

Cook Inlet Area Tanner Crab (10 proposals)

Subsistence Tanner Crab (3 proposals)

PROPOSAL 246

5 AAC 02.311. Customary and traditional subsistence uses of shellfish stocks and amounts reasonably necessary for subsistence.

Adopt amounts reasonably necessary for subsistence for crab in the Cook Inlet Area, outside the Anchorage-Matsu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area, as follows:

(a) The Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) finds that the shellfish stocks in that portion of the Cook Inlet Area outside the nonsubsistence area described in 5 AAC 99.015(a) (3) are customarily and traditionally taken or used for subsistence.

(b) The board finds that

(1) 850–1,275 gallons or 6,800–10,200 pounds (round weight) of hardshell clams are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in that portion of the Cook Inlet Area described in (a) of this section from the easternmost point of Jakolof Bay to Point Pogibshi;

(2) 350–525 gallons or 2,800–4,200 pounds (round weight) of hardshell clams are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in the remainder of that portion of the Cook Inlet Area described in (a) of this section that is not included in the area described in (1) of this subsection;

(3) 4,500–6,500 pounds of usable weight of shellfish, other than hardshell clams, crab, and shrimp, are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in that portion of the Cook Inlet Area described in (a) of this section.

(4) The board finds that XXXX crab are reasonably necessary for subsistence uses in the Cook Inlet Area.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? This proposal provides an opportunity for the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) and public to consider adopting an ANS for subsistence findings for crab stocks in the Cook Inlet Area [outside the Anchorage-Matsu-Kenai Nonsubsistence Area described at 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3)]. There are ANS amounts for the other shellfish stocks that the board has found there are customary and traditional subsistence uses, but not for the crab stocks.

The language above suggests individual numbers of crab, all species combined, but the public and the board could also consider separate ANS findings by crab species, as well as pounds edible weight, as has been done for the other resources with a positive customary and traditional use finding. Please see the Community Subsistence Information System for a source of harvest and use data.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F19-137)

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)

PROPOSAL 248

5 AAC 58.022. Waters; season; bag, possession, annual and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet- Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area.

Establish an annual limit for Tanner crab sport fisheries, as follows:

5 AAC 58.022 is amended to read:

(a)(11) Tanner crab may only be taken as follows:

(A) only from **September 1** [JULY 15]

March 15, except as specified under 5 AAC 35.410(c); bag and possession limit of five male crab; **annual limit of 40**; minimum size is four and one-half inches across the widest part of the shell, including spines; and shellfish harvest recording form is required as specified in 5 AAC 58.026;

(B) notwithstanding the provisions of (a)(11)(A) of this section, if the provisions of 5 AAC 35.408(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 crab; **annual limit of 20**; minimum size is four and one-half inches across the widest part of the shell, including spines; no more than one pot per person with a maximum of one pot per vessel; a shellfish harvest recording form is required as specified in 5 AAC 58.026

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In 2017, the board adopted a department proposal to allow a reduced season sport fishery in the absence of trawl survey data or when abundance estimates were below the threshold required for the regular sport fishery season. This new fishery was structured to have a shorter season, reduced gear and limits, and was assumed to result in a sustainable harvest level. The preliminary harvest from the 2017-2018 sport fishery was 8,263 Tanner crab, which is sustainable but higher than the department had anticipated. Approximately 90% of the participants harvested fewer 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 this fishery, an annual limit would effectively restrict the harvest to a modest level while providing an equal harvest opportunity among users.

Sport Tanner Crab (6 proposals)

PROPOSAL 249

5 AAC 58.022. Waters; season; bag, possession, annual and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet- Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area.

Align tanner crab sport fishery season dates for all areas, as follows:

5 AAC 58.022. is amended to read:

(a)(11) Tanner crab: may be taken as follows;

(A) only from **September 1** [JULY 15]

March 15, except as specified under 5 AAC 35.410(c); bag and possession limit of five male crab; minimum size is four and one-half inches across the widest part of the shell, including spines; a shellfish harvest recording form is required as specified in 5 AAC 58.026;

(b)(1)(B) [TANNER CRAB: IN KACHEMAK BAY, EAST OF A LINE FROM POINT POGIBSHI TO ANCHOR POINT, THE OPEN SEASON IS FROM SEPTEMBER 1- DECEMBER 31 AND FROM JANUARY 15 OR THE BEGINNING OF THE COMMERCIAL TANNER CRAB SEASON, WHICHEVER IS LATER, THROUGH MARCH 15]

(b)(2)(D) [TANNER CRAB: IN KACHEMAK BAY, EAST OF A LINE FROM POINT POGIBSHI TO ANCHOR POINT, THE OPEN SEASON IS FROM SEPTEMBER 1- DECEMBER 31 AND FROM JANUARY 15 OR THE BEGINNING OF THE COMMERCIAL TANNER CRAB SEASON, WHICHEVER IS LATER, THROUGH MARCH 15]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Currently, there are two different sport fishery seasons for Cook Inlet –Resurrection Bay Area Tanner crab. A reduced season sport fishery opens from October 1 through the end of February in all areas in the absence of trawl survey data or when Tanner crab abundance is below thresholds. The regular sport fishery season has differing opening dates between Kachemak Bay (September 1) and all other areas (July 15). The regular sport fishery is managed with the Registration Area H Tanner crab harvest strategy (5 AAC 35.408). This strategy uses abundance estimates from the Kachemak and Kamishak bays trawl surveys. The Kachemak Bay trawl survey is only used to manage the Kachemak Bay fisheries and the Kamishak Bay trawl surveys is used to manage all other areas. The Kamishak Bay survey has been discontinued since 2013. This proposal would align the season start date of the regular sport fishery for all areas similar to the reduced sport fishery.

PROPOSAL 250

5 AAC 58.026. Shellfish harvest recording form required.

Include an appeal process for failure to report for the Tanner crab sport fishery harvest recording form, as follows:

5 AAC 58.026 is amended to read:

(a) Before harvesting shellfish with pots, 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, in ink, the **harvest** and catch information requested in 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** [PARTICIPATE] during the following **season** [CALENDAR YEAR] 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? Prior to 2017, the noncommercial Tanner crab fisheries in Cook Inlet – Resurrection Bay included subsistence, personal use and sport fisheries. These noncommercial fisheries required a permit for participation and all fisheries were included in one permit. In 2017, the Board of Fisheries (board) eliminated the personal use Tanner crab fishery in Cook Inlet – Resurrection Bay because it was redundant to the sport fishery. As a result, a separate permit was needed for the sport fishery; it was only offered online with reporting only available online. 5 AAC 58.026 requires a shellfish harvest recording form prior to harvesting shellfish with pots in the Cook Inlet – Resurrection Bay Area. In addition, it specifies that a person who fails to comply with the requirements may be ineligible to participate in the next calendar year’s fishery. Online permits and reporting provide the department a more functional process to identify persons who have not reported their harvest and deny permits as provided in regulation for persons who do not report. Sport fishing regulation is needed to outline an appeal process for permittees that fail to comply with permit requirements, similar to statewide personal use and subsistence permit regulations.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F19-156)

PROPOSAL 251

5 AAC 58.035. Methods, means, and general provisions — Shellfish.

Require two escape mechanisms per pot in the tanner crab sport fishery in the Cook Inlet and North Gulf coast areas, as follows:

All pots used in the Cook Inlet and North Coast tanner crab sport fishery must have 2 not 1 openings at least 18” long on opposite sides of the pot. Laced with biodegradable untreated twine no larger than #30 thread.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Biodegradable escape mechanism in sport Tanner Crab pots for Cook Inlet and North Gulf Coast areas. There are many different configurations of pots being used. Some of the pots being used are not very heavy. In series of large tides with wind and big marking buoys or when a boat runs over the buoys and drags the pot and cuts buoy line. We end up with ghost pots. These light weight pots under these circumstances can lay over on the biodegradable opening possibly trapping crab indefinitely. The additional escape opening will benefit this fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Dan Anderson

(EF-F19-006)

PROPOSAL 252

5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet — Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area.

Establish a seasonal limit for Tanner crab in Kachemak Bay, as follows:

Establish a reasonable seasonal limit for tanner crab, in the neighborhood of 36-48.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Over exploitation of tanner crab in Kachemak Bay

PROPOSED BY: Dave Lyon

(EF-F19-127)

PROPOSAL 253

5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area; and 5 AAC 58.035. Methods, means, and general provisions – Shellfish.

Allow crab rings in the Cook Inlet Area Tanner crab sport fishery, as follows:

5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet - Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area

(a) Except as provided in (b) and (c) of this section, and unless otherwise specified in this chapter, the following are the seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits, and special provisions for finfish and shellfish in the Cook Inlet - Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area:

...

(11) Tanner crab: may be taken as follows:

(A) only from July 15 - March 15, except as specified under 5 AAC 35.410(c); bag and possession limit of five male crab; minimum size is four and one-half inches across the widest part of the shell, including spines; a shellfish harvest recording form is required as specified in 5 AAC 58.026;

(B) notwithstanding the provisions of (a)(11)(A) of this section, if the provisions of 5 AAC 35.408(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 crab; minimum size is four and one-half inches across the widest part of the shell, including spines; no more than one pot **or crab ring** per person with a maximum of one pot **or crab ring** per vessel; a shellfish harvest recording form is required as specified in 5 AAC 58.026;

5 AAC 58.035. Methods, means, and general provisions - Shellfish

(a) Unless otherwise specified in 5 AAC 58.022 or by an emergency order issued under AS 16.05.060, the provisions of this section apply to shellfish sport fishing in the Cook Inlet - Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area.

...

(d) Notwithstanding 5 AAC 75.035(3), no more than two pots **or crab rings or combination thereof** per person, regardless of type, with a maximum of two **pots or crab rings or combination thereof** per vessel, regardless of type, may be used to take shellfish at any time, except that in the waters between the longitude of Gore Point (150_ 57.85' W. long.) and the longitude of Cape Fairfield (148_ 50.25' W. long.), no more than two pots **or crab rings or combination thereof** per person with a maximum of six pots **or crab rings or combination thereof** per vessel may be used to take Tanner crab.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The new Cook Inlet Tanner Crab Sport fishery has regulations wording that inadvertently left out the use of crab rings as legal gear. The regulations establishing this fishery were written defining the limit of pots per person, and pots per vessel with no reference to the allowance of crab rings which are also typical legal gear in all sport, personal use, and subsistence crab fisheries around the state. This proposal addresses this 'technical' omission which has currently prevented the use of crab rings in this fishery.

The smaller sport fishing boats and even kayakers are not equipped with pot pullers for handling tanner size crab pots and therefore have been excluded from participating in this winter fishery. The statewide sport crab fishery regulations allow pots and crab rings, or a combination of both when a fishery allows more than one piece of gear for harvest. Correcting the wording to include the use of a crab ring(s) along with crab pots will standardize the regulations to conform with the traditional gear and allow more participants to engage in this limited winter fishery. Even kayakers are capable of deploying and retrieving a crab ring from their vessel.

PROPOSED BY: Gary Barnes (HQ-F19-008)

PROPOSAL 254

5 AAC 02.307. Lawful subsistence fishing gear for the taking of Tanner crab; and 5 AAC 02.325. Subsistence Tanner crab fishery.

Allow crab rings in the Cook Inlet Area Tanner crab subsistence fishery, as follows:

5 AAC 02.307. Lawful subsistence fishing gear for the taking of Tanner crab
In that portion of the Cook Inlet Area outside the nonsubsistence area described in 5 AAC 99.015(a)(3),

(1) Tanner crab may be taken only with pots, ring nets, dip nets, diving gear, hooked or hookless hand lines, and by hand;

(2)...

(3) no more than two pots **or crab rings or combination thereof** per person with a maximum of two pots **or crab rings or combination thereof** per vessel may be used to take Tanner crab, except that in the waters of the Outer and Eastern Districts between the longitude of Gore Point (150_ 57.85' W. long.) and the longitude of Cape Fairfield (148_ 50.25' W. long.), no more than two pots **or crab rings or combination thereof** per person with a maximum of six pots **or crab rings or combination thereof** per vessel may be used to take Tanner crab.

5 AAC 02.325. Subsistence Tanner crab fishery

...

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of 5 AAC 02.307 and (a) of this section, if the provisions of 5 AAC 35.408(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; no more than one pot or crab ring per person with a maximum of one pot or crab ring per vessel may be used to take Tanner crab.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The new Cook Inlet Tanner Crab subsistence fishery has regulations wording that inadvertently left out the use of crab rings as legal gear. The regulations establishing this fishery were written defining the limit of pots per person, and pots per vessel with no reference to the allowance of crab rings which are also typical legal gear in all sport, personal use, and subsistence crab fisheries around the state. This proposal addresses this ‘technical’ omission which has currently prevented the use of crab rings in this fishery. The smaller boats often are not equipped with pot pullers to handle tanner size crab pots and therefore have been excluded from participating in this winter fishery. The statewide subsistence crab fishery regulations allow pots or crab rings, or a combination of both when a fishery allows more than one piece of gear for harvest. Correcting the wording to include the use of a crab ring(s) along with crab pots will standardize the regulations to conform with the traditional gear and allow more participants in this limited winter fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Gary Barnes

(HQ-F19-009)

Commercial Tanner Crab (1 proposal)

PROPOSAL 255

5 AAC 35.408. Registration Area H Tanner crab harvest strategy; and 5 AAC 35.410. Fishing Seasons for Registration Area H.

Amend commercial and noncommercial thresholds, and management based on thresholds, for Cook Inlet Area Tanner crab fisheries, as follows:

5 AAC 35.408. is amended to read:

(a) The provisions of this section establish[ES THE] abundance thresholds for the Tanner crab fisheries in the Southern, Kamishak, and Barren Island Districts of Cook Inlet.

(b) In the Southern District, the minimum stock threshold for the commercial fishery is **1,000,000** [500,000] legal male Tanner crab. **If the commercial fishery has been closed for three or more consecutive years, then the estimated abundance of legal male Tanner crab from the Kachemak Bay trawl survey must be greater than or equal to 1,000,000 crab for two or more years before the commercial fishery may open.** The commercial Tanner crab fishery will open only under the following conditions:

(1) if the estimated abundance level of legal male Tanner crab is [AT LEAST 1,000,000] **2,000,000** crab **or greater**, the commercial fishery will open to harvest Tanner crab at a rate, in combination with the noncommercial fisheries, not to exceed 25 percent of the estimated abundance level of legal male Tanner crab;

(2) if the estimated abundance level of legal male Tanner crab is at least [500,000] **1,000,000**, but less than [1,000,000] **2,000,000** crab, the commercial Tanner crab fishery

will open to harvest Tanner crab at a rate, in combination with the noncommercial fisheries, not to exceed 15 percent of the estimated abundance level of legal male Tanner crab;

(3) the commercial fishery may not open if

(A) the estimated abundance level of legal male Tanner crab is below **1,000,000** [500,000] crab;

(B) attainment of the guideline harvest level would cause legal male Tanner crab abundance to fall below **1,000,000** [500,000] crab; or

(C) the estimated harvest capacity, calculated by the number of registered vessels multiplied by the legal pot limit, and the estimated catch rate exceeds the guideline harvest level during a commercial fishery of a minimum 12-hour duration;

(c) In the Kamishak and Barren Islands Districts, combined, the minimum stock threshold for the commercial fishery is **4,000,000**[700,000] legal male Tanner crab. **If the commercial fishery has been closed for three or more consecutive years, then the estimated abundance of legal male Tanner crab from the Kamishak Bay trawl survey must be greater than or equal to 1,000,000 crab for two or more years before the commercial fishery may reopen.** The commercial fishery

will open only under the following conditions:

(1) if the estimated abundance level of legal male Tanner crab is **8,000,000**[1,400,000] crab or greater, Tanner crab may be harvested at a rate, in combination with the noncommercial fisheries, not to exceed 25 percent of the estimated abundance level of legal male Tanner crab;

(2) if the abundance level of legal male Tanner crab is **at least 4,000,000** [less than 1,400,000], but **less than 8,000,000** [GREATER THAN 700,000] crab, Tanner crab may be harvested at a rate, in combination with the noncommercial fisheries, not to exceed 15 percent of the estimated abundance level of legal male Tanner crab;

(3) the commercial fishery may not open if

(A) the estimated abundance level of legal male Tanner crab is below **4,000,000**[700,000] crab;

(B) the attainment of the guideline harvest level would cause the abundance of legal male Tanner crab to fall below **4,000,000** [700,000] crab; or

(C) the estimated harvest capacity, calculated as the number of registered vessels multiplied by the legal pot limit and estimated catch rates, exceeds the guideline harvest level for a fishery of a minimum 24-hour duration.

(d) The noncommercial Tanner crab fisheries **in the Cook Inlet Area will be managed as provided in 5 AAC 58.022(11)(A) and 5 AAC 02.325(a)** [GUIDELINE HARVEST LEVEL MAY NOT EXCEED 10 PERCENT OF] when the **most** recent **consecutive** three-year average of legal male stock abundance **estimated from the Kachemak Bay trawl survey is greater than or equal to 200,000 crab and the annual estimate for the most recent year is at least 100,000 crab. The harvest rate is not expected to exceed approximately 10% of legal male Tanner crab abundance under these regulations.** [WHEN LEGAL MALE STOCK ABUNDANCE IS BELOW THE MINIMUM STOCK THRESHOLD FOR A COMMERCIAL FISHERY. THE NONCOMMERCIAL TANNER CRAB FISHERIES WILL BE MANAGED AS PROVIDED IN 5 AAC 58.022(11)(B) AND 5 AAC 02.325(B) IN THE ABSENCE OF A TRAWL SURVEY OR IF

(1) IN THAT PORTION OF THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT EAST OF A LINE FROM POINT POGIBSHI TO ANCHOR POINT, IF THE

(A) RECENT THREE-YEAR AVERAGE STOCK ABUNDANCE OF LEGAL MALE TANNER CRAB ESTIMATED FROM THE KACHEMAK BAY TRAWL SURVEY IS LESS THAN 100,000 TANNER CRAB; OR

(B) ESTIMATED STOCK ABUNDANCE LEVEL OF LEGAL MALE TANNER CRAB IS LESS THAN 50,000 TANNER CRAB IN ANY GIVEN YEAR;]

[(2) IN THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT WEST OF A LINE FROM POINT POGIBSHI TO ANCHOR POINT AND THE KAMISHAK AND BARREN ISLANDS DISTRICTS, IF THE

(A) RECENT THREE-YEAR AVERAGE STOCK ABUNDANCE OF LEGAL MALE TANNER CRAB ESTIMATED FROM THE KAMISHAK BAY TRAWL SURVEY IS LESS THAN 50,000 TANNER CRAB; OR

(B) ESTIMATED STOCK ABUNDANCE LEVEL OF LEGAL MALE TANNER CRAB FROM THE KAMISHAK BAY TRAWL SURVEY IS LESS THAN 40,000 IN ANY GIVEN YEAR.]

(e) The noncommercial Tanner crab fisheries in the Cook Inlet Area will be managed as provided in 5 AAC 58.022(11)(B) and 5 AAC 02.325(b) in the absence of a trawl survey or if the most recent consecutive three-year average of legal male stock abundance estimated from the Kachemak Bay trawl survey is less than 200,000 crab or the annual estimate for the most recent year is below 100,000 crab. The harvest rate is not expected to exceed approximately 10% of legal male Tanner crab abundance under these regulations.

5 AAC 35.410. is amended to read:

(c) Notwithstanding (b) of this section, the commercial harvest of Tanner crab in the Outer, Eastern, and Central Districts is closed until the Tanner crab stocks have recovered and a harvest strategy **for those districts** is developed by the department and adopted in a regulation by the Board of Fisheries. [WHEN THE NONCOMMERCIAL FISHERIES IN THE KAMISHAK OR BARREN ISLAND DISTRICTS ARE CLOSED TO THE TAKING OF TANNER CRAB, THE NONCOMMERCIAL FISHERIES IN THE EASTERN, OUTER, AND CENTRAL DISTRICTS SHALL ALSO REMAIN CLOSED.]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In 2017, the board reduced the legal size for Tanner crab in the Cook Inlet Area from 5.5 inches to 4.5 inches. The board also adopted regulations for reductions in season, gear, and bag limits for the noncommercial (sport and subsistence) fisheries in the absence of surveys or if noncommercial stock thresholds were not met. However, the abundance thresholds for commercial and noncommercial fisheries were not updated to reflect the new reduced legal size. These proposed thresholds were recalculated from historical abundances using the new legal size of Tanner crab. Currently in regulation there are different abundance thresholds associated with the different districts; the thresholds are estimates derived from the Kachemak Bay and Kamishak Bay trawl surveys.

In addition, for the noncommercial fisheries, the department proposes grouping all regulatory provisions together for the Cook Inlet Area, and not separating them by district; they would all be tied to the Kachemak Bay trawl survey results. There is low fishing effort outside of Kachemak Bay, and management of the entire Cook Inlet Area would not pose an unacceptable risk of overharvest to areas outside of Kachemak Bay. Regulatory provisions that tie Southern, Kamishak,

and Barren Islands districts to results of the Kamishak Bay trawl survey are not needed; this survey is no longer being conducted because of very low levels of legal crab encountered in 2012, and funding constraints.

The new proposed Kamishak Bay commercial thresholds are much higher than currently in regulation. These elevated thresholds were derived from department survey information that showed a high ratio of pre-recruit crab (legal with the new size) to recruit-sized crab; these high levels produced high thresholds.

Changes to the harvest strategy and associated regulations are needed to reflect the changes in management and assessment. These changes will provide consistency, clarify conditions for differential management, and simplify regulations, thereby reducing confusion for the public and aiding enforcement.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F19-165)
