

Red king crab

PROPOSAL 241

5 AAC 34.128. Operation of other gear in Registration Area A.

Allow a vessel participating in a Registration Area A king crab fishery to operate groundfish coil spring pots to catch bait.

5 AAC 34.128(c)

(c) a person or vessel may operate coil spring groundfish pots, commonly known as slinky pots, for bait during an open King crab season in Registration Area A.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I would like a vessel fishing for Golden King or Red King crab in Southeast Alaska to be able to use coil spring groundfish pots, commonly known as slinky pots, for bait in accordance with 5 AAC 28.190 without having to reduce the number of pots used to fish for Golden King or Red King crab.

Currently a vessel fishing Golden King or Red King crab may use slinky pots for bait but must give up an equal number of King crab pots from his limit(80 for golden King crab and 20 for Red King crab)for every slinky pot the vessel uses.

If the vessel was so inclined, they could use longline skates of gear for bait without giving up any pots. Slinky pots are much less cumbersome to use and also have the benefit of less bycatch.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. Conversations with Department staff and fellow permit holders.

PROPOSED BY: Jared Bright

(EF-F24-149)

PROPOSAL 242

5 AAC 34.111 Section 11-A Red and Blue King Crab Management and Allocation Plan.

Allocate 100% of the Section 11-A red king crab guideline harvest level to the personal use fishery, 70% for summer harvest and 30% for fall/winter harvest.

We propose that the Board of Fish repeal and readopt 8 AAC 34.111 as follows:

5 AAC 34.111

(a) The Board of Fisheries (Board) finds that red and blue king crab in Section 11A of the Southeastern Alaska Area shall be allocated at 100% to personal use. The Board finds that commercial red/blue king crab harvest in Southeastern Alaska has led to severe reductions in red/blue king crab stocks since the 2005/06 season, such that personal use and commercial seasons for red/blue king crab have been closed or significantly restricted for multiple seasons following a commercial season. The Board finds that commercial red/blue king crab seasons in 2005/06 resulted in a 4-year commercial closure, in 2011/12 resulted in a 4-year commercial closure, and in 2017/2018 resulted in a 4-year commercial closure as of 2023/24. The Board finds that commercial red/blue king crab season in 2005/06 led to personal use red/blue king crab season closures in Section 11A for 2007/08 Winter, 2008/09 Summer/Winter, and 2009/10 Summer/Winter and that the commercial red/blue king crab season in 2011/12 led to personal use red/blue king crab season closures in Section 11A for the 2012/12 through 2016/17 seasons. The Board finds that 13 of the red/blue king crab commercial permit holders fished for 24 hours in Section 11A in 2017/18 and that the commercial harvest reduced crab stocks such that there has

been zero economic benefit from red/blue king crab harvest in Section 11A or anywhere else in Southeastern Alaska through the 2023/24 season. The Board finds that, particularly when measured over the years of closure following the last two openings, that the commercial red/blue king crab fishery in Section 11A is not economically significant and that due to the demand for personal use harvest in Section 11A, the section can no longer support both a personal use and commercial red/blue king crab fishery. The Board finds that significant portions of Section 11A have been completely closed to commercial red/blue king crab harvest (i.e. Auke Bay, Gastineau Channel, etc.) with little to no economic impact. The Board finds that many personal users residing in the vicinity of Section 11A do not have capabilities to safely fish for king crab outside of Section 11A (particularly in winter) and that commercial vessels and gear allow safer king crab fishing outside Section 11A in any season. The Board finds that nearly 100% of brown king crab in Southeastern Alaska are primarily harvest by commercial permit holders and that other species of king crab should be prioritized for personal users over commercial permit holders. The Board finds that protecting red/blue king crab stocks from commercial harvest in Section 11A will help to simplify management and ensure a more sustainable resource for personal users.

(b) When managing red/blue king crab in Section 11A, the Board authorizes the department to conduct the personal use fishery as follows:

1. July 1 through September 30 (Summer Season) - 70% of the red/blue king crab guideline harvest level
2. October 1 through March 31 - 30% of the red/blue king crab guideline harvest level

(c) The personal use red/blue king crab fishery should be conducted so that the established seasons last as long as possible within the allocation plan described in (b) of this section. To accomplish this, the commissioner may close, by emergency order, a personal use red/blue king crab season, an immediately reopen a personal use red/blue king crab season, during which any of the following restrictions, selected at the discretion of the commissioner, are in effect:

1. The daily bag and possession limit is between one and three male king crab per person
2. No more than one pot per personal use permit holder may be used to take king crab
3. No more than two pots per personal use permit holder may be used to take king crab
4. No more than three pots per vessel may be used to take king crab
5. A seasonal per household limit for king crab is established by the commissioner

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? We would like the Board of Fish to provide enhanced protection of red and blue king crab stocks in Section 11A of Southeastern Alaska by prohibiting commercial fishing in Section 11A. Section 11A is the area immediately surrounding the community of Juneau and is subject to limited personal use seasons of just a few days with extremely limited daily and seasonal bag limits. Based on data presented in the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in Fishery Management Report No. 21-08, "Management Report for Southeast Alaska and Yakutat Red and Blue King Crab Fisheries, 2017/18 - 2019/20" (copy attached), commercial red/blue king crab openings in Southeastern Alaska have historically (starting with the 1984/85 season) led to closures in the year(s) immediately following the commercial opening (see Table 1.1, p. 13). The impact of commercial red/blue king crab fisheries has become even more clear over the past two decades, as each commercial opening has been followed by multi-year closures after the 2005/06, 2011/12 and 2017/18 seasons. In fact, the commercial red/blue king crab fishery has not opened since the 2017/18 season and personal use red/blue king crabbing has also been closed or severely restricted in areas throughout Southeastern Alaska since that season.

Personal use limit reductions following commercial openings have been the most severe in Section 11A. Shortly after the 2005/06 commercial red/blue king crab season, personal use limits were reduced from 40 per household per year for the summer and winter seasons to 26 in 2006/07, 10 in 2007/08, 10 in 2008/09, and then to zero for two years until 2010/11 when the season was reopened with a 4 crab per year household limit (see Table 1.4, p. 16). Then the personal use annual limit for red/blue king crab was reduced to zero for four seasons following the 2011/12 commercial red/blue king crab opening. The annual household personal use limit for red/blue king crab has remained dismally low to the present date in Section 11A. This data illustrates the devastating impact of commercial red/blue king crabbing in Southeastern Alaska.

It is also noteworthy that the economic impact of the commercial red/blue king crab fishery has been significantly reduced since the 2011/12 commercial season. Only 7 commercial permits were fished in 2011/12 with a catch representing about 6% of the total harvest and just 13 permits were fished in 2017/18 with a catch representing about 19% of the total harvest. Nearly all of the harvestable brown king crab stocks in Southeastern Alaska are taken by commercial interests and it is unlikely that this will change due to limitations in sport gear/vessels to effectively participate in brown king crab fisheries.

With the increased personal use demand in Section 11A, the waning economic value of the red/blue king crab commercial fishery in Section 11A, and the need to provide improved protection for red/blue king crab stocks, it makes sense to restrict commercial king crabbing in section 11A and manage it solely for personal use.

This proposal does not aim to shut down commercial red/blue king crabbing in Southeastern Alaska. All of the remaining sections will be eligible for commercial blue/red king crab harvest in the event the crab populations meet the guideline harvest levels.

Another aspect of this proposal is to change the way the commissioner limits the number of pots that can be fished. Current regulation directs the commissioner to restrict the number of pots per vessel. It should be based on the permit holder. Restricting the number of pots based on the vessel forces unnecessary inefficiencies and reduced catch rates. It would be more cost efficient if a few friends who each have a household permit were allowed to coordinate their resources on a single vessel. Not only would this allow for savings associated with fuel, vessel wear and tear, etc., it would increase safety by reducing the inherent risks of having each household permit holder run their own boat out to check a single pot. If the pot gets flipped on its side, as many lightweight sport pots do, the trip is wasted. The personal use annual limit has been set at one or two crab per household; why not allow for the most cost-efficient harvest? This proposal aims to allow each personal use household permit holder to fish a pot while maintaining a reasonable 3-pot limit per vessel. ADF&G staff may say that having more pots would be difficult to police and that there are stories of personal users calling friends to come out with their permit when they get a good haul of king crab, but ADF&G staff have also said that Section 11A has some of the best numbers for new recruits of anywhere in Southeastern Alaska, so the management is working. If personal use was having a major impact on crab populations, Section 11A, which has the highest number of personal users anywhere in Southeastern would not be such a success story.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. This proposal is submitted via Territorial Sportsman Inc.

PROPOSED BY: Territorial Sportsmen Inc

(EF-F24-102)

PROPOSAL 243

5 AAC 34.113. Southeast Alaska Red King Crab Management Plan; 5 AAC 34.125. Lawful gear for Registration Area A; 5 AAC 34.126. King crab pot marking requirements for Registration Area A; and 5 AAC 77.664 Personal use king crab fishery.

Adopt a biologically based harvest strategy for the commercial red and blue king crab fishery along with a bag and possession limit maximum for the personal use fishery and adopt new management measures for the red and blue king crab fishery, as follows:

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 median 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 median biomass estimate of legal males, then the biomass of legal males available for harvest will not exceed $0.1 \times LMB \times (LMB/LMB_{MED})$, where "LMB" is equal to the current year preseason biomass estimate of legal males, and " LMB_{MED} " is equal to the median biomass estimate of legal males;

(2) equal to or greater than the LMB_{MED} , 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 individual catch limit (ICL) that is specified by the department. The department shall determine the annual amount of king crab ICL 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 ICL 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 lb, 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 inseason 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.

(2) “ICL” means individual catch limits.

(j) The provisions of this section do not apply after January 24, 2028.

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) **through January 24, 2028**, 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] lb;

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 **fishery, or the** [AND] Tanner crab [FISHERIES] **fishery**, the tags are issued to the vessel for the duration of the fishing season.

5 AAC 77.664 Personal use king crab fishery.

...

(b) Except as specified in (e) of this section, and through January 24, 2028, 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 **median** 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.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Currently, a commercial red and blue king crab fishery will not open in Southeast Alaska if the estimated biomass of legal male red king crab is below 200,000 lb. This threshold was developed so that the department could manage the fishery without exceeding the guideline harvest level (GHL). At lower abundance levels, prosecuting a fishery where registered permit holders could not exceed an individual catch limit (ICL) would allow the department to conduct a modest fishery with little risk while targeting a GHL less than 200,000 lb; the GHL would continue to be developed from the annual crab surveys conducted around Southeast Alaska, which have been done for more than 40 years. In tandem with the commercial elements, the personal use fishery would not have a 200,000 lb trigger. This proposal seeks to provide the department with a mechanism to adjust the bag limit based on preseason estimates of biomass that are the same as used in the commercial fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F24-149)
