

PROPOSAL 266

5 AAC 34.610. Fishing seasons for Registration Area O.

Change the season dates for the Registration Area O golden king crab fishery to March 1–October 31, as follows:

Change the fishery dates for the Aleutian Islands golden king crab fishery from August 1 through April 30 to March 1 through October 31. The following regulatory language is suggested:

5 AAC 34.610 Fishing seasons for Registration Area O

(b) Male golden king crab may be taken only as follows:

(2) beginning **March 1, 2021** [AUGUST 1, 2015], from 12:00 noon **March 1 through 11:59 p.m. October 31** [AUGUST 1 THROUGH 11:59 P.M. APRIL 30].

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Dutch Harbor processors desire and ability to efficiently take deliveries of Golden King Crab (GKC) during November, December, and early January has been an increasing problem over the last several years. Due to rising costs, the plant owners have consistently scaled back the staff and the days they’re open during those times. The slow time period between the finish of Red King Crab and the start of Opilio and Pollock deliveries is used for annual plant maintenance and repair projects. Two of the three Dutch Harbor processors typically close for the year in early November. The remaining plant operates with a day shift crew until closing in mid-December. These issues seem to be getting worse each year with the ever increasing costs to operate the plants. A significant portion of the GKC quota is landed during this period. If the third plant follows suit and closes, the harvesters would incur unnecessary costs and risk their ability to harvest the quota before the season ends.

A change to the season dates would be mutually beneficial to the processing and harvesting sectors. A change from the current season of August through April to March through October would avoid the difficult months for the processors. For the processors, accepting GKC deliveries while they're fully staffed for other fisheries (Cod, Pollock, etc...) is more profitable. A change would allow the harvesters to catch their quota without the risk of having nowhere to deliver during November and December. A March season start would mean that more of the GKC harvest would occur during the summer months. Doing so would reduce deadloss, reduce weather related safety issues, and provide opportunities for vessels to participate in other crab fisheries that conflict with the current season.

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