

PROPOSAL 3

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

Amend the *Aleutian Islands Subdistrict Pacific Cod Management Plan* to reduce the guideline harvest level based on processor availability, as follows:

5 AAC 28.647 is amended to read:

...

(d) During a state-waters season,

(1) the guideline harvest level for Pacific cod in the Aleutian Islands Subdistrict is 27 percent of the estimated total allowable harvest of Pacific cod for the federal Aleutian Islands Subarea;

(A) if the guideline harvest level established under this [PARAGRAPH] **subsection** is achieved in a calendar year, the guideline harvest level will be increased to 31 percent of the estimated total allowable harvest of Pacific cod for the federal Aleutian Islands Subarea beginning the next calendar year; if the guideline harvest level is achieved in a calendar year thereafter, the guideline harvest level will be increased to 35 percent of the estimated total allowable harvest of Pacific cod for the federal Aleutian Islands Subarea beginning the next calendar year; if the guideline harvest level is achieved in a calendar year thereafter, the guideline harvest level will be increased to a maximum of 39 percent of the estimated total allowable harvest of Pacific cod for the federal Aleutian Islands Subarea beginning the next calendar year;

(B) [A] **a** guideline harvest level established under this [PARAGRAPH] **subsection** may not exceed 15 million pounds;

(C) if a processor in the City of Adak or City of Atka is not available to process Pacific cod in the Aleutian Islands Subdistrict during the upcoming fishing year, the guideline harvest level for Pacific cod in the Aleutian Islands Subdistrict is 13.5 percent of the estimated total allowable harvest of Pacific cod for the federal Aleutian Islands Subarea. Processor availability in the City of Adak or City of Atka is determined by an official notification of intent to process Aleutian Islands Pacific cod during the upcoming fishing year as submitted to the National Marine Fisheries Service Alaska Region no later than October 31 as specified in 50 C.F.R. 679.20(a)(7)(viii)(D). If a timely and complete intent to process notification is submitted during a calendar year when the guideline harvest level is 13.5 percent of the estimated total allowable harvest of Pacific cod for the federal Aleutian Islands Subarea, the guideline harvest level the following calendar year will return to 27 percent of the estimated total allowable harvest of Pacific cod for the federal Aleutian Islands Subarea.

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What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Aleutian Islands Subdistrict Pacific cod management plan allows the state-waters Pacific cod GHL to increase by four percent each year for a total of four years if the previous year's GHL was fully achieved. Largely due to limited processing capacity in the region, the Aleutian Islands District GHL has only been achieved three seasons since inception of the fishery in 2006. Years when the GHL was fully harvested correspond to years when at least one processor was operational in the City of Adak or Atka.

Lower Pacific cod abundance in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska combined with an operational processor in Adak have recently renewed interest in the Aleutian Islands state-waters Pacific cod fishery. Higher participation in this fishery will increase the likelihood of achieving annual GHGs and allow future GHGs to increase over time. Each time the state-waters GHG increases, a corresponding decrease in federal Pacific cod total allowable catch is necessary to prevent exceeding the combined Aleutian Islands Subarea Pacific cod ABC. In recent years, pot and trawl catcher vessels 58 feet in length or less harvested the majority of state-waters Pacific cod in the Aleutian Islands Subdistrict. Without a mechanism to decrease the GHG, the state-waters fishery may become underutilized if adequate processing capacity becomes unavailable. In this situation the state-waters fishery would encumber a disproportionate percentage of the Aleutian Islands Pacific cod ABC that would otherwise be available to typically larger federal/parallel Pacific cod fishery participants that may have improved capacity to harvest and process fish.

Federal regulations allow for additional harvest and processing opportunity in the federal/parallel Aleutian Islands Pacific cod fishery contingent upon adequate regional processing capacity. Additional federal opportunity becomes available, in part, when the City of Adak or Atka provides a notification of intent to process Pacific cod prior to the season opening the following calendar year. This proposal would use the same processor notification of intent to determine if a state-waters fishery GHG reduction is warranted such that if no processor was available for the upcoming season, the GHG would be reduced to 13.5 percent of the estimated total allowable harvest of Pacific cod for the federal Aleutian Islands Subarea. If a processor becomes available any year after the GHG was reduced to 13.5 percent, the GHG for the following calendar year would increase to 27 percent of Pacific cod for the federal Aleutian Islands Subarea.

This change would allow for responsive management of the Aleutian Islands Pacific cod stock by realigning harvest opportunity for all participants during periods of low state-waters fishery productivity while still maintaining a sufficient guideline harvest level for future state-waters fisheries.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F18-027)
