

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES
FINDING FOR AREA O BROWN KING CRAB SEASON
99-190-FB

Introduction

At a meeting on July 29, 1999, the Board of Fisheries (Board) amended 5 AAC 34.610(b) by moving up the date of the opening of the commercial Area O brown king crab season from September 1 to August 15 beginning in the 2000 season. Earlier at the March 1999 meeting the Board had moved the Bristol Bay red king crab season from November 1 to October 15. After the meeting, Area O brown king crabbers petitioned the Board under 5 AAC 39.998 to consider a corresponding change for the Area O brown king crab season to avoid an overlap in the seasons that would prevent participation in both fisheries.

Written and oral staff reports on the brown or golden king crab fishery, stock status, and the effect of a season change were presented by Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) biologist Forrest Bowers. Because of past Board action in 1996 dealing with season opening dates for the eastern and western Aleutians, the Board focused their discussion on the last three brown king crab seasons.

FMP Criteria

As required by the Fishery Management Plan for Bering Seas/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs (FMP) criteria for Category 2 – Seasons measures, the Board discussed deadloss, product quality, biological seasons, weather concerns, costs to industry, and coordination with other fisheries.

Deadloss: The Board expressed some concern over deadloss, but acknowledged that there are multiple factors that impact deadloss, and didn't expect a 16-day season change to make a significant difference for the Area O fishery.

Product Quality: Since the western Aleutians area is typically open year-round, and no quality issues have been identified in that fishery, the board was satisfied that similar quality standard could be maintained throughout the eastern Aleutians in mid-August.

Biological Seasons: Golden king crab mating and molting occurs year-round. Therefore, there is no infringement on a defined mating and molting season. Staff could see no biological impacts from moving the fishing season.

Weather Concerns: Severe Weather can be expected year-round in the Aleutians, but the frequency of bad weather was expected to be greater in the fall than in the summer.

Costs to Industry: Over the long term, this season change was seen as potentially less costly than a season where vessels had to redeploy gear after the end of the Bristol Bay red king crab season.

Coordination with Other Fisheries: Board members also pointed out that moving the season up would maintain status quo of timing relative to the Bristol Bay red king crab season. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council staff saw no effects on groundfish fisheries and noted that pollock fishing began September 1.

Magnuson-Stevens Act National Standards

The Board reviewed and discussed the National Standards set out in the Magnuson-Stevens Act in the context of moving the brown king crab season to August 15, as follows:

National Standard 1, Preventing Overfishing while Achieving Optimum Yield: The season change would have a positive effect by keeping the existing relationship between the brown king crab and red king crab seasons.

National Standard 2, Best Scientific Information: The Board believed it had the best information available to make a decision.

National Standard 3, Individual Fish Stocks Managed as a Unit, Interrelated Stocks Managed in close coordination: The season change would be consistent with this standard.

National Standard 4, Allocations Fair and Equitable to All Fishermen: There was no indication or information that the season change would have any adverse effects, but, in fact, it would avoid allocative impacts.

National Standard 5, Efficiency in Utilization: Coordination of the fishing would have a positive effect on the efficiency in utilization of the resource.

National Standard 6, Taking into account and Allowing for Variations and Contingencies: Maintaining relationship between the brown and red king crab seasons would have a positive effect.

National Standard 7, Minimization of Costs and Avoiding Unnecessary Duplication: As explained above, a season change would have a positive effect.

National Standard 8, Impact on Fishing Communities: Coordination of the two fisheries would have only positive effects.

National Standard 9, Minimization of Bycatch: No indication of an adverse effect on bycatch.

National Standard 10, Promote Safety of Life at Sea: Earlier season, with slightly better weather, would have a positive effect.

The NPFMC concurred with the Board's application and assessment of the National Standards.

State Law Criteria

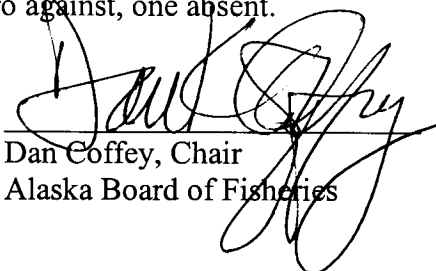
The Board referred to the allocation criteria found in AS 16.05.251(e), but, with Department of Law's confirmation, determined that no allocation was effected by the season change.

Effective Date

The Department of Law indicated that an emergency regulation would be needed to implement the season change for the 1999 season. The Board adopted an amendment to have the season change take effect beginning in 2000; and to keep the status quo for the 1999 season because no emergency was apparent. The Board also expressed concern that some participants had already scheduled vessel maintenance based on the existing season regulation and would be unable to participate in an earlier season this year.

The Board voted for the season change, six in favor, zero against, one absent.

ADOPTED: Oct 29, 1999
Fairbanks, Alaska


Dan Coffey, Chair
Alaska Board of Fisheries

VOTE: _____