

PROPOSAL 159

5 AAC 27.610. Fishing seasons and periods for Alaska Peninsula-Aleutian Islands Area, and 5 AAC 27.655 Dutch Harbor Food and Bait Herring Fishery Allocation Plan.

Change season start dates and allocation between drift gillnet and purse seine gear groups in the Dutch Harbor food and bait herring fishery, as follows:

Remove the allocation and season timing sector splits between the gillnet and purse seine gear groups in the Dutch Harbor Food and Bait Herring Fishery, aligning them within a shared fishery where 100% of the allocation and fishing time is available to both gear types.

In 5 AAC 27.655, strike sections (a) and (b) establishing separate allocations to the gillnet and purse seine gear groups.

In 5 AAC 27.610, under section (e) (2), align the season start dates of the gillnet and purse seine gear groups.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Observations on the fishing grounds show herring are arriving to both the Togiak and Dutch Harbor districts earlier. This resulted in a drastic under-harvest in 2016, when the Dutch Harbor fleet was able to capture only 208 tons of the 2,166 allocated. In 2017, reports from local fishermen and processors indicated herring had again returned to the district early, in late June. Timing and allocation separation of the gillnet and purse seine fleets in Dutch Harbor — only one of which has been active in the last 10 years — prevents managers from opening the full fishery to active participants in response to these shifts.

ADFG has recorded zero participation from the Dutch Harbor herring gillnet fleet since 2009. For five years prior to 2009 the effort was small enough to trigger confidentiality requirements that precludes the state from reporting that effort. The purse seine fleet, on the other hand, has maintained consistent participation in the harvest of this important resource. For these reasons, it makes the most sense to remove the now inapplicable allocation split and season start difference between the purse seine and gillnet fleets. This allows managers the flexibility to open the fishery to active participants in response to run timing, managing for effective harvest and in consideration of the ecological changes occurring in Western Alaska and the North Pacific.

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