

RC 45

**BERING SEA/ALEUTIAN ISLANDS  
CRAB OBSERVER OVERSIGHT TASK FORCE**

REPORT TO THE ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES - MARCH 2013

The Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Crab Observer Oversight Task Force (COOTF) was formed by the Alaska Board of Fisheries in 1999 and consists of crab industry members, including stakeholder representatives. The COOTF is intended to interact and be advisory to ADF&G, and to report to and be advisory to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

The current members of the COOTF are: Jeff Stephan (Co-Chair), Arni Thomson (Co-Chair), Jerry Bongen, Lance Farr, Mark Gleason, Linda Kozak, Edward Poulsen, Dick Powell, Anne Vanderhoeven and Doug Wells.

The purpose of the COOTF is to review and recommend specific action for all aspects of the BSAI crab observer program as found at 5ACC.39.645, including the following:

- Funding mechanisms for observers
- Budget and reserve priorities
- ADF&G suggested program receipt requests

This report is being provided to the Board as a result of a meeting held by the COOTF on February 18, 2013 (DRAFT Minutes of this meeting are attached). Following is a short summary of action taken by the COOTF at the February 18 meeting.

A report was received from ADF&G personnel regarding the status of increased Test Fish authority budget requests for FY14, as well as a review of the observer program's budget, including administrative expenses.

Two motions were made and accepted unanimously by the COOTF.

1. The Crab Observer Oversight Task Force recommends that crab observers for the Aleutian Islands golden king crab fishery be funded through the Alaska Department of Fish & Game Test Fish receipt authority granted by the Alaska Legislature, making this fishery consistent with other observed crab fisheries in the Bering Sea. The Aleutian Islands golden king crab Test Fishery would also fund research for Aleutian Islands golden king crab.
2. The Crab Observer Oversight Task Force recommends that in the future, catcher processors in the Bristol Bay red king crab, Bering Sea Tanner crab, and Bering Sea snow crab fisheries be funded by ADF&G Test Fishery funds at 33% of their total coverage requirements. This action is contingent upon receiving the FY14 increase in Test Fish authority for the Bering Sea crab observer program and crab research.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the COOTF,

Jeff Stephan, Co-Chair (907-350-2088; <jstephan@ptialaska.net>)  
Arni Thomson, Co Chair (907-929-0388; <accrabak@earthlink.net>)

Crab Observer Oversight Task Force (COOTF) meeting.  
Conducted via call-in teleconference  
Monday, February 18, 2013  
10:00 AM AKST

Meeting called to order at 10:00 AM by Jeff Stephan

Attendees:

Jeff Stephan, co-chair	COOTF
Arni Thomson, co-chair	COOTF
Jerry Bongen	COOTF
Lance Farr	COOTF
Mark Gleason	COOTF
Linda Kozak	COOTF
Edward Poulsen	COOTF
Anna Vanderhoeven	COOTF
Doug Wells	COOTF
Wayne Donaldson	ADF&G, Kodiak
Mary Schwenzfeier	ADF&G, Dutch Harbor
Melissa Salmon	ADF&G, Dutch Harbor
Angela Jones	ADF&G, Dutch Harbor

Absent: Dick Powell

A quorum of COOTF membership present.

Meeting notes taken by Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) participants in Dutch Harbor.

Jeff Stephan called for updates from ADF&G before addressing the two motions that are the purpose for the meeting.

Wayne Donaldson updated the group stating that ADF&G has included, in the Governor's FY14 budget, an increase in Test Fishery (TF) authority of \$300,000 for Westward Region Observer Program and Crab Research.

ADF&G consulted with Doug Mecum of NOAA a year ago regarding the use of Crab Ratz funds for training observers because the Observer Training Center in Anchorage is closed. NMFS has given ADF&G permission to use Crab Ratz funds for training crab observers.

Donaldson reiterated that ADF&G looks to COOTF for guidance in utilizing observer program TF deployment funds; how to spend for observer deployments and in what fisheries.

Jeff Stephan asked Linda Kozak to introduce her motion.

Kozak stated the Aleutian Islands golden king crab (AIGkc) fleet would like to fund their observer coverage through ADF&G TF authority similar to the test fish funding of observer coverage for Bristol Bay red king crab and Bering Sea snow crab. This would be separate from the current TF for Bristol Bay and Bering Sea crab.

Linda Kozak motioned: "The Crab Observer Oversight Task Force recommends that crab observers for the Aleutian Islands golden king crab fishery be funded through the Alaska Department of Fish and Game test fish receipt authority granted by the Alaska Legislature, making this fishery consistent with other observed crab fisheries in the Bering Sea."

Edward Poulsen seconded the motion.

Discussion:

Mary Schwenzfeier explained the spreadsheet (Attachment 1) ADF&G provided to COOTF members. Cost projections for the AIGkc TF include the program's administrative expenses that are used for AIGkc observer deployments currently funded by the Bristol Bay red king crab TF. Schwenzfeier outlined how ADF&G envisions the AIGkc TF.

1. No regulation changes needed; catcher vessels will continue to track their 50% required coverage; no random selection of vessels for observer coverage.
2. Dedicated AIGkc TF budget to allow for separate budget management and tracking of expenditures. Funds to be used only for AIGkc deployments and associated administrative costs.
3. Dedicated AIGkc cost recovery contract with processor; TF harvest to take place during the commercial fishery.
4. Dedicated observer provider contract separate from Bering Sea observer provider contract. AIGkc requires higher observer standard. ADF&G does not allow trainee observers to deploy in the AIGkc fishery because of nature of fishery for reasons including low participation, long trips, convoluted statistical areas, long line gear rather than single pot, etc.
5. Cost recovery harvest will be 100% observed by ADF&G personnel.
6. Cost recovery harvest will be conducted on one vessel per year and during consecutive days until harvest is complete.
7. Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ), Community Development Quota (CDQ), and Adak Community Allocation (ACA) may be harvested during the same trip as cost recovery harvest but only after cost recovery harvest goals have been met.
8. If IFQ/CDQ/ACA is harvested during the cost recovery trip, the ADF&G staff observer will collect IFQ/CDQ/ACA data that would count towards the vessel's observed harvest.
9. ADF&G recommends that the TF allocation be at least \$300,000 for the first year to adequately cover all costs of the AIGkc TF program.

Kozak said that this is also what the AIGkc fleet is thinking.

COOTF members discussed whether the proposed AIGkc TF authority should include funds for AIGkc research since AIGkc research is currently paid for using funds from Bristol Bay red king crab TF harvest. Donaldson stated he did not know the amount of funding needed for AIGkc research; however, Doug Pengilly would be consulted. The revenue for research funding would need to be added to the \$300,000 for observer deployments and program administrative costs.

A friendly amendment was added to Kozak's motion.

Kozak accepted the friendly amendment as: "The Aleutian Islands golden king crab test fishery should also fund research for Aleutian Islands golden king crab."

Motion with friendly amendment read by Mary Schwenzfeier.

"The Crab Observer Oversight Task Force recommends that crab observers for the Aleutian Islands golden king crab fishery be funded through the Alaska Department of Fish and Game test fish receipt authority granted by the Alaska Legislature, making this fishery consistent with other observed crab fisheries in the Bering Sea. The Aleutian Islands golden king crab Test Fishery would also fund research for Aleutian Islands golden king crab."

Roll call vote requested by Jeff Stephan and taken by Mary Schwenzfeier.

Arni Thomson	-	yes
Jeff Stephan	-	yes
Jerry Bongen	-	yes
Lance Farr	-	yes
Linda Kozak	-	yes
Dick Powell	-	(not present)
Anne Vanderhoeven	-	yes
Doug Wells	-	yes
Edward Poulsen	-	yes
Mark Gleason	-	yes

Motion passed: 9 yes, 1 absent.

Additional discussion:

Donaldson stated that until the new TF funds for AIGkc observer coverage and research are available, that TF funding will remain status quo; COOTF members agreed. He assured the group that if the new TF funds become available in time to implement the AIGkc TF for FY14, ADF&G would move forward with establishing the AIGkc TF.

Kozak will address the AIGkc TF request made to the legislature again at the annual June COOTF meeting.

Jeff Stephan invited Doug Wells to introduce his motion.

Doug Wells motioned: "The Crab Observer Oversight Task Force recommends that in the future, catcher processors in the Bristol Bay red king crab, Bering Sea Tanner crab, and Bering Sea

snow crab fisheries be funded by ADF&G Test Fishery fund at 33% of their total coverage requirements.”

Mark Gleason seconded the motion.

Discussion:

This action by the COOTF would not require a regulatory change. Current regulation addresses the level of observer coverage on catcher-processors, not the funding of observer coverage.

Approximately \$40,000 would be needed to cover these costs. Donaldson stated that if ADF&G's \$300,000 FY14 increase passes the legislature the catcher processor cost could be covered.

Based on the discussion, Doug Wells proposed substitute motion wording:

Action on the motion is contingent upon receiving the FY14 \$300,000 increase in TF authority for the Bering Sea crab observer program and crab research.

Arni Thomson seconded the motion.

Roll call vote on motion and substitute motion wording requested by Jeff Stephan and taken by Mary Schwenzfeier.

Arni Thomson	-	yes
Jeff Stephan	-	yes
Jerry Bongen	-	yes
Lance Farr	-	yes
Linda Kozak	-	yes
Dick Powell	-	(not present)
Anne Vanderhoeven	-	yes
Doug Wells	-	yes
Edward Poulsen	-	yes
Mark Gleason	-	yes

Motion passed: 9 yes, 1 absent.

Kozak suggested the COOTF provide a report on their activities to the Board of Fisheries (BOF) on an annual basis as stated in the original charge to the COOTF. She offered to craft a one page report for COOTF review. Membership agreed with this and will report to the BOF during the March meeting.

Kozak would like minutes from the previous COOTF meetings. She will meet with Donaldson and Doug Pengilly to discuss and to go over AIGkc research funding needs.

Anne Vanderhoeven motioned to adjourn meeting.

Mark Gleason seconded the motion.

All were in favor.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:30 AM.