

**Groundfish and Herring (7 proposals)**

**PROPOSAL 39** – Exempt vessels using jig gear from exclusive and superexclusive groundfish registration restrictions.

**5 AAC 28.005. Registration areas established.**

**PROPOSED BY:** Gregory Gabriel.

**WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO?** This would designate registration areas as nonexclusive for all Pacific cod state-waters jig seasons.

**WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?** Each state-waters Pacific cod season occurs within a registration area that is designated superexclusive, exclusive, or nonexclusive for Pacific cod (Table 39-1). Exclusivity restrictions are as follows:

1. A vessel registered for a superexclusive state-waters Pacific cod season may not be used to take Pacific cod in any other registration area in the same calendar year;
2. A vessel registered for an exclusive state-waters Pacific cod season may not be used to take Pacific cod in any other exclusive or superexclusive registration area in the same calendar year, although the vessel may be used to take Pacific cod in other nonexclusive Pacific cod seasons (e.g. parallel seasons) during the same calendar year; and
3. A vessel registered for a nonexclusive state-waters Pacific cod season may not be used to take Pacific cod in any other superexclusive registration area in the same calendar year, although the vessel may be used to take Pacific cod in other nonexclusive, and one exclusive, state-waters Pacific cod seasons during the same calendar year.

The Kodiak, South Alaska Peninsula, and Cook Inlet Pacific Cod Management Plans currently provide the department with authority to designate areas as nonexclusive registration areas for Pacific cod after a specified date (June 10 or October 30) if the guideline harvest level is not expected to be fully harvested before the regulatory closure on December 31 (Table 39-1). Notably, the *Chignik Area Pacific Cod Management Plan* does not provide this authority.

Eastern Gulf of Alaska (Southeast), Prince William Sound Area (PWS), Dutch Harbor Subdistrict, and the Aleutian Islands Subdistrict are currently designated as nonexclusive registration areas for vessels using jig gear during state-waters Pacific cod seasons.

**WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?**

A nonexclusive registration designation for all state-waters jig gear fisheries would provide operational flexibility for existing jig gear vessels and may increase jig effort overall. Vessels would have greater opportunity to transition across registration areas based on factors such as availability of jig gear guideline harvest level (GHL), time of year, or other fishing opportunities in the same area. The effect of this proposal on jig gear harvest rates of Pacific cod in specific registration areas is largely unknown. However, jig gear GHL allocations are not fully harvested during most years and any increase in jig gear harvest would increase the likelihood of achieving state-waters Pacific cod GHLs. Potential increases in jig gear effort or vessel movement across registration areas is not expected to adversely impact the department's ability to sustainably manage these fisheries, however, increases in targeted Pacific cod harvest could increase harvest of associated bycatch species.

**BACKGROUND:** State-waters Pacific cod jig gear fisheries are open access. However, current regulations may prevent vessels from participating in multiple fisheries in different areas during the same calendar year if registration areas are designated as exclusive or superexclusive for vessels using jig gear during state-waters Pacific cod seasons. Exclusive or superexclusive area designations were initially implemented for state-waters seasons to maintain opportunity for local fleets. Pacific cod guideline harvest levels (GHLs) during state-waters seasons are based on a percentage of the acceptable biological catch (ABC) from the adjacent federal regulatory area. Each registration area has specified allocations for jig gear (Table 39-1).

The majority of Pacific cod jig gear harvest occurs in spring and early summer. Pacific cod jig gear effort and harvest varies across registration areas and between years, although in general Pacific cod jig gear GHL allocations are not fully harvested in most years (Table 39-2).

Pacific cod management plans in Cook Inlet, South Alaska Peninsula, and Kodiak provide the department the authority to designate registration areas as nonexclusive for Pacific cod. If it appears unlikely that the jig gear GHL allocation will be fully harvested, the plans also provide the authority to make unharvested jig gear GHL available to vessels using other legal gear types, referred to as GHL rollover. The date that the GHL rollover can occur varies by area, although generally occurs in late summer or fall (Table 39-1). Current regulations that allow the department to relax exclusivity do not substantially increase jig gear harvest rates or increase the likelihood of jig gear GHLs being achieved. This is because these management actions can only be taken later in the year, after the majority of jig gear effort and harvest has occurred.

**DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:** The department is **NEUTRAL** on this allocative proposal. This proposal is allocative because registration areas would remain designated as exclusive or superexclusive for Pacific cod state-waters pot seasons, whereas Pacific cod state-waters jig seasons would become less restrictive and jig vessels would have additional opportunities in different registration areas that pot vessels would not.

**COST ANALYSIS:** Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional cost to the department.

Table 39-1.—State-waters Pacific cod jig gear fishery registration type, GHL allocation, GHL rollover date, and nonexclusive designation date, by area.

State-waters Pacific cod jig gear fishery	Area registration type	Jig gear GHL allocation	GHL rollover date	Nonexclusive designation date
Eastern Gulf of Alaska	Nonexclusive	none	none	NA
Prince William Sound	Nonexclusive	15% (pot and jig)	September 1	NA
Cook Inlet	Exclusive	15%	September 1	October 30
Kodiak	Exclusive	50%	After CGOA pot B	June 10
Chignik	Superexclusive	10%	August 15	none
South Alaska Peninsula	Exclusive	15%	After WGOA pot B	October 30
Dutch Harbor Subdistrict	Nonexclusive	100,000 lb	none	NA
Aleutian Islands District	Nonexclusive	none	none	NA

Table 39-2.—Average state-waters Pacific cod jig gear effort, guideline harvest level (GHL), and harvest, by exclusive or superexclusive registration area, 2015–2019 (through September 10, 2019), for areas that would be affected by Proposal 39.

Area	Vessel count	Number of landings	Jig GHL allocation (lb)	Harvest (lb)	Percent of jig GHL allocation harvested
Cook Inlet	4	13	423,115	25,846	4.3%
Kodiak	55	345	4,701,285	1,540,409	32.8%
Chignik	1	2	658,176	9,898	1.5%
South Alaska Peninsula	19	127	2,603,426	689,827	26.5%

*Note:* The full jig gear GHL allocation was not available for harvest in 2019 in South Alaska Peninsula due to pot gear overage.