

Draft Southeast Alaska Red and Blue King Crab Management Plan

Submitted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game

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The following draft substitute language amending the Southeast Alaska Red King Crab Management Plan is the result of discussions between Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) staff and commercial crab fishery stakeholders in Southeast Alaska. The proposed changes in this document provide a biologically based threshold to annually evaluate potential for a commercial red and blue king crab fishery as well as annual harvest limit estimates based on legal male biomass. Both department staff and crab industry stakeholders involved in development of this draft management plan agree these proposed changes would best be considered as potential substitute language for **Proposal 190**.

5 AAC 34.113. Southeast Alaska Red King Crab Management Plan; 5 AAC 34.125. Lawful gear for Registration Area A; 5 AAC 77.664 Personal Use King Crab Fishery; Substitute language to implement a biological based harvest strategy for the commercial red and blue king crab fishery and the bag and possession limit maximum for the personal use fishery.

5 AAC 34.113. Southeast Alaska Red King Crab Management Plan. is repealed and readopted to read:

5 AAC 34.113. Southeast Alaska Red and Blue King Crab Harvest Strategy.

(a) The commissioner may by, emergency order, open the red and blue king crab fishery only if the department's preseason biomass estimate of legal male red and blue king crab equals at least 50 percent of the average biomass estimate of legal males.

(b) If the commercial red and blue king crab fishery is open under (a) of this section, and the preseason biomass estimate of legal males is:

(1) at least 50 percent but less than 100 percent of the average biomass estimate of legal males, the biomass of legal males available for harvest will not exceed $0.1 \times \text{LMB} \times (\text{LMB}/\text{LMB}_{\text{AVG}})$, where "LMB" is equal to the current year preseason biomass estimate of legal males, and "LMB_{AVG}" is equal to the average biomass estimate of legal males;

(2) equal to or greater than the LMB_{AVG}, the biomass of legal males available for harvest will not exceed 10 percent of the preseason estimate of LMB.

(c) In implementing this harvest strategy, the department shall consider the reliability of biomass estimates of red and blue king crab, the manageability of the fishery, and other factors the department determines important to manage the fishery consistent

with sustained yield principles, and shall use the best scientific information available and consider all sources of uncertainty as necessary to avoid overfishing.

(d) In Registration Area A, the holder of a CFEC permit for red and blue king crab may not retain more king crab in the directed fishery than the annual amount of king crab equal quota share that is specified by the department. The department shall determine the annual amount of king crab equal quota share by dividing the annual total allowable catch by the number of CFEC permits eligible to be fished in the fishery. The department shall use the best available information, including harvest rate and biological data, to set the total allowable catch.

(e) Any commercial and personal use harvest that exceeds the permit holder's equal quota share established under (d) of this section will be reported as an overage on an ADF&G fish ticket at the time of delivery and immediately surrendered to the state. All proceeds from the sale of excess king crab shall be surrendered to the state.

(f) Except as provided in (a) – (e) of this section, when the biomass of legal males available for harvest is equal to or greater than 200,000 pounds a competitive fishery may open.

(g) If multiple CFEC permit holders are registered to fish from a vessel the maximum number of king crab pots that may be operated may not exceed pot limits as described in 5 AAC 34.125(b)(1).

(h) Based on in season information, the commissioner may, by emergency order, close a fishing season.

(i) For the purposes of this section,

(1) “preseason biomass estimate” means the sum of surveyed and non surveyed biomass estimates of legal male red and blue king crab present at the time of the preseason survey as estimated directly by the catch survey analysis method from annual pot survey data;

(2) “legal males” means all male red and blue king crab at least 7 inches or greater in width of shell.

5 AAC 34.113. Southeast Alaska Red King Crab Management Plan. Repealed. [(a) THE SOUTHEAST ALASKA RED KING CRAB FISHERY SHALL BE MANAGED CONSISTENTLY WITH THE BOARD'S “POLICY ON KING AND TANNER CRAB RESOURCE MANAGEMENT” (90-04-FB, MARCH 23, 1990), ADOPTED BY THIS REFERENCE, AND ACCORDING TO THE PRINCIPLES SET OUT IN THIS SECTION.

(b) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL CLOSE AN AREA IF THE ABUNDANCE OF VARIOUS SIZES OF MALE AND FEMALE CRABS IS INADEQUATE TO PROVIDE FOR

A SUSTAINED HARVEST, OR WHEN POTENTIALLY HIGH EFFORT PRECLUDES AN ORDERLY FISHERY.

(c) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL CLOSE THE FISHERY IF THE DEPARTMENT'S ESTIMATE OF THE AVAILABLE HARVEST IS BELOW THE MINIMUM THRESHOLD OF 200,000 POUNDS OF LEGAL MALE RED KING CRAB.

(d) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL DETERMINE AN APPROPRIATE HARVEST RATE BEFORE THE OPENING OF THE FISHERY. THE HARVEST RATE IS THE PERCENTAGE OF THE LEGAL MALES THAT CAN BE HARVESTED WHILE PROVIDING FOR THE LONG-TERM REPRODUCTIVE VIABILITY OF RED KING CRAB STOCKS. THE DEPARTMENT SHALL BASE THE HARVEST RATE ON ESTIMATES OF ABUNDANCE OF THE VARIOUS SIZE CLASSES OF MALE AND FEMALE CRABS, AND ON FACTORS AFFECTING THE REPRODUCTIVE VIABILITY OF THE STOCK.

(e) THE DEPARTMENT SHALL DETERMINE THE GUIDELINE HARVEST LEVEL BEFORE EACH FISHING SEASON. THE GUIDELINE HARVEST LEVEL IS THE SUM OF THE ESTIMATES OF SUSTAINABLE HARVEST FOR EACH FISHING DISTRICT. IF STOCK ASSESSMENT DATA ARE NOT AVAILABLE, THE GUIDELINE HARVEST LEVEL WILL BE BASED ON HISTORICAL FISHERY PERFORMANCE, CATCH, AND POPULATION INFORMATION. A LACK OF ADEQUATE INFORMATION WILL RESULT IN CONSERVATIVE MANAGEMENT.]

5 AAC 34.125(b)(1)(A) is amended to read:

5 AAC 34.125. Lawful gear for Registration Area A.

...

(b) The following king crab pot limits are in effect in Registration Area A:

(1) during the commercial red king crab season, the maximum number of king crab pots that may be operated from a vessel registered to fish for king crab is as follows:

(A) no more than 20 king crab pots when the guideline harvest level is **less than 399,999** [AT LEAST 200,000 BUT NOT MORE THAN 399,999] pounds;

5 AAC 34.126(b) is amended to read:

5 AAC 34.126. King crab pot marking requirements for Registration Area A.

...

(b) If multiple CFEC permit holders are registered to fish from a vessel simultaneously for the **red and blue king crab fishery or** for the golden king crab and Tanner crab fisheries, the tags are issued to the vessel for the duration of the fishing seasons.

5 AAC 77.664(b) is amended to read:

5 AAC 77.664 Personal use king crab fishery.

...

(b) Except as specified (e) of this section, the daily bag and possession limit is three male crab per person; if the **preseason biomass estimate of legal male** [REGIONWIDE HARVESTABLE BIOMASS OF MATURE] red and blue king crab is **less than 50 percent of the average surveyed and non surveyed biomass estimate of legal males** [BELOW 200,000 POUNDS], the commissioner may, by emergency order, reduce the bag and possession limit of red and blue king crab.