

### **ACR 3**

Adopt a new harvest strategy for Aleutian Islands golden king crab that relies on annual stock assessment model outputs to set total allowable catch and stock status determination criteria (5 AAC 34.612).

**CITE THE REGULATION THAT WILL BE CHANGED IF THIS ACR IS HEARD.** 5 AAC 34.612. Harvest Levels for Golden King Crab in Registration Area O.

**WHAT IS THE PROBLEM YOU WOULD LIKE THE BOARD TO ADDRESS? STATE IN DETAIL THE NATURE OF THE CURRENT PROBLEM.** The existing regulation establishes a fixed harvest rate for golden king crab “until the Aleutian Islands golden king crab stock assessment model and a state regulatory harvest strategy are established...” The regulatory harvest limits or total allowable catch (TAC) were initially set in the mid-1990s. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council’s Crab Plan Team recommended, and Scientific and Statistical Committee formally adopted a new stock assessment model in 2017 and used it for the first time to set the federal overfishing level (OFL) and acceptable biological catch (ABC) for the 2017/2018 fishing season. Consistent with the current regulation, this action prompted the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to begin development of a new harvest strategy that uses outputs from the stock assessment model to set annual TACs that will better reflect the condition of the stock and conform with the federal ABC and OFL harvest control rules.

**WHAT SOLUTION DO YOU PREFER?** Adopt a new regulatory harvest strategy based on annual stock assessment model outputs that allows the department to raise or lower TACs according to changes in status of the golden king crab stock. The department is currently working with industry to develop a harvest strategy for consideration by the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) during the 2018/2019 meeting cycle. Preliminary elements of the new harvest strategy include using outputs from the model to establish minimum biomass levels necessary for a fishery to occur, formulating a range of annual exploitation rates that are responsive to stock condition and consistent with harvest strategies for other regional crab stocks, and setting a limit on the proportion of legal crab that could be harvested in any given year.

**STATE IN DETAIL HOW THIS ACR MEETS THE CRITERIA STATED ABOVE.**

**a) for a fishery conservation purpose or reason:** The current regulation limits the department’s flexibility to set appropriate TACs based on the observed condition of the stock. From 2016/17 to 2018/19, the department has lowered regulatory TACs based on conservation concerns. While the department has authority to set a TAC below the regulatory limit, best available science is not being used to effect these changes. Therefore, the existing regulatory TACs may not provide for adequate conservation of the resource. Adopting a new harvest strategy to set TACs will ensure that the process used to manage the fishery is consistent with the board’s policy on King and Tanner crab resource management.

**b) to correct an error in regulation:** Not applicable.

**c) to correct an effect on a fishery that was unforeseen when a regulation was adopted:** Not applicable.

**WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THIS PROBLEM IS NOT SOLVED PRIOR TO THE REGULAR CYCLE?** The fishery will be managed with a harvest strategy that does not use best available science.

**STATE WHY YOUR ACR IS NOT PREDOMINANTLY ALLOCATIVE.** Aleutian Islands golden king crab is a rationalized commercial fishery. Adopting a new harvest strategy does not change any allocation of quota share to participants.

**IF THIS REQUEST IS ALLOCATIVE, STATE THE NEW INFORMATION THAT COMPELS THE BOARD TO CONSIDER AN ALLOCATIVE PROPOSAL OUTSIDE OF THE REGULAR CYCLE.** Not applicable.

**STATE YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE FISHERY THAT IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS ACR.** The Alaska Department of Fish and Game manages subsistence, commercial, and sport fisheries for king and Tanner crab in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands, subject to the regulations established by the board.

**STATE WHETHER THIS ACR HAS BEEN CONSIDERED BEFORE, EITHER AS A PROPOSAL OR AS AN ACR, AND IF SO, DURING WHICH BOARD OF FISHERIES MEETING.** The board accepted this same request as ACR 2 in 2017. During a subsequent board meeting in March 2018, the department and industry notified the board that while underway, final analysis for the new harvest strategy was not yet complete. The board took interim action that provided some flexibility to the existing regulation but did not take specific action to adopt a new harvest strategy consistent with ACR 2. At that time, department staff notified the board that final analysis would be available for final action during the 2018/2019 board cycle.

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