

PROPOSAL 39

5 AAC 34.210 Fishing seasons for Registration Area E.

Establish season dates for a commercial golden king crab fishery in Prince William Sound, as follows:

Reinstate the historic season dates for Golden King Crab in PWS and instate gear limits.

5 AAC 34.210 Fishing seasons for Registration Area E.

(a) The commercial taking of **red king crab and blue king crab** in Registration Area E is closed until the king crab stocks have recovered enough for a harvest strategy to be developed by the department and adopted by the Board of Fisheries.

(b) Golden King Crab may be taken from 12:00 Noon November 1 to December 20th and from 12:00 noon January 15 through March 31 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m

5 AAC 34.225. Lawful gear for Registration Area E

(a) King crab may be taken only with king crab pots. **Except that Golden King Crab taken in Tanner Crab pots as described in 5 AAC 35.125(f) may be retained if the CFEC permit holder fishing for Tanner Crab is also registered to fish for Golden King Crab and both crab fisheries are open at the same time.** King crab taken by other means must be returned to the water without further harm.

(c) The following king crab pot limits are in effect in Registration Area E:

(1) when the commercial Golden King Crab season is open in Registration Area E, and the commercial Tanner Crab season is closed, no more than 30 king crab pots may be operated from a vessel registered to fish for king crab; (2) when the commercial Golden King Crab and Tanner Crab seasons are open in Registration Area E at the same time, an aggregate of no more than 75 king and Tanner crab pots may be operated from a vessel registered to fish for both king crab and Tanner Crab

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? End the continued closure of the Golden King Crab (GKC) fishery in Prince William Sound. The GKC fishery has been closed since the 1994–1995 season, despite evidence of a small but healthy stock. ADFG has little ability to assess GKC populations as they live on cliffs in deep water, which makes targeting them difficult - even to experienced fishermen. Widespread evidence of GKC throughout western Prince William Sound was seen in the recent Tanner Crab commercial and test fisheries, as well as ADFG’s own pot survey in 2005-2007 and the recent 2020 test fishery.

The GKC fisheries in the state of Alaska that remain open are in Southeast Alaska and the Aleutian Islands. Management in those areas relies heavily on commercial fisherman's catch rates and knowledge of the stock to inform the GHL. A management strategy such as the one outlined for Southeast Alaska by Andrew Olson and Katie Palof in 2023, “Recommended Harvest Strategy for Southeast Alaska Golden King Crab”, is the only path forward for a fishery in Prince William Sound. This is because it uses commercial fishermens’ CPUE to develop GHLs and collect data on stock health. ADFG in Southeast also partners with commercial fishermen to take size and sex data on undersize GKC to assist management. This kind of collaborative management is possible in PWS, but it requires the ability to open the fishery to be changed in regulation.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fishermen United (CDFU)

(EF-F24-128)
