

A large, rusted metal hook or anchor is the central focus, lying on a beach of smooth, grey stones. The background shows a calm sea and snow-capped mountains under a cloudy sky. The text is overlaid on this scene.

Industry Priorities and Recommendations

Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers

Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force

Crab Subcommittee

6/17/2022

Cory Lescher – cory@alaskacrabbers.org

Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers

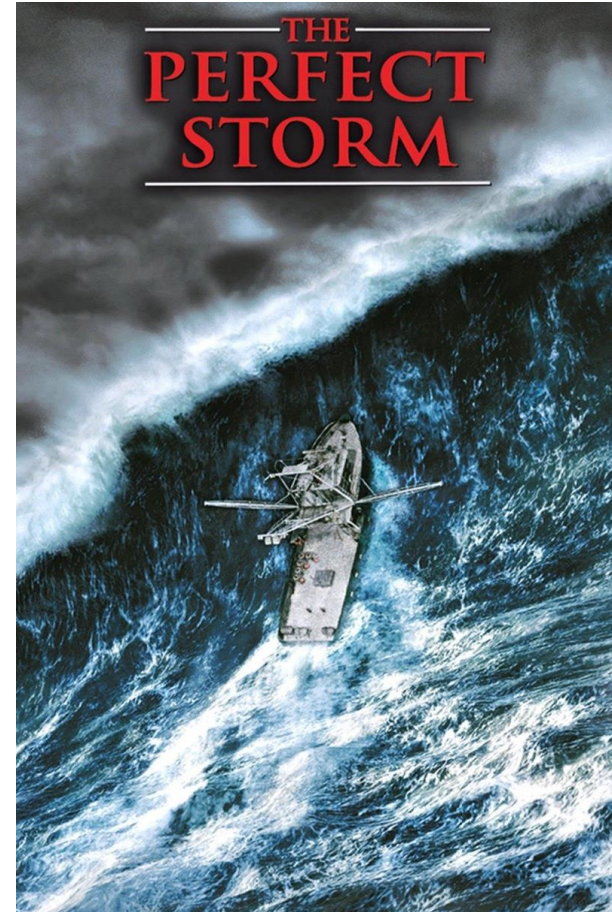
- Industry trade association
- Representing ~ 70% crab harvesters
- Snow, Tanner and RKC
- Active in the NPFMC process, Board of Fish and at a National level



EBS crab stocks at low levels

- Climate
- Predation
- Disease
- Fishery harvest
- **Bycatch mortality**

Share the burden of conservation



What can we do?

- Dynamic spatial management
- Manage PSC
- Account for unobserved mortality
- Protect essential fish habitat
- Continued research



Directed fishery actions

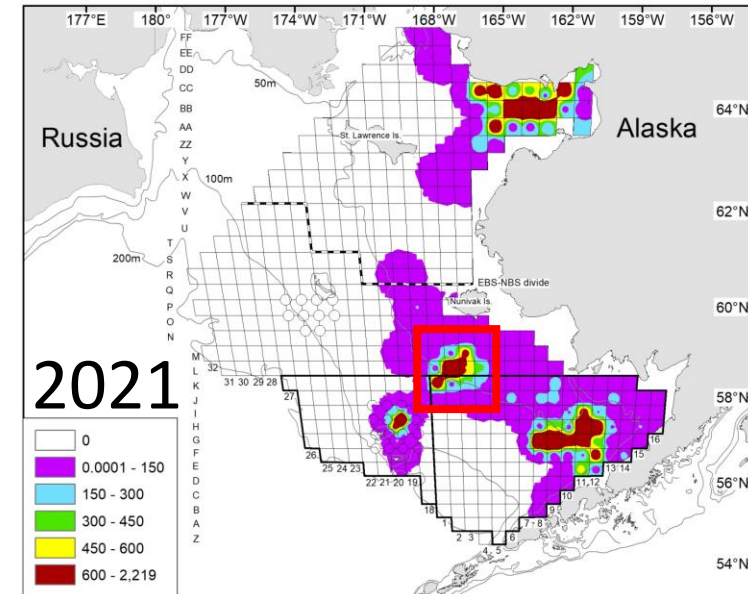
- Longer soak times
- Increased mesh size (Chionoecetes)
- Retention size (Chionoecetes)
- Mixed landings
- Pcod BREP
- BREP proposal
- Hot spot reporting
- EBT closure
- And more



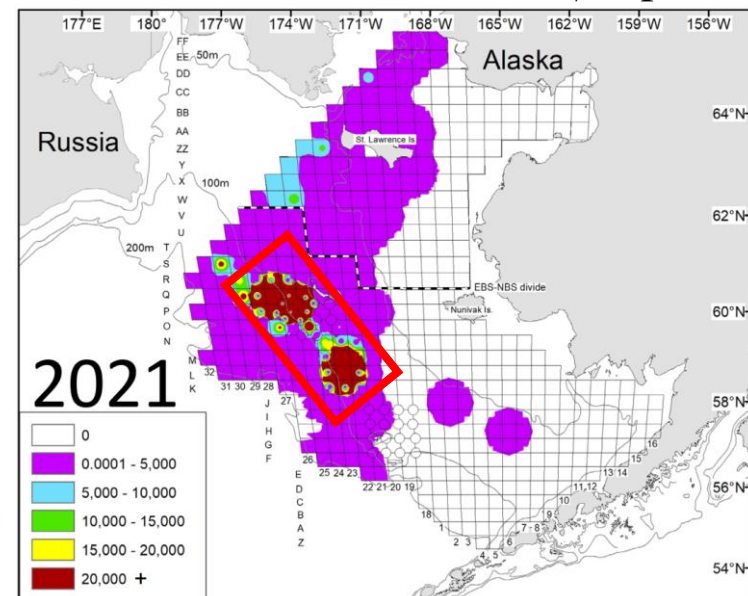
Dynamic management

- Use annual data (survey, tagging, etc.) to protect brood stock
 - Dynamic closures
- Protect molting and mating crab
 - Time/area closures

♀ RKC

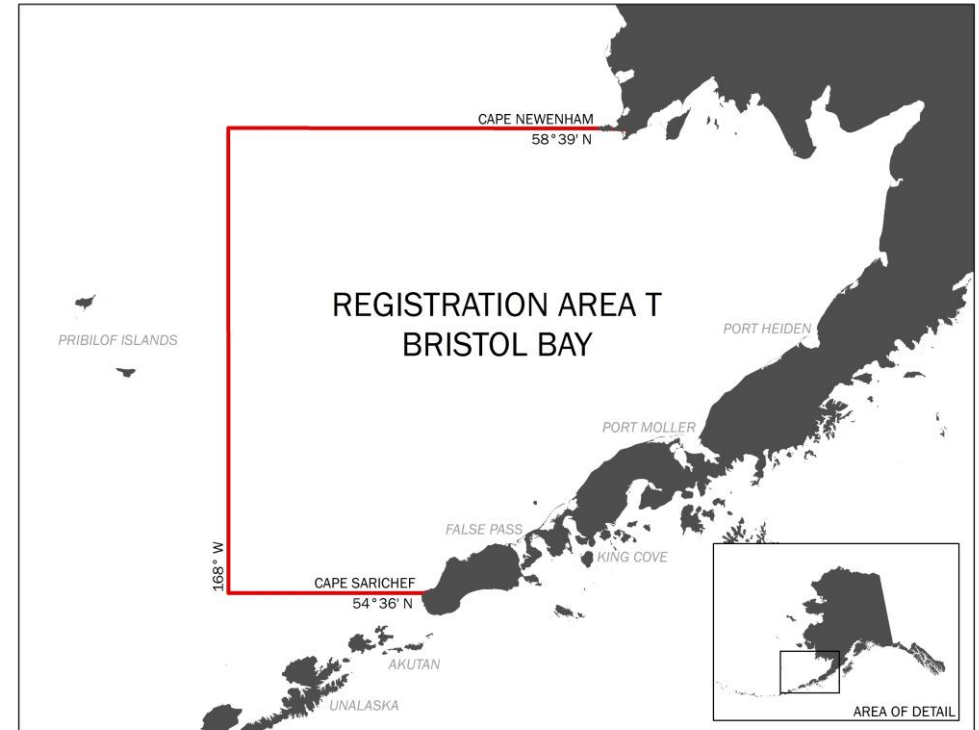
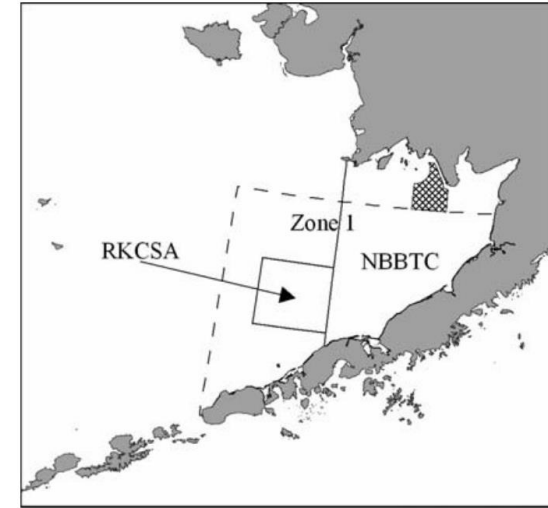


♀ Opilio



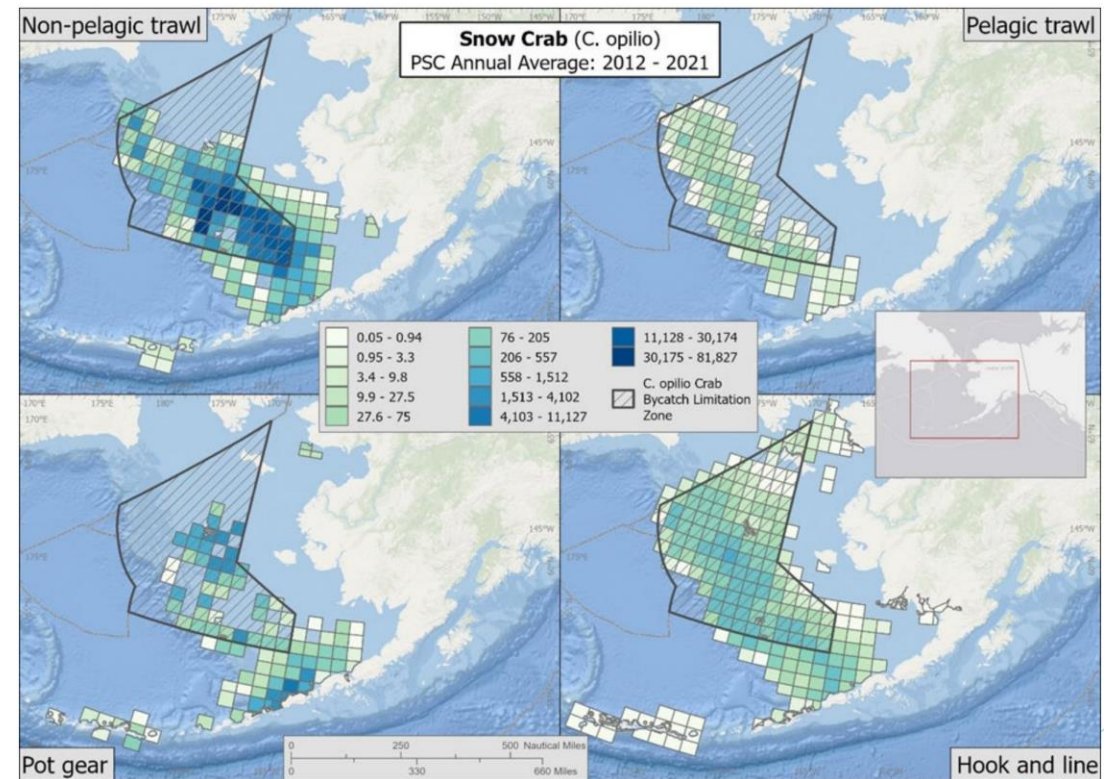
PSC management

- Align PSC boundaries with a crab stocks range OR management areas
 - Ex: BBRKC Zone 1 and registration area T



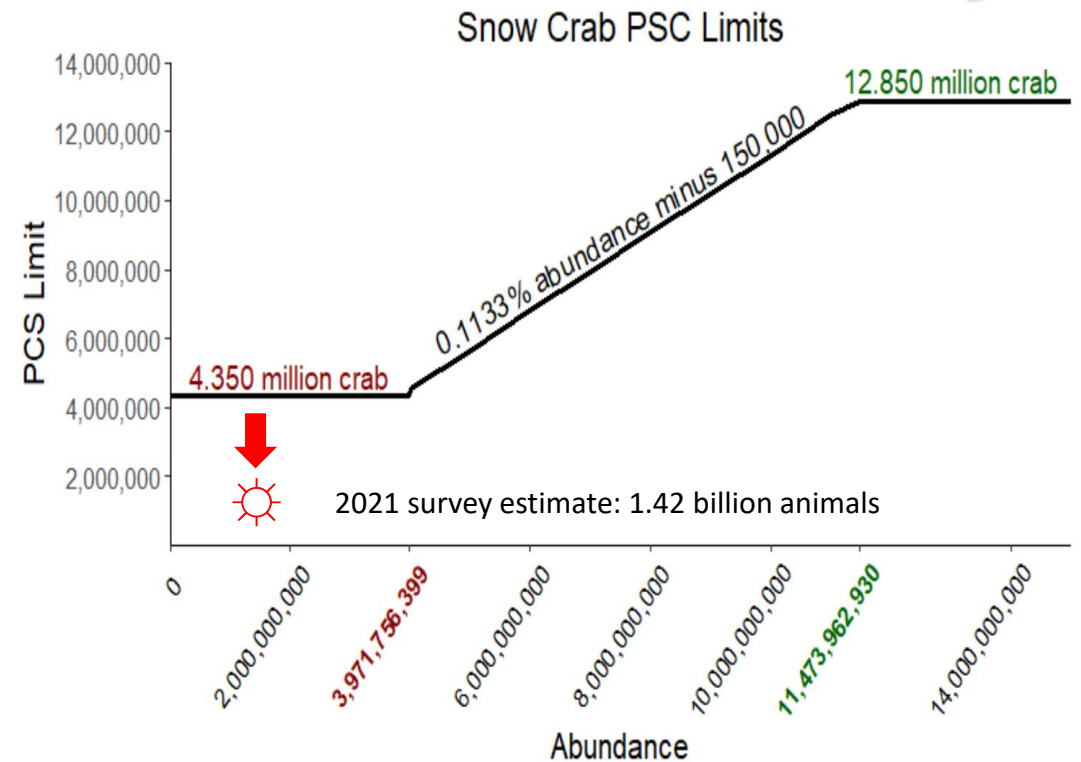
PSC management

- Align PSC boundaries with a crab stocks range OR management areas
 - Ex: Account for snow crab caught outside of COBZL



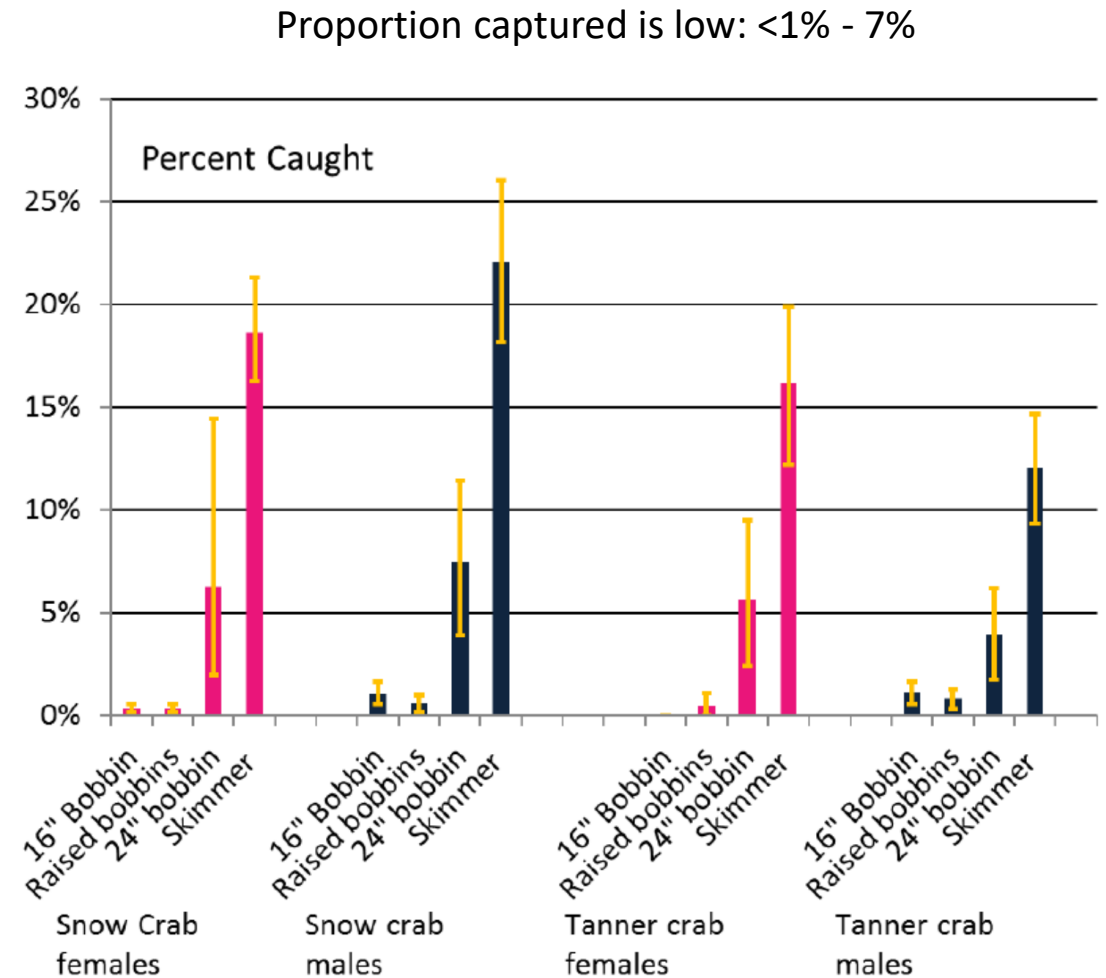
PSC management

- Remove PSC limit floor, especially important while stocks are at low levels
 - Provides incentive to move away from areas of high bycatch
- 2021 NMFS survey abundance estimate of 1.42 billion snow crab results in a 2022 snow crab PSC limit of 1,458,860 animals



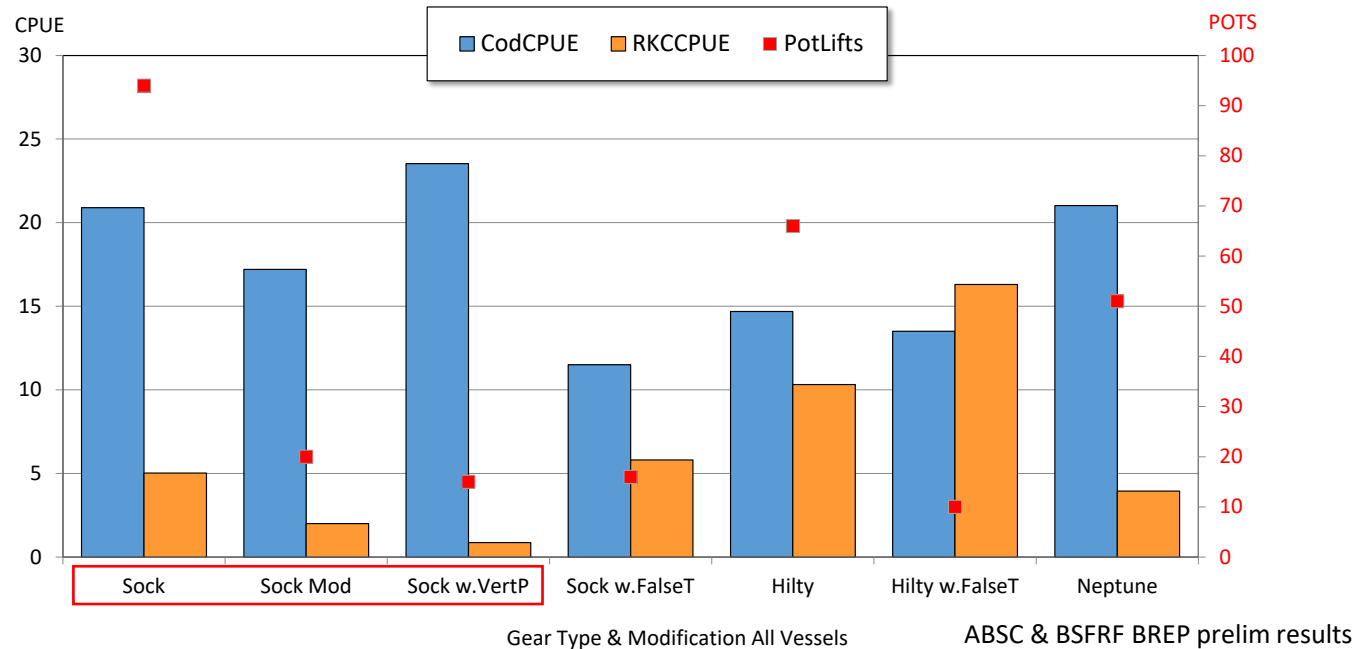
Unobserved mortality

- NOAA defines bycatch as:
“discarded catch of marine species and unobserved mortality due to a direct encounter with fishing vessels and gear.”
- Estimate unobserved mortality with current available information
- Pelagic gear contacts seafloor 40-80% of the time
- RKCSA closed to bottom trawling
 - To protect females and critical spawning grounds



Pot gear sectors

- Continue and improve hot spot reporting to avoid high encounters of crab
- Implement gear modifications to reduce crab bycatch



Summary

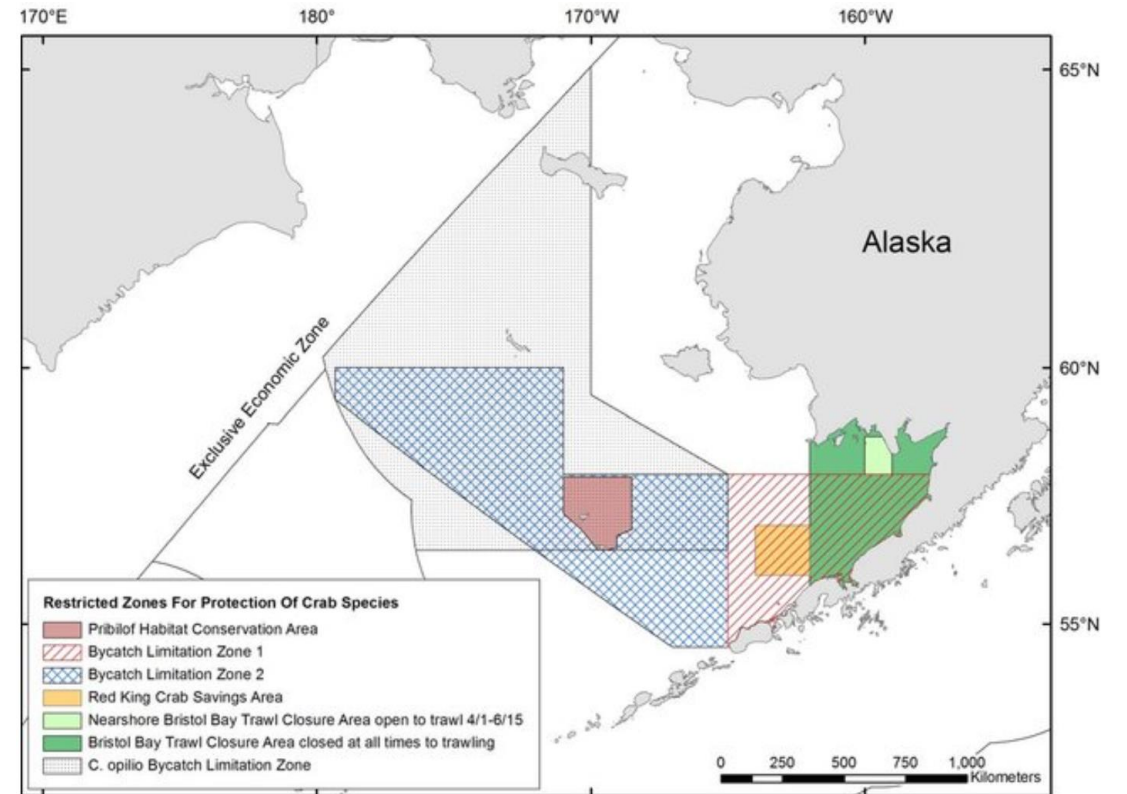
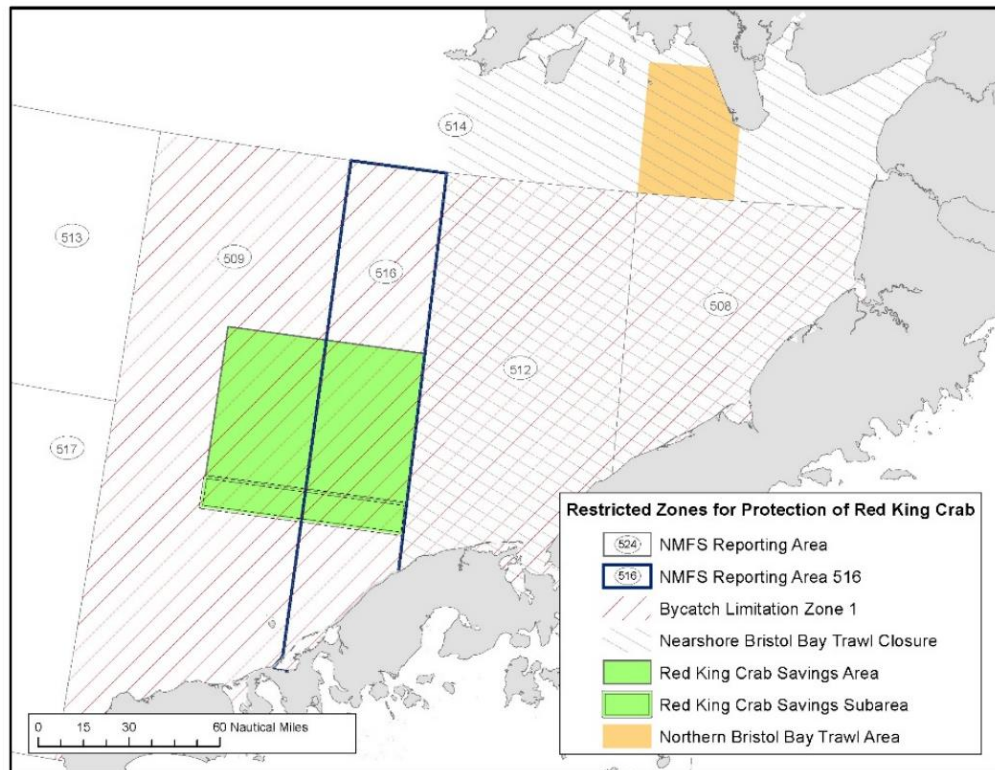
- Protect crab high density areas and centers of abundance
- Protect female broodstock
- Protect molting/mating crab
- Remove PSC limit floor
- Manage PSC across a stocks range
- Include unobserved mortality estimates towards PSC
- Fixed gear bycatch
- Encourage voluntary measures by all sectors to minimize bycatch of crab
- Keep all sectors fishing!



Thank you



Additional maps



Additional maps

