

Razor Clam (3 proposals)

PROPOSAL 269

5 AAC 58.026. Shellfish harvest recording form required. and 5 AAC 77.507. Shellfish harvest recording form required.

Implement a permit for harvesting razor clams in Cook Inlet sport and personal use fisheries as follows:

5 AAC 58.026 is amended to read:

...

(a) Before harvesting shellfish with pots **or razor clams**, a person must obtain a sport fishing shellfish harvest recording form, described in 5 AAC 75.016 and provided by the department. Upon taking shellfish with pots, and before concealing the shellfish from plain view or removing the shellfish from the fishing site, the person must enter the harvest and catch information requested on the form. A person who fails to comply with the requirements of this subsection or 5 AAC 75.016, including any requirement to return harvest and catch information to the department, may be ineligible to obtain a shellfish harvest recording form during the following season in the fishery for which the form was required, unless the permit applicant demonstrates to the department that failure to report was due to unavoidable circumstances.

5 AAC 77.507 is amended to read:

...

5 AAC 77.507. Shellfish harvest recording form required. A person must obtain a personal use shellfish permit described in 5 AAC 77.015, from the department before harvesting shellfish with pots **or razor clams** in the Cook Inlet Area. Upon taking shellfish and before concealing the shellfish from plain view or removing the shellfish from the fishing site, the person must enter the catch information requested on the personal use permit. **A person who fails to comply with the requirements of this subsection or 5 AAC 77.015, including any requirement to return harvest and catch information to the department, may be ineligible to obtain a shellfish harvest recording form during the following season in the fishery for which the form was required, unless the permit applicant demonstrates to the department that failure to report was due to unavoidable circumstances.**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The sport and personal use Cook Inlet razor clam fisheries are concurrent and identical in regulation and managed in unison except that only Alaska residents can participate in the personal use fishery. Because of this, only sport harvest data is collected. Currently, harvest data for razor clam sport fisheries in Cook Inlet is available from the Statewide Harvest Survey (SWHS), but the number of responses for shellfish fisheries in the SWHS has been low, which results in imprecise harvest estimates. Implementing a razor clam harvest reporting form would be consistent with other sport shellfish fisheries such as Prince William Sound shrimp and Cook Inlet Tanner crab and would provide more accurate and timely harvest information. The east Cook Inlet razor clam fishery was closed from 2015 through 2022 and opened in 2023 to a limited fishery in the Ninilchik area, requiring intensive creel surveys to provide timely harvest estimates. A permit would also provide more robust harvest data for the

razor clam fisheries open in the remainder of Cook Inlet year-round, which are difficult to monitor given their remote locations in west Cook Inlet. Requiring a permit for harvesting razor clams in Cook Inlet is a precautionary management approach that is appropriate given the decline in Cook Inlet shellfish stocks.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F24-181)

PROPOSAL 270

5 AAC 58.040. East Cook Inlet Razor Clam Sport Fishery Management Plan. and 5 AAC 77.519. East Cook Inlet Razor Clam Personal Use Fishery Management Plan.

Modify the East Cook Inlet Razor Clam Sport and Personal Use Fishery Management Plan, as follows:

5 AAC 58.040(b)(2) is amended to read:

...

(2) if the estimated adult clam abundance is greater than or equal to 50 percent of the average 1989 – 2012 abundance but the population does not meet the criteria outlined in (1) of this subsection, then razor clams may be taken from **either July 1 through July 31 or August 1 through August 31** [MAY 1 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30] and the bag and possession limits are the first **15** [30] clams taken or possessed; the combined harvest rate of the sport and personal use fisheries is not expected to exceed 10 percent of the adult clam abundance.

5 AAC 77.519(b)(2) is amended to read:

...

(2) if the estimated adult clam abundance is greater than or equal to 50 percent of the average 1989 – 2012 abundance but the population does not meet the criteria outlined in (b)(1) of this subsection, then razor clams may be taken from **either July 1 through July 31 or August 1 through August 31** [MAY 1 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30] and the bag and possession limits are the first **15** [30] clams taken or possessed; the combined harvest rate of the sport and personal use fisheries is not expected to exceed 10 percent of the adult clam abundance.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The East Cook Inlet razor clam management plans were adopted by the Alaska Board of Fisheries at the March 2022 Miscellaneous Shellfish meeting. Razor clam abundance surveys in 2023 estimated adult clam abundances met the threshold to open the limited fisheries outlined in 5 AAC 58.020(b)(2) and 5 AAC 77.519(b)(2). This opening provided an opportunity to assess harvest and effort for the first time in nearly a decade. The department issued a preseason emergency order to ensure a conservative harvest as expected effort was unknown. Resulting harvest estimates from extensive creel surveys during the fishery indicate the current regulations would result in harvest of over 10 percent of the adult clam abundance. These proposed modifications provide a harvest opportunity that is better aligned with a harvest of less than 10 percent of adult razor clam abundance and gives the public and board the opportunity to decide a preference for season.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F24-182)

PROPOSAL 271

5 AAC 58.040. East Cook Inlet Razor Clam Sport Fishery Management Plan and 5 AAC 77.519. East Cook Inlet Razor Clam Personal Use Fishery Management Plan.

Reduce the East side razor clam bag limit, as follows:

When and if we can open a fishery, we need to be very conservative with bag limits.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Reduce the East Side Cook Inlet Sport and Personal Use Razor Clam Limited Fishery Bag Limit to 15 Clams.

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

PROPOSED BY: Thomas Hagberg (HQ-F24-117)
