

**PROPOSAL 275**

**5 AAC 34.816 Bristol Bay red king crab harvest strategy.**

Update Bristol Bay red king crab harvest strategy used to set annual harvest limits, as follows

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** The current Bristol Bay red king crab (BBRKC) harvest strategy was last updated in the mid-1990s and is composed of three components, minimum stock size thresholds to ensure for conservation of the stock, an abundance-based harvest control rule used to set an exploitation rate when stock size thresholds are met, and a maximum harvest cap on legal males. Over the last decade, the BBRKC stock has undergone a broad decline. During this time the fishery has occurred under reduced harvest limits or was closed because estimated abundance of mature female crab was below regulatory thresholds established in the harvest strategy.

Minimum stock size thresholds established in the harvest strategy are derived, in part, from the BBRKC stock assessment model. Assessment methodology has changed and improved over time and this proposal would update elements of the BBRKC regulatory harvest strategy to reflect current assessment and management practices. Proposed changes will focus on updating the minimum stock size thresholds that must be met before a fishery can occur. Additional recommendations will include options for transitioning from a stair step to a sloping harvest control rule. Updating the harvest strategy will address conservation of the stock and fishery stability for stakeholders during a period of high uncertainty.

Full analysis and recommended harvest strategy updates will be provided by the department prior to the 2025 Statewide shellfish meeting.

The BBRKC harvest strategy is a Category 2 management measure under the federal Fishery Management Plan for Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs (FMP; FMP Section 8.2.5 Fishing Seasons). Changes to Category 2 management measures occur at the discretion of the board but should be consistent with the criteria set out in the FMP and the Magnuson – Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act National Standards.

**PROPOSED BY:** Alaska Department of Fish and Game

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