

ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES**FINDINGS REGARDING TANNER CRAB POT LIMIT
IN SOUTHEASTERN ALASKA AREA (AREA A)
(PROPOSAL #45)**

The Alaska Board of Fisheries (board) discussed Region 1 Shellfish Proposal #45 submitted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (department) to reduce the maximum number of pots by each Tanner crab fishing vessel in Statistical Area A from 100 pots to 50 pots. This discussion took place on October 28, 1995 during proposal deliberations, after all staff reports, public comments, and advisory committee comments had been received. All board members, with the exception of Trefon Angasan, were present. The board amended the proposal to set the maximum number of pots at 80, and passed the amended proposal by a vote of 6-0, with one absent. This action was intended to balance the immediate resource conservation concerns with needs of the industry. The board developed the following findings during their discussions:

1. The department does not have a pre-season stock assessment program to determine stock strength in the Southeastern Alaska Area (Statistical Area A) commercial Tanner crab fishery. The intensity of the commercial fishery has increased significantly during recent fishing seasons and the guideline harvest level has consistently been exceeded during the past three seasons. The catch contribution of the recruit class has increased to between 66 and 77 percent of the catch. The department estimated a season length of 11 days during the impending season. The department can not gather fishery data through fish tickets or logbooks to provide management decisions in season which would result in stock savings.
2. While a reduction in the pot limit to 50 pots would result in an estimated season length of 21 days and provide the department with the ability to manage in-season, this reduction in pot limit would also place a severe economic constrain on the participants.
3. The board discussed other possible solutions to reduce the risk of overharvest that included: a reduction in the GHR; a reduction in fishing time; a split season with the ability to gather necessary fishery data between two separate openings; and means to improve the data gathering process which could include the use of cellular phones and FAX machines.
4. The amendment to 80 pots per vessel was made with the understanding that the department and industry would form a cooperative group to improve the flow of immediate information from the fleet to the department. This group will be composed of department personnel, processor personnel, fishermen, tender operators, and representatives of fishermen organizations (i.e. from the Petersburg Vessel Owner's Association).

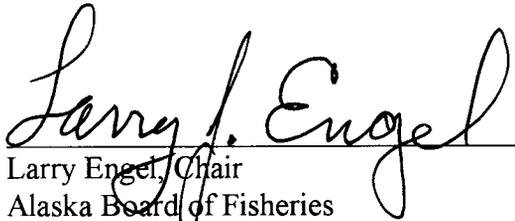
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5. The desired objective is for the department to receive, on a daily basis, catch and effort information from the industry through the use of new communication technology. Industry indicated through the public hearing process that they were willing to purchase cellular telephones and faxes, and provide information to the department on a daily basis.
6. If the plan developed by the cooperative group does not solve the situation, the board has instructed the department to take actions necessary to provide for harvests within the allowable levels. These actions could include a reduction to a 50 pot per vessel limit.
7. If the plan developed by the cooperative group succeeds, the pot limit could be increased to the original 100 pots by future actions of the board.

At Sitka, Alaska

Date: January 29, 1997

Approved: 4/0/0/3 (Yes/No/Absent/Abstain)


Larry Engel, Chair
Alaska Board of Fisheries