

Westward Area Commercial Tanner Crab (5 proposals)

PROPOSAL 260

5 AAC 35.505. Description of Registration Area J districts; 5 AAC 35.506. Area J registration; and 5 AAC 35.507. Kodiak, Chignik, and South Peninsula Districts *C. bairdi* Tanner crab harvest strategies.

Align boundaries for the Chignik District commercial Tanner crab fishery with the commercial salmon fishery, as follows:

Adjust the boundaries for the Chignik Area for the commercial tanner crab fishery to the same Area boundaries as those used in the commercial salmon fishery as follows:

5 AAC 35.505. Description of Registration Area J Districts. (a) Kodiak District: all Pacific Ocean waters south of the latitude of Cape Douglas (58° 51.10' N. lat.), west of 149° W. long., and east of a line extending **135° southeast from a point near Kilokak Rocks at 57° 10.34' N. lat., 156° 20.22' W. long., (the longitude of the southern entrance to Imuya Bay);** [SOUTH FROM CAPE KUMLIK ALONG 157° 27.00 W. LONG.;

[(5) SEMIDI ISLAND OVERLAP SECTION: ALL WATERS OF THE KODIAK DISTRICT WEST OF A LINE EXTENDING SOUTH FROM THE ALASKA PENINSULA, NEAR KILOKAK ROCKS, ALONG 156° 20.22' W. LONG., AND EAST OF A LINE EXTENDING SOUTH FROM CAPE KUMLIK ALONG 157° 27.00' W. LONG.;

(f) Chignik District: all Pacific Ocean waters east of a line extending 135° southeast from Kupreanof Point at 55° 33.98' N. lat., 159° 35.88' W. long., [TO CASTLE ROCK AT 55° 16.80' N. LAT., 159° 29.11' W. LONG., AND EXTENDING 135° SOUTHEAST FROM CASTLE ROCK,] and west of a line extending **135° southeast from a point near Kilokak Rocks at 57° 10.34' N. lat., 156° 20.22' W. long., (the longitude of the southern entrance to Imuya Bay);** [SOUTH FROM CAPE KUMLIK ALONG 157° 27.00 W. LONG.;

5 AAC 35.506. Area J registration.

[(B) NOTWITHSTANDING (C) AND (G) OF THIS SECTION, A TANNER CRAB VESSEL VALIDLY REGISTERED FOR THE CHIGNIK DISTRICT MAY BE USED TO TAKE TANNER CRAB IN THE SEMIDI ISLAND OVERLAP SECTION OF THE KODIAK DISTRICT AS SPECIFIED IN 5 AAC 35.507.]

5 AAC 35.507. Kodiak, Chignik, and South Peninsula Districts *C. bairdi* Tanner crab harvest strategies.

(c) In the Kodiak District,

[(3) IN THE SEMIDI ISLAND OVERLAP SECTION,]

[(A) THE FISHERY WILL OPEN WHEN EITHER THE SOUTHWEST SECTION OF THE KODIAK DISTRICT OR THE CHIGNIK DISTRICT IS OPENED;]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Chignik Area has different boundaries in the tanner crab fishery when compared to the salmon boundaries for the Chignik Area. The Chignik Area boundaries should be uniform for all fisheries

PROPOSED BY: Axel Kopun

(EF-F19-085)

PROPOSAL 261

5 AAC 35.508. Bering Sea District *C. bairdi* Tanner crab harvest strategy.

Adopt a new Bering Sea Tanner crab harvest strategy used to set annual harvest limits, as follows:

A detailed analysis and recommended harvest strategy scenarios will be provided by the department prior to the March 2020 Statewide King and Tanner Crab meeting.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Eastern Bering Sea Tanner crab stock is characterized by highly variable and episodic recruitment leading to substantial changes in annual abundance levels. The current Bering Sea Tanner crab harvest strategy was established in 1999 and requires minimum abundance threshold levels for both mature male and female crab to be met before fisheries can occur. In recent years the fishery has been closed or occurred at reduced harvest limits based on low female abundance.

The analysis in support of the revised harvest strategy will evaluate the utility of including female abundance when considering harvest limits for the male only Tanner crab fishery. The recommended harvest strategy is expected to reduce probability of fishery closures, allow for best application of population estimates, and improve yield and stability for stakeholders.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F19-172)

PROPOSAL 262

5 AAC 35.517. Bering Sea *C. opilio* Tanner crab harvest strategy.

Modify the Bering Sea *C. opilio* harvest strategy definition of “exploited legal males”, as follows:

Revise the harvest strategy definition of “exploited legal males” to allow for periodic changes in the size of exploited legal males, as follows:

...

(d) For the purposes of this section,

(5) "exploited legal males" means 100 percent of the new-shell plus a percentage of the old-shell male *C. opilio* Tanner crab that are of a size defined by ADF&G preseason during TAC setting and greater than the legal size; the percentage of old-shell male *C. opilio* Tanner crab will be based on the expected fishery selectivity for old-shell verses new-shell male *C. opilio* Tanner crab;

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The basic framework of the Bering Sea snow crab harvest strategy applies an exploitation rate to the estimated mature male biomass or a percentage of exploited legal males to establish annual harvest limits. Currently, the legal minimum size for Bering sea snow crab (*C. opilio* Tanner crab) is 3.1 inches. However, an industry preferred size of 4 inches or larger is used to prosecute the fishery, thus, 4 inch or larger male snow crab are defined as “exploited legal males” in the harvest strategy. Retaining crab at industry preferred size provides for better product recovery and market yield relative to smaller sized legal crab.

During the TAC setting process, harvest limits are scaled to the abundance of exploitable legal males to avoid overharvest of the largest crab in the population. Recent information is showing that some *Chionoecetes* crab may reach maturity and terminal molt below 4 inches, meaning they would never enter the fishery under the current definition of exploited legal males. Providing flexibility to the definition of “exploited legal males” in the harvest strategy, would allow the definition to adapt to changes in the industry preferred size while remaining above the minimum legal male size of 3.1 inches. Lowering the industry preferred size (for example to 3.8 inches) would result in benefits to the Alaskan snow crab resource consistent with Magnuson-Stevens Act National Standards and the *Board’s Policy on King and Tanner Crab Resource Management*. Specifically, these benefits include but are not limited to: 1) increased abundance of exploited legal males available to the fishery resulting in higher TACs in some years, and potentially reduced inter-annual variation in TAC levels; 2) improved vessel harvest efficiency; 3) reduced discard mortality of legal snow crab.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers (EF-F19-087)

PROPOSAL 263

5 AAC 35.506. Area J registration.

Allow retention of incidentally harvested Bering Sea District *C. bairdi* during directed a *C. opilio* season, as follows:

5 AAC 35.XXX. Possession limits for Registration Area J.

Add a small possession limit for *C. bairdi* crab taken incidentally during *C. opilio* crab fishing after the season for *C. bairdi* crab has closed, as follows:

“In the Bering Sea District, a vessel operator that is registered to fish for *C. opilio* Tanner crab may also possess *C. bairdi* Tanner crab taken incidentally during *C. opilio* Tanner crab fishing after the season *C. bairdi* crab has closed in amount not to exceed [INSERT VALUE BETWEEN 2 TO 5] percent of the weight of *C. opilio* Tanner crab on board the vessel and reported on an ADF&G fish ticket. Any *C. bairdi* Tanner crab on board the vessel at the time of landing will not accrue toward quota and will be forfeited.”

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? *C. bairdi* crab and *C. opilio* crab co-occur on the fishing grounds and even interbreed creating hybrids. Meaning while fishing for one species, it is inevitable that some of the other species will also be caught. In addition, the seasons for these two species largely overlap, with *C. bairdi* crab season closing first (on March 31) while the *C. opilio* crab season lasts longer (closing May 15 in the Eastern Subdistrict and May 31 in the Western Subdistrict). Fishermen sort the crab at sea to retain the intended target species. However, there may be a small amount of the non-target species that are mis-identified or cling on to the target species going in the vessel’s holding tank. A regulation already exists to allow up to 35% of *C. opilio* crab to be retained during the season while fishing *C. bairdi* crab (5 AAC 35.506(j)). This proposal would allow a small amount (between two to five percent) of non-target species (*C. bairdi* crab) caught incidentally when targeting *C. opilio* crab after the season for *C. bairdi* crab has closed without being subject to a penalty or violation. This proposal would

formalize in writing an existing agency practice/policy. The *C. bairdi* crab would have to be forfeited at the time of landing and would not accrue toward quota in the crab rationalization program.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers (EF-F19-086)

PROPOSAL 264

5 AAC 35.510. Fishing Seasons for Registration Area J.

Amend Area J Tanner crab season opening weather delay criteria, as follows:

5 AAC 35.510 is amended to read:

(a) In the Kodiak District,

...

(2) the season opening shall be delayed for 24 hours if the January 14, 4:00 a.m. National Weather Service forecast [FOR THE CURRENT DAY AND NIGHT OR THE FOLLOWING DAY AND NIGHT] for any section of the Kodiak District, except in the Semidi Island Overlap and Southwest Sections, contains a gale warning, in which case the season opening in all sections of the Kodiak District eligible for a season opening will be delayed 24 hours; if after the initial weather delay, the 4:00 a.m. National Weather Service forecast [FOR THE CURRENT DAY AND NIGHT OR THE FOLLOWING DAY AND NIGHT] again contains a gale warning, the season opening in all sections will be delayed an additional 24 hours; the season opening delays may continue on a rolling 24-hour basis until 12:00 noon on January 25, when the season will open regardless of any gale warning in the National Weather Service forecasts; for the purposes of this paragraph, the corresponding National Weather Service forecast areas for the sections of the Kodiak District are as follows:

- (A) Northeast Section: **PKZ132** [3B];
- (B) Eastside Section: **PKZ132** [3B];
- (C) Southeast Section: **PKZ132** [3B];
- (D) Westside Section: **PKZ138** [3C];
- (E) North Mainland Section: **PKZ138** [3C];

...

(b) In the Chignik District,

...

(2) the season opening shall be delayed for 24 hours if the January 14, 4:00 a.m. National Weather Service marine forecast [FOR THE CURRENT DAY AND NIGHT OR THE FOLLOWING DAY AND NIGHT] contains a gale warning; if after the initial weather delay, the 4:00 a.m. National Weather Service marine forecast [FOR THE CURRENT DAY AND NIGHT OR THE FOLLOWING DAY AND NIGHT] again contains a gale warning, the season opening will be delayed an additional 24 hours; the season opening delays may continue on a rolling 24-hour basis until 12:00 noon on January 25, when the season will open regardless of the National Weather Service marine forecasts; for the purposes of this paragraph, the corresponding National Weather Service marine forecast area for the Chignik District is [AREA] **PKZ155**[: COASTAL WATERS SOUTH OF THE ALASKA PENINSULA CASTLE CAPE TO CAPE SARICHEF.]

(c) In South Peninsula District,

...

(2) the season opening shall be delayed for 24 hours if the January 14, 4:00 a.m. National Weather Service marine forecast [FOR THE CURRENT DAY AND NIGHT OR THE FOLLOWING DAY AND NIGHT] contains a gale warning; if after the initial weather delay, the 4:00 a.m. National Weather Service marine forecast [FOR THE CURRENT DAY AND NIGHT OR THE FOLLOWING DAY AND NIGHT] again contains a gale warning, the season opening will be delayed an additional 24 hours; the season opening delays may continue on a rolling 24-hour basis until 12:00 noon on January 25, when the season will open regardless of the National Weather Service marine forecasts; for the purposes of this paragraph, the corresponding National Weather Service marine forecast area for the South Peninsula District is [AREA] PKZ155[: COASTAL WATERS SOUTH OF THE ALASKA PENINSULA CASTLE CAPE TO CAPE SARICHEF.]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Regulations established to delay opening of Area J commercial Tanner crab seasons are based on National Weather Service (NWS) marine weather forecasts. However, existing regulations do not reflect current NWS forecasting practices and forecast areas. Tanner crab seasons in Kodiak, Chignik, and South Alaska Peninsula are delayed if a gale warning is forecasted during the 48-hour period beginning the day before the fishery is scheduled to start; however current NWS marine warnings only extend 36 hours beyond the initial forecast. Additionally, marine forecast areas have been redefined since these regulations were established. This proposal aligns weather delay regulations with current NWS forecast areas and practices. The department encourages alternative input from fishery participants on the timing and criteria for weather delay regulations given the constraints of the NWS marine warning forecasting process.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F19-173)
