

Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force Bering Sea & Gulf of Alaska Crab Committee Meeting Report - June 21, 2022



Thank you to ADF&G Staff

Administrative Support

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Bering Sea & Gulf of Alaska Crab Committee

Meeting Report - June 21, 2022

Committee Members

Linda Kozak, Chair

Kevin Delaney

Stephanie Madsen

Erik Velsko



Meeting Schedule by Region & Discussion Focus

- April 4 Gulf of Alaska Tanner Crab
- April 26 Gulf of Alaska Tanner Crab
- May 31 Gulf of Alaska Tanner Crab
- June 17 Bering Sea King, Tanner and Opilio Crab

Upcoming Meetings

- July 26 Bering Sea King, Tanner and Opilio Crab
- August Finalize Recommendations

Summary of Meeting Details

- In addition to committee members, several Task Force members attended meetings as well as AF&G and NMFS staff
- Between 20-30 individuals attended each meeting
- Input has been solicited from various Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea fixed and trawl gear groups
- Presentations were made by ADF&G staff and researcher Dr. Craig Rose, as well as the fixed and trawl gear industry
- Future reports will be made by North Pacific Council staff and industry



Gulf of Alaska Tanner Crab Presentations

April 4th

- ADF&G Tanner Crab Update: *Stock Status and Management in the Kodiak, Chignik and South Peninsula Districts*

April 26th

- Researcher Dr. Craig Rose: *Impacts of Modified Non-pelagic Trawl Sweep Gear on Crab Bycatch and Bycatch Mortality* (Also provided a research paper titled, “*Cooperative Research to Reduce Effects of Bering Sea Flatfish Trawling of Seafloor Habitat and Crabs*”)

May 31st

- ADF&G Bycatch Update: *Tanner Crab Bycatch and Groundfish Catch in the Central Gulf of Alaska*

Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea Groups Providing Recommendations

Fixed Gear

Kodiak Crab Alliance

Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers

Alaska Marine Conservation Council

Trawl Gear

Alaska Groundfish Data Bank

Alaska Whitefish Trawlers Association

Groundfish Forum

Written and oral comments were also provided by individuals from the fixed and trawl gear sectors

**Industry recommendations can be found in the
Crab Committee meeting information**

Gulf of Alaska Tanner Crab

Examples of Recommended Research Priorities

- Study crab discard mortality rates for fixed and trawl gear
- Improve understanding of preferred habitat at various life stages and identify critical crab habitat
- Address data gaps regarding uncertainty of bycatch/discards in the directed Tanner crab fishery and state pot cod fishery
- Ways to better estimate total fishery mortality in the groundfish and directed crab fisheries, including unobserved mortality
- Study trawl fishing effects/habitat modifications

Gulf of Alaska Tanner Crab Bycatch Management Recommended by Directed Crab Fishery Participants

- Require full retention of Tanner crab in all GOA trawl fisheries for a period of two years and electronic monitoring to ensure compliance
- Require 100% observer coverage for non-pelagic trawl fisheries in areas 525702 and 525630 for a period of three years
- Consider gear modifications in the directed crab fishery to reduce crab discard mortality and to adopt best handling practices
- Support reviewing current closed areas to trawling in the Central Gulf

Gulf of Alaska Tanner Crab Bycatch Management

Recommended by GOA Trawl Fishery Participants

- Implement observer coverage on directed Tanner crab and state pot cod fishery vessels to better quantify removals
- Review current closed areas to trawling in the Central Gulf
- Consideration of Gulf of Alaska trawl rationalization program

Bering Sea Red King, Tanner and Opilio Crab

First meeting held on June 17th
Next scheduled meeting on July 26th



Bering Sea & Aleutian Islands Comprehensive Crab Reports

Provided by ADF&G

Located Under June 17th Meeting Information

- Fishery Overview – page 2
- Management Framework – page 9
- Stock Status – page 16
- Shellfish Observer Program – page 28
- Discard and Bycatch – page 37
- Bycatch Research Priorities: Crab Fisheries – page 43
- Bycatch Research Priorities: Groundfish Fisheries – page 44

Bering Sea & Aleutian Islands Industry Presentation

Provided by Cory Lescher, Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers

Located Under June 17th Meeting Information

- Recommendations for crab directed fishery participants to reduce crab bycatch and bycatch mortality
- Suggestions for management measures include:
 - Utilize time/area closures
 - Align closed area boundaries with range of crab stocks
 - Modify crab prohibited species caps
 - Account for unobserved mortality
 - Address protections for molting/mating crab and females

Bering Sea Red King, Tanner and Opilio Crab

Expected Reports for July 26th

- Bycatch mitigation measures in place currently and potential consideration of future management modifications presented by North Pacific Fishery Council staff
 - Fishing effects model presented by Brad Harris
 - Actual bycatch taken by trawl fleet compared with caps
 - Trawl industry recommendations for research priorities and bycatch management measures



