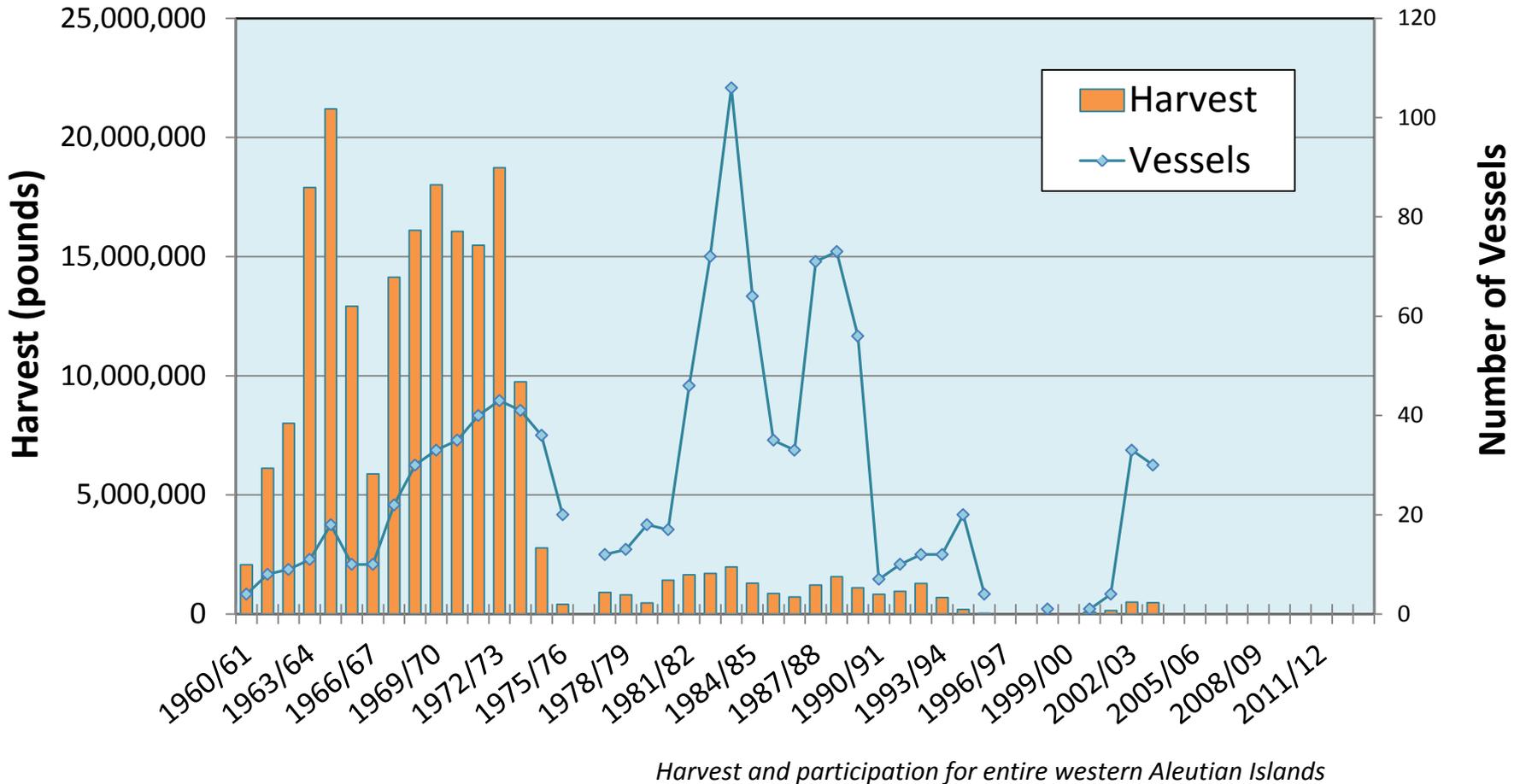


Aleutian Islands golden king crab season dates



# Aleutian Islands red king crab

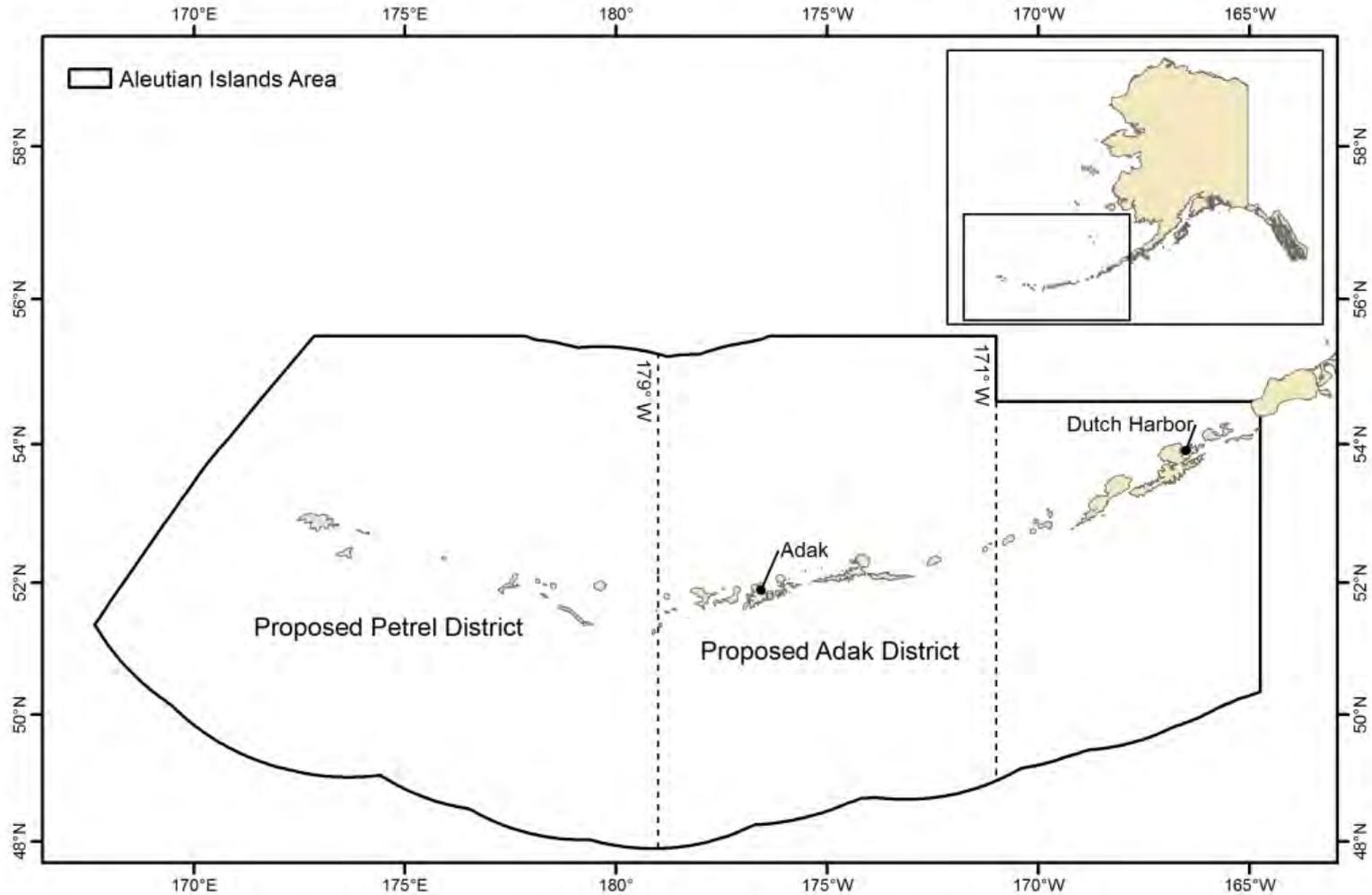
## Proposals 350-356



Proposals 351-356: affect only 171° to 179° W long, proposed “Adak District”  
Managed under FMP, not rationalized

# Aleutian Islands red king crab

## Proposal 350 – Establish districts



# **Aleutian Islands red king crab (Proposed Adak District)**

## **Proposals 351-356**

### **Proposal 351 – Establish management measures**

- Assist department ability to track fishery inseason

### **Proposal 352 – Close federal waters when GHL <250,000 lb**

- OFL applies to entire area west of 171 W long

### **Proposal 353 – Shorten preseason registration from 21 days to 7 days**

- 21 days allows time to determine vessel effort, ensure observer coverage

### **Proposal 354 – Modify season opening from Oct 15 to July 1**

- Improved safety with favorable weather conditions, mating/molting occurs through June, department suggests opening in August

### **Proposal 355 – Decrease stand-down from 30 days to 7 days**

### **Proposal 356 – Allow enforcement to perform tank inspections**

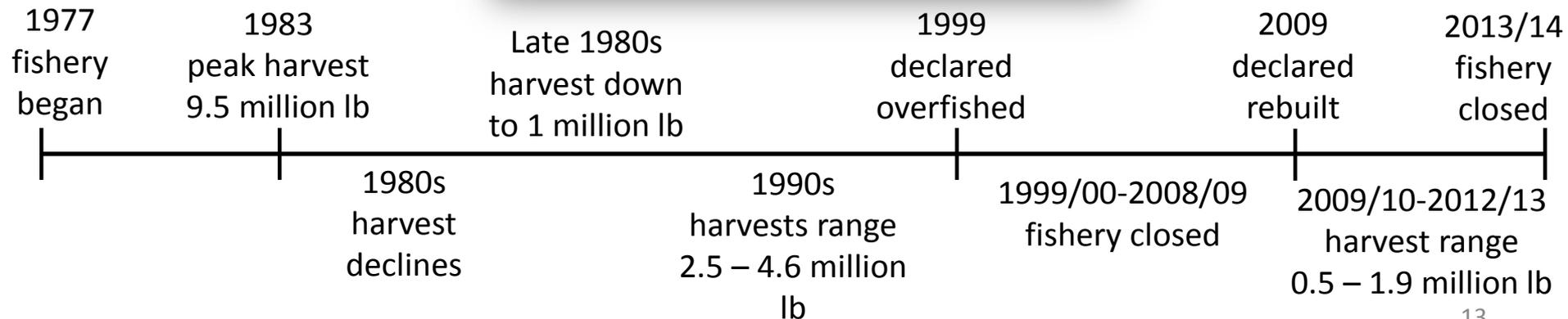
- Department sends personnel to ports based on anticipated vessel effort, if no department personnel - waive tank inspection

# St. Matthew blue king crab

Proposal 358 – Modify harvest strategy

Proposal 359 – Allow groundfish pots

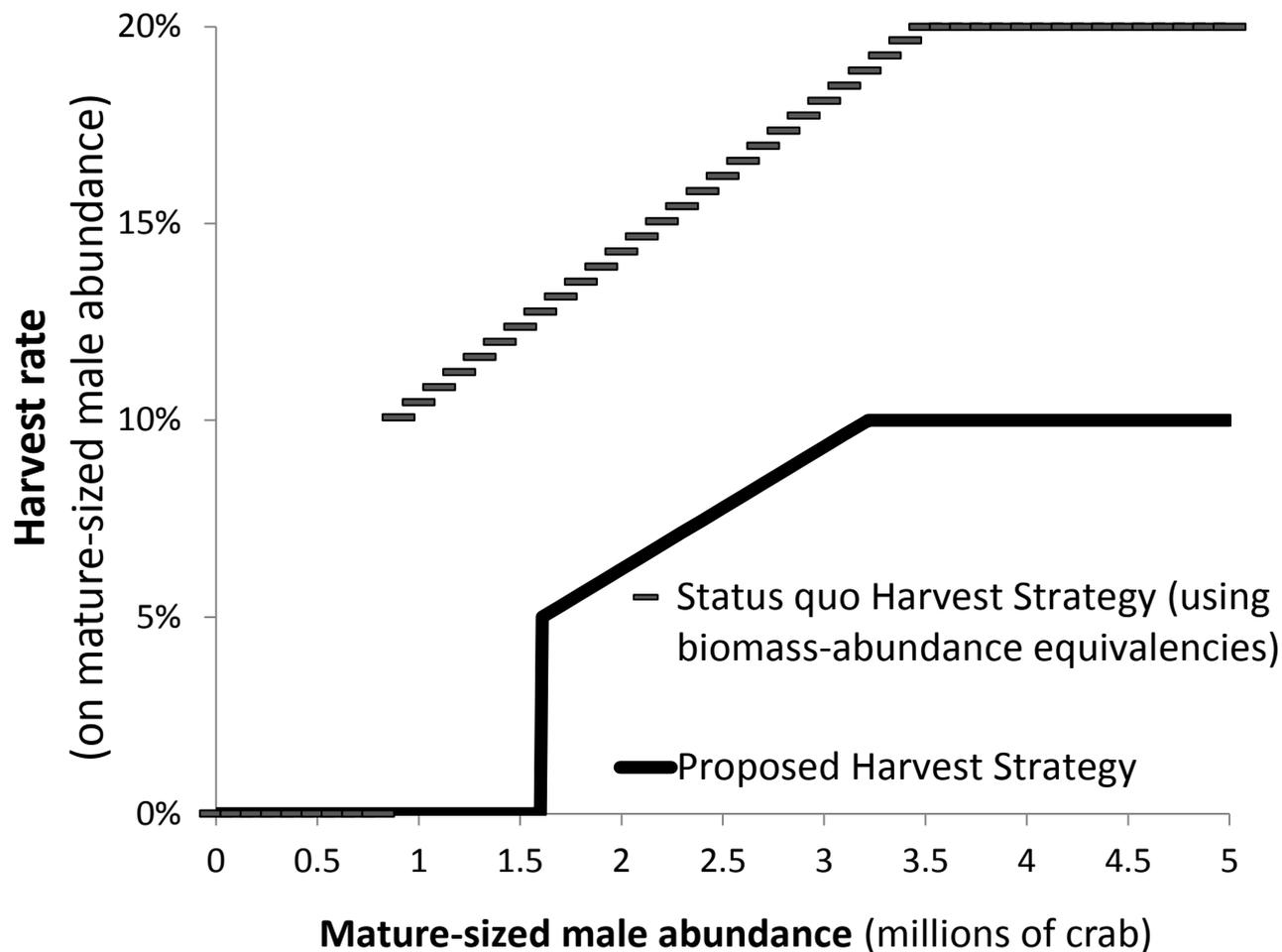
Proposal 360 – Repeal buoy tag requirement



# St. Matthew blue king crab

## Proposal 358 – Revise harvest strategy

Comparing *status quo* harvest strategy to proposed harvest strategy: Determination of harvest rate to apply to mature-sized male abundance.

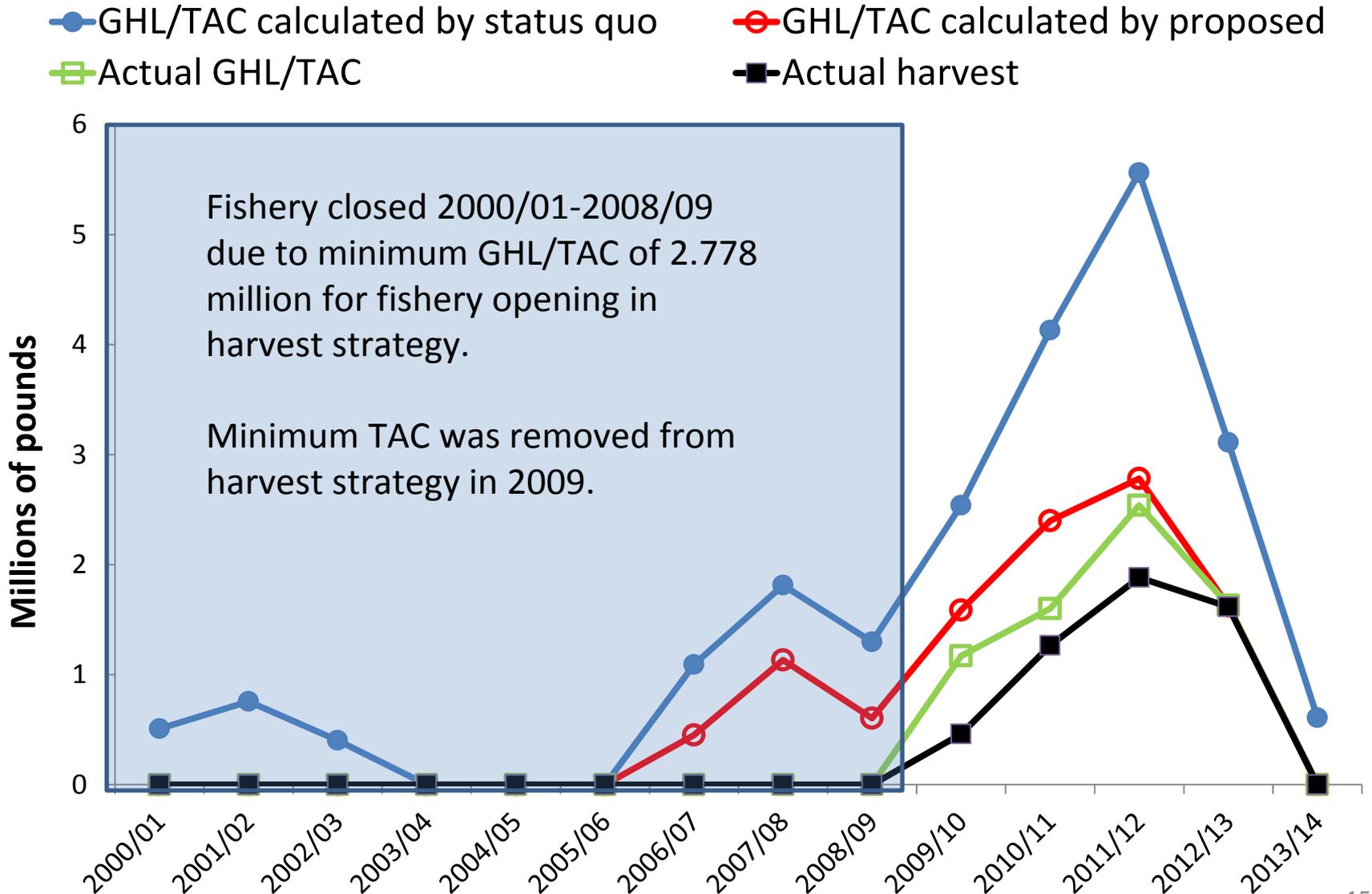


Relative to *status quo*, proposed harvest strategy would:

- Prescribe lower harvest rates on mature-sized male abundance over all stock levels
- Close the fishery at higher stock level
- Prescribe highest harvest rate on mature-sized male abundance at lower stock level

# St. Matthew blue king crab

## Proposal 358 – Revise harvest strategy



# St. Matthew blue king crab

## Proposal 358 – Revise harvest strategy

### Benefits of proposed harvest strategy relative to status quo

(5 AAC 34.917)

- More precautionary, reduces conflict with federal overfishing definitions when establishing the TAC
- Provides harvest opportunities, while providing protection to stock
- Reduces chance of prolonged stock collapse
- More consistent with other Bering Sea king crab harvest strategies in regulation
- Clarifies that harvest strategy computations are applied to “survey-equivalent” estimates of the number of crab present at the time of the stock assessment survey

# St. Matthew blue king crab

## **Proposal 359 – Allow groundfish pots**

- Fresh bait for long-duration fishery
- Improve accounting of catch and effort



## **Proposal 360 – Eliminate buoy tag requirement**

- Buoy tags required to enforce pot limits
- Pot limits not necessary
  - Fishermen do not use maximum number of pots
  - No negative effects are apparent from removal of pot limits in other rationalized crab fisheries

# Bering Sea Snow and Tanner crab

## Proposal 362

Specify vertical placement of escape rings for Tanner crab

Update snow crab ring placement definition

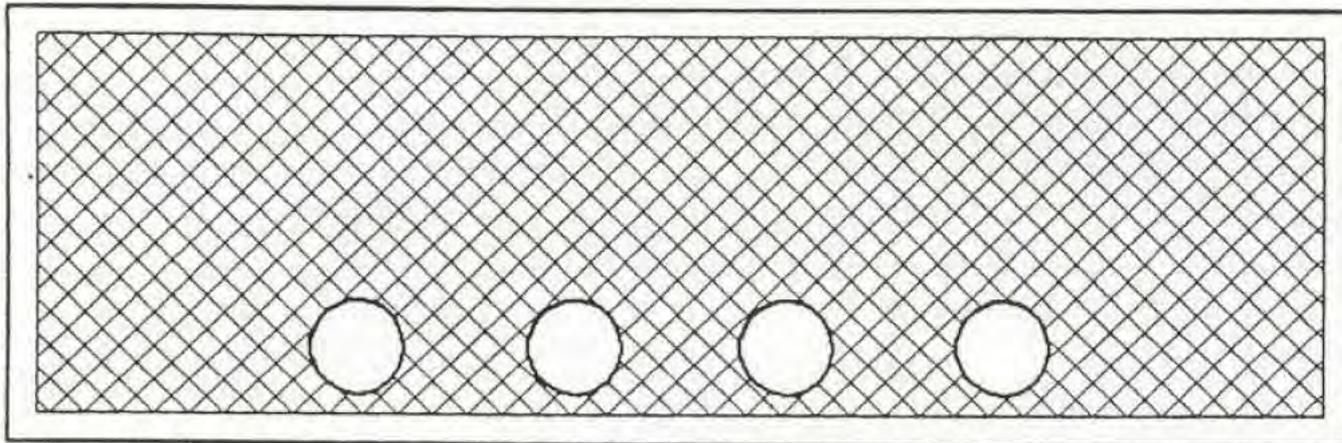
### Current regulation:

*Rings may be placed anywhere on vertical surface*

### Proposed:

*Ring may be placed no higher than first full mesh of bottom on vertical surface*

- Ring placement determines effectiveness



# Questions?

