

PROPOSAL 247

5 AAC 02.325. Subsistence Tanner crab fishery.

Adjust the opening date of the subsistence Tanner crab fishery east of Kachemak Bay in the Cook Inlet Area, as follows:

5 AAC 02.325 is amended to read:

(a) In that portion of the Cook Inlet Area outside the nonsubsistence area described in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3), in the subsistence taking of Tanner crab,

(1) male Tanner crab may be taken only from **September 1** [JULY 15] through March 15, [EXCEPT THAT

(A) IN KACHEMAK BAY, EAST OF A LINE FROM POINT POGIBSHI TO ANCHOR POINT, MALE TANNER CRAB MAY BE TAKEN ONLY FROM SEPTEMBER 1 THROUGH DECEMBER 31 AND FROM JANUARY 15 OR THE BEGINNING OF THE COMMERCIAL TANNER CRAB SEASON, WHICHEVER IS LATER, THROUGH MARCH 15; AND

(B) WHEN THE SUBSISTENCE TANNER CRAB FISHERY IS CLOSED IN THE KAMISHAK OR BARREN ISLANDS DISTRICTS, THE SUBSISTENCE TANNER CRAB FISHERY IS ALSO CLOSED IN THE EASTERN, OUTER, AND CENTRAL DISTRICTS AS SPECIFIED IN 5 AAC 35.410(C);]

(3) the daily bag and possession limit is five male Tanner crab[;] **and the seasonal limit is forty male Tanner crab;**

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of 5 AAC 02.307 and (a) of this section, if the provisions of 5 AAC 35.408(e[d]) apply, then male Tanner crab may be taken only from October 1 through the last day of February; bag and possession limit of three male Tanner crab; **seasonal bag limit of twenty male Tanner crab;** no more than one pot per person with a maximum of one pot per vessel may be used to take Tanner crab.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In 2017, the board changed the opening date for the subsistence Tanner crab fishery in the Cook Inlet Area to September 1 in Kachemak Bay, east of a line from Point Pogibshi to Anchor Point. However, the season opening date was not changed in the other areas in the Cook Inlet Area. This proposal would align the seasons for the entire management area and eliminate the closure period of January 1-15 in Kachemak Bay.

The Kamishak Bay trawl survey has not been conducted since 2012 due to budget constraints and extremely low abundance of legal Tanner crab so abundance estimates cannot be generated. Because noncommercial (sport and subsistence) fishing effort is so low in the remainder of the Cook Inlet Area outside of Kachemak Bay, managing the noncommercial fisheries in the entire Cook Inlet Area based on the Kachemak Bay survey would provide consistency between management approaches and simplify regulations. The reference to 5 AAC 35.408 in 5 AAC 02.325(b), Registration Area H Tanner crab harvest strategy, was amended to (e) due to proposed changes to that regulation for this same board cycle.

In 2017, the board adopted a department proposal to allow a noncommercial fishery with restricted season, gear, and bag limits in the absence of trawl survey data or when abundance estimates were below the thresholds required for the primary noncommercial fishery; those restrictions were in place

for the 2017-18 and 2018-19 seasons. The preliminary harvest from the 2017-18 noncommercial fishery was 8,645 Tanner crab, which is higher than the department had anticipated. Approximately 90% of the participants harvested less than 20 crabs for the season. The remaining 10% of the participants harvested 49% of the total crab harvested. To stabilize the Tanner crab harvest in these fisheries annual seasonal limit would effectively restrict the harvest while providing an equal harvest opportunity among users.

The department is submitting a corresponding proposal to align season dates and implement the same seasonal limits for the Tanner crab sport fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F19-164)
