

PROPOSAL 173

5 AAC 31.110. Shrimp pot fishing seasons and periods for Registration Area A; and 5 AAC 31.145. Southeastern Alaska Area Pot Shrimp Fishery Management Plan.

Change the pot shrimp fishery from a fall/winter season to a spring/summer season, as follows:

5 AAC 31.110. Shrimp pot fishing seasons and periods for Registration Area A Except as provided in 5AAC 31.145 (d), in Registration Area A, shrimp may be taken by pots only from **May 21 through July 31** [OCTOBER 1 THROUGH FEBRUARY 28] unless closed earlier by emergency order.

5 AAC 31.145.

(d) The commissioner may, by emergency order, open a shrimp fishing season from **October 1 through February 30 (winter season)**, [MAY 21 THROUGH JULY 31 (SUMMER SEASON)] in a district where the guideline harvest range was not reached during the season specified in 5 AAC 31.110 (**Summer Season**) [(WINTER SEASON)].

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? We hope to address the ever-decreasing shrimp stocks and shorter and shorter commercial shrimping seasons in Southeast Alaska by moving the commercial shrimp opener from October to May when the shrimp no longer have eggs. If the commercial shrimp season continues to be held at a time when a large percentage of the shrimp carry eggs, the stocks in Southeast Alaska may continue to decline. In the past, some permit holders have resisted this change, citing it would limit opportunity for those that participate in multiple fisheries. However, in recent years 95% of the harvest occurs in the first two-three weeks of fishing, making the conflict with other fisheries less of an issue.

Moving the fishery to the spring would enhance shrimp stocks and possibly lead to more fishing opportunity. ADF&G staff have been very supportive of this move in the past saying:

“Changing the initial season start date to May 15 would enhance biological conservation and fishery management. Fishing during this time period may allow for increased GHGs in the future because the fishery would occur before the high natural mortality periods of molting, mating, egg development, and egg extrusion. The current fall fishery occurs after these processes are complete. Fishing on the stock in the spring would also allow females carrying eggs in the fall to brood and hatch their eggs before being subject to fishing mortality, which may enhance long term stock resilience.” (ADF&G 2017 Staff Comments)

In their consideration of moving the commercial shrimp season opening to May 15, however, ADF&G staff failed to realize that a May 15 opening would create a serious conflict with the long established spring brown bear hunting season for resident and guided non-resident bear hunters. Moving this season opening to May 21 would eliminate most, if not all of this conflict.

Additional benefits of a spring opening would include:

- Enhanced management of the fishery. Currently the October opener occurs too close to the survey to inform management for that season's fishery

- More opportunity for a local Market. Regional processors and catcher/sellers have expressed interest in a spring fishery as the tourist season provides more customers and restaurants are wanting shrimp.
- Safer weather and more participation opportunity for smaller boats
- A more viable product for US markets. Eggs cause the shrimp to decompose more rapidly and the orange mess is a turn off to the American consumer.

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