

PROPOSAL 74

5 AAC 35.165. Description of Registration Area D districts.

Establish a tanner crab fishery in a section of the Yakutat District, as follows:

- (a) Yakataga District: all waters of Alaska between the longitude of Cape Suckling (144° W. long.) and the longitude of Icy Cape (141° 42' W. long).**
- (b) Yakutat District: all waters of Alaska between the longitude of Icy Cape (141° 42' W. long.) and a line projected southwest from the westernmost tip of Cape Fairweather.**
 - (1) Yakutat Bay Section: all waters of the Yakutat District northeast of a line from Ocean Cape at (coordinates) to Point Manby at (coordinates) [REGISTRATION AREA D DISTRICTS ARE DESCRIBED IN 5 AAC 30.200].**

Approximately 20 years ago, all forms of commercial crab fishing ceased in the Yakutat area. At the time, stocks were declining, and there appeared to be a biological need to do so. Since then, the Yakutat A.C. has been working toward getting these fisheries tested, and or obtaining a limited, test fishery. We asked for the tanner crab pot limit to be reduced from 100 pots to 40, with the intent of having a small, two week test fishery to see what kind of stocks are available. The pot limit was reduced, but the fishery never happened. We've asked to have a Dept. sanctioned biomass study done, but have been informed that there is no money for the study. Revisiting our original proposal, we recommended that we implement a 2 week test fishery, in which our fishermen provide boats, Dept. staff would be welcome, and the crab can be released, we just need to know what is out there. We have had numerous testimonies that state that subsistence pots are coming up full of tanner crab, and our hope is to see if market quantities are available. To date, we have been told that this test fishery cannot proceed, because the Yakutat area is big, and our local boats would not sample it all the way from Fairweather to Sukling.

Therefore, this proposal asks that the Yakutat tanner crab fishery statistical area be broken up in this fashion. Yakutat Bay would become its own statistical area, separate from the rest of the district by a line from Ocean Cape, to Point Mamby. This area could then be allowed a 2 week test fishery in which participants must register and Dept. staff would be welcome to come and count crab, which could then be released. If it is determined that there are in fact market quantities of crab available, then a structured fishery could proceed according to those findings. If market quantities are in fact found in Yakutat Bay, then we would ask that an official sampling of the remainder of the district be conducted.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Our proposed solution has been outlined. Commercial crab fisheries were a huge part of Yakutat's economy, as well as to fishermen who came here from other regions. If we're going to be proper stewards of the resource, then a better mechanism is needed for testing and managing fisheries that have been emergency closed. We fully understand the State's limited financial abilities, and we are trying to accommodate the need with the use of volunteers. Currently, it would appear that if your commercial fishery is ever emergency closed, it means you have permanently lost it. We find this unacceptable.

What we are asking for is a test fishery, all crab would be released unharmed, and no one would be adversely affected. The volunteer fishermen are available to test Yakutat Bay anytime, and in any fashion the Dept. sees fit.

PROPOSED BY: Yakutat Fish and Game Advisory Committee

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