



Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force (ABRT) Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska crab committee Tuesday August 30, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Virtual (Zoom) meeting at

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82014194284?pwd=ZmlsSElBVFEFYXZQQ2VZVHhjkVXUT09>

Committee members: Linda Kozak (Chair), Erik Velsko, Stephanie Madsen, Kevin Delaney

1. Call to order
Alaska Bycatch Review Task Force (ABRT) Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska crab committee meeting called to order at 9:00 AM by Chair Linda Kozak
2. Roll call: of committee and ABRT members
Committee members present: Linda Kozak (Chair), Stephanie Madsen, Erik Velsko, Kevin Delaney
ABRT members present: John Jensen, Tommy Sheridan
3. Approve agenda: August 30, 2022, approved
4. Approve Minutes: August 9, 2022
5. Old Business
 - Review Industry information and recommendations on research
 - Chair Kozak went over the general research recommendations and further information regarding how and why these recommendations would work in helping to better research bycatch. These general recommendations were adopted by the Committee. Chair Kozak went on to further discuss specific research recommendations for this committee, which are posted on the ABRT site. Responded to Member Delany's question regarding formatting. Responded to Member Velsko that any gear touching the bottom is very general and that is why it was left like that to cast a much wider net. Notes to Member Delaney that crab habitat is important to addressing open and closed areas so that they can be better managed so as to reduce bycatch.
 - Member Delaney questioned formatting of 3 general recommendations vs. a list of everything suggested to us by public and staff. Agrees to most of the specific recommendations but takes issue with how from a pure habitat work relates directly to bycatch and requests an explanation but does not object to forwarding this if he is the only dissenting voice on this matter. Notes that Member Madsen really hit home on her suggestions regarding how we have data for salmon and halibut but not so much data for crab. Hoping to come out of this process with a much larger portion of affected and interested people around the state having more knowledge in general of bycatch.
 - Member Madsen responds to habitat issue is more general than some of the other specific recommendations and it is possible that habitat falls into one of the general recommendations.

Notes that understanding of gear impacts on crab habitat could get everyone closer to understanding what impact bycatch has as a whole on crab. Questioned impact of bycatch on the target species and asked if anyone remembers if bycatch is causing a tanner crab decline and wants to make sure assumptions are not being made on impacts of bycatch of crab based on overlapping of fishing by gear types to the abundance of tanner crab.

- Member Velsko wants to make sure pelagic trawl or any gear contacting the bottom are included on the final point of research. With that change made Member Velsko approves moving on to STI committee

6. New business:

- Begin discussions on management measures for Gulf of Alaska Tanner crab bycatch
 - Chair Kozak reminded everyone of the State's presentation on crab made to the committee on April 4 by showing a particular slide that is meaningful to this discussion. Chair Kozak remarked that there are big gaps in knowledge to crab lifespan and predation. Chair Kozak went over a list of pre-made recommendations which are available on the website. Chair Kozak suggests that retention of tanner crab removals might actually be best put under research since observed and unobserved mortality as well as amount of crab bycatch would be more of a research project than a management suggestion. Chair Kozak is hoping to find recommendations that the committee has agreed upon and then a further discussion can be had on those recommendations that are not agreed upon. Chair Kozak notes that once a rationalization program is in place there will be 100% observer coverage so maybe that observer coverage can be linked to rationalization. Request group consensus on observer coverage. Possible 100% retention of crab as a research project. Notes that 100% observer coverage even if it was a sampling system would give managers better tools to quantify bycatch in these fisheries and figure out better management strategies going forward due to a better data set to work from. Chair Kozak asked Bonney how many catcher processor vessels are in the key areas Bonney responded. Asked how tanner crab bycatch is being counted if it is an actual count or census? JB responded it is based on a sample taken.
 - Member Madsen points out that this slide points out where the crab is and where the trawl fishery takes place but it is not showing the impacts of bycatch to crab in this area. Does not want to make assumptions that trawl fisheries are automatically affecting crab only based on the fact that areas of crab abundance are overlapped by areas where trawl fisheries occur. Supports GOA rationalization, gear type modifications, and reviewing open and closed areas. Discussed observer coverage and how it could be managed. Concerned about second bullet under monitoring thinks it might be too specific to time/area so maybe rewording it to be more inclusive would be best. Also, that asking trawl vessels to declare before they go out wouldn't be very helpful given the management directives already in place to monitor which type of trawl is occurring regardless of vessel. Member Madsen is okay with having 100% retention pulled out of management and put under one of the research headings. Agrees with slowing the fishery down and giving them tools to manage bycatch more effectively. The Three years and 2 areas seems awkward and thinks there is a better way to do this doesn't know what the purpose is for trawl vessels to declare how they will be fishing before they leave.
 - Member Velsko commented that an NPFMC motion was made to get 100% observer coverage and retention to know learn/study what the impacts of bycatch are. Agrees that there is no data on that and without that data there is no way to determine this. Discusses how retention could be research or management. Notes that the state has been asked regarding a full observer program but they do not have the money/desire to do so. Member Velsko agrees that rationalization would be good to do but requires more data. Member Velsko wants 100% retention from the fleet as a whole to show what bycatch is going on and maybe addressing the caps would be better to allow for the retention. Member Velsko comments on nonpelagic vs. pelagic coverage given that trawl trips can be a mixture of both types of fishing 28% observer coverage. The data breakout leaves non-pelagic at 9-10% observer coverage so the suggestion was made to up that coverage percentage. Member Velsko asked O'Donnell how do they separate out the fish ticket part of the pelagic vs. nonpelagic.

O'Donnell responded it is 2 fish tickets.

- Member Delaney states that dead loss reduces opportunities in all fisheries and there are several questions if answered could help reduce bycatch and the associated dead loss. Wants to focus on rationalization and gear modification and review of open and closed areas as the most important management changes that could improve bycatch. Wants estimates coming out of observer program that managers are comfortable that this data is accurate enough to feed into the modeling done on the fisheries. Might be an opportunity for beneficial research project if an area can be identified and get 100% observer coverage for said area/time period/gear type, with 100% retention this data set could be very helpful from a management standpoint.

7. Public comment: three-minute (3) limit to individual comments

- Julie Bonney: Supports Gulf rationalization for trawl, reevaluating of open and closed areas on Gulf, pot gear modifications (notes does not like these put in regulations so that gear modification upgrades can be made), monitoring in SOA Tanner and PCod fisheries (notes partial monitoring and cameras could help this coverage more certainty could result in higher quotas. On 100% retention of crab are you requiring this on catcher processors or catcher vessels are there going to be issues in getting catches back to shore the ability to get back to shore or count these crab that are retained. There is no allowance for these crab to go to any kind of food bank. This would also double the crab removal given that there is a 50% survival rate of crab returned once caught. 100% observer coverage gets complicated due to market changes there is some coverage already there and due to there not being a fishery the information gathered could be very little. NPFMC looked at 100% observer coverage and that it would bankrupt the fleet. If rationalization would occur this could be mitigated but not in the current way the fishery is run. Pelagic vs. Non-pelagic this is already logged on a tow by tow basis which is required no later than 2 hours after the gear is deployed. So, this data could already be looked at given it is already there to look at.
- Paddy O'Donnell: Notes that it is required to log discards in the log book for crab or any other bycatch. Interested in the type 1 trawl closed areas the crab have not recovered there in the 30years these closed areas have been in place in fact the crab have decreased instead of increased in these closed areas. Concerning declaring pelagic vs. non pelagic gear it is important to use both so as to allow them to be more flexible in how the fishing occurs to make things profitable. No fisheries for a number of years no cod since 2017 there are low observer numbers in non pelagic since there isn't much fishing in nonpelagic fisheries.
- Chris Woodley: Amendment 80 fleet has looked at the two stat areas and very little fishing is done in those areas. Overall crab bycatch in entire GOA is very low, those numbers are collected by 2 observers on board 100% of the time. Sampling from each haul is how they get the number so it isn't complete but is a good sample. Supports all of Julie Bonney's comments especially when it comes to full retention of crab. There would have to be an exempted fisheries permit to retain 100% of the crab. The goal of understanding the removals is a good idea but the way to achieve it might not be through 100% retention given the hurdles there. Should add to category legal males that aren't preferred by the market so they are caught but not retained in addition to females and sub-legal males.
- Rebecca Skinner: Does not think that basing management efforts on a specific area is going to address the issues being experienced out in the fisheries. Flexibility in small trawl vessels is what allows them to make trips profitable. Especially when focused on specific geographic areas given the burdens this would impose on those smaller boats and the reduction in the flexibility that allows them to operate profitably.

8. Crab committee and ABRT comments

- ABRT Chair Jensen: Thanked Linda for all the hard work and a very informative meeting
- ABRT Co-Chair Sheridan: Echoed ABRT Chair Jensen's comments and looks forward to the rest of the meetings for this week.
- Committee members thanked Chair Kozak for the work put in and looks forward to next draft of the recommendations.

9. Next Meeting Date: September 6, 2022, 9am

10. Adjournment by 10:41 am