

Public comment on Norton Sound superexclusive registration area for crab.  
NPFMC - September 22, 1993

Robert Knight, Nome Eskimo Community. We were at the amendment advisory group meeting yesterday morning and at the Advisory Panel today and feel that the matter as it has come forward to the Council has been thoroughly discussed, debated, and we think we can live with it and it will provide a successful solution. We're very much in support of it.

[no Council questions]

John Handeland, Mayor, City of Nome. Mr. Chairman and members of the Council, I appreciate this opportunity on behalf of the City of Nome to address you today. In your agenda packet is a communication, statement that we made dated September 9th, and as long as that's in your record I won't read it to you again., I would like to elaborate just a little bit on the City's position on the Norton Sound crab fishery. Although this fishery has been in existence for a number of years, this is the first year that the region has seen a notable economic or social benefit from the summer harvesting activities. In past years we've seen short-lived, two- or three-day fisheries which were more of a social nightmare than anything else. This year, rather than having to call in additional law enforcement to deal with drunken crabbers, we were able to physically participate in and enjoy the actual product. The economy of the region was stimulated by the increased activity and local fishermen actually received an increased revenue because they were able to sell live crab at a premium over the prices traditionally received for processed crab. An estimated 3% or 4% of the total quota was sold right in our community. We support the superexclusive status and pot limits as a long-term fishery plan for the Norton Sound crab fishery. We believe that it is necessary for the sound management of that fishery. People of our region are vitally concerned and protective of our resources. We have heard of the decline of fish in some areas of the state, including in our own Bering Strait region. We believe in the use of the resource but not its misuse and we want to ensure the continued viability of the resource for generations to come. Although the superexclusive status was overturned this year, I suggest to you that we basically had that superexclusive fishery anyway and that the process worked well, both from a biological standpoint and from an economic standpoint. Because the larger processors were not able to get in in time, I guess, the fishery lasted for a two-month period which gave biologists the opportunity to collect better data; local fishermen were able to utilize their boats to a greater degree, boats which had been sitting idle because of other disastrous fisheries such as the herring fishery last season. I certainly don't understand all the intricacies of the crab management, but support the management of this fishery by the State of Alaska. Alaska has a history of managing these resources and I reiterate to you that while the economic factors certainly motivate our activities we do want to make sure that that resource is protected. It is, I believe, more sensible and responsible to have local state managers than to have to go through another level of bureaucracy, plenty of that exists already. Local communities and private enterprises stand ready to commit resources toward the enhancement of this fishery; however as stated in our letter, before considering any investment in a long-term fishery infrastructure our community and others need to receive the assurance that this fishery will continue to provide economic benefits to the community through local participation in that fishery. Fishermen need to upgrade gear, financial institutions need some financial assurance of payback. The superexclusive fishery would provide some degree of security and a comfort level to lenders. It has been suggested that the fishery proceed as it has in the past while it's studied some more. Study is important and should continue, but to delay action on considering the superexclusive designation will only harm this now local fishery which is in its infancy. We urge you to study and proceed, but not to study and delay. We urge your approval of

the exclusive fishery for the Bering Sea crab fishery. Thank you.

**Questions:**

**Krygier:** The small boat harbor, I understand that the City is considering doing some expansion if you believe the fishery will continue. What size vessels are normally in there and what size vessels would probably still be restricted after you did some internal construction?

**Handeland:** As it presently stands, we do have a causeway out from the community and then an inner harbor, as it is referred to. As that is now, it's simply a turning basin which is not dredged to any great depth. We would envision that we would dredge that harbor out to some level that was able then to accommodate ships, boats that I would say are 30 to 50 ft. I don't think we're looking at 150 ft boats getting in there.

**Krygier:** The local area, you have a fair number of crab utilized in the restaurants and did I understand that they also shipped to other parts of the state for fresh. . .is that correct?

**Handeland:** That is correct. There were actually entrepreneurs in the community that had made arrangements to ship the live product into Anchorage. It also was shipped as far as New York City and arrived live.

**Alverson:** Sir, what time of the year is the fishery conducted, is it in July?

**Handeland:** This was conducted in July and August of this year, approximately a 60-day period.

**Alverson:** Did it start July 15, or do you remember?

**Handeland:** It was towards the beginning of July; I don't remember if it was July 1st. . .

**Alverson:** Is that sort of the traditional time frame that the Board sets for that area?

**Handeland:** Well, as I said, in the past my only experience really with the crab fishery was that it was a nightmare in the community because we had several folks coming in for a couple days to raise hell and I don't remember exactly the days it was that they were in town, but we'd just as soon forget those.

**Behnken:** Earlier, I think it was an ADF&G or NMFS biologist who works in Norton Sound with crab management, indicated that there was a local boat, part of the CDQ program, I think, that participated in that. His comment more was on training people than actually harvesting crab. Are you familiar with that training program?

**Handeland:** There was a boat that did come up from the Y-K Delta area program; I think it was called the Buddha Head, or something out of Emmonnek, and yes, they did work with training local fishermen.

**Behnken:** Was it your impression that was a fairly successful operation?

**Handeland:** Yes, I believe that it was.

**Thomas Johnson, Nome.** Mr. Chairman, members of the Board, I've fished for let's say 49 years now

and I think next year I'll go home with the boat to fish crab. Fishing used to be where we used to see these large boats come into the Nome area and I think one time we had 26 large boats and they carried as many as 200 pots and it looked like they were going to do some good, but as the records show, they didn't do too good because they burned a lot of fuel coming up, they put the pots out, and they got very few crabs. And they didn't hire any local guys to go on the crab boats; the only thing they bought was fuel and food for those people that were on the boats. Now, with the small boats I was asked to go ahead and work for Yukon-Delta, which consists of four villages. They had four boats they brought up themselves; they were in the range of 62 ft, was the largest boat they had. They had 40 pots for each boat. Now each boat carried so many trainees on board; they paid them, let's say \$80 a day for the trainees; they would come into town every so often and buy food and fuel but they wouldn't be able to come into our inner harbor. They had four boats, they had the ?, the Trident, the Buddha Head, and one other boat we had to send back to Seattle because we had so much problems with it. Now there were 7 other boats that came in; they were Bristol Bay boats. They were only 32 ft long, which I am accustomed to use and I think that they did very well with the 40-pot limit. What they would do is, they would go ahead and set the pots out one day, wait 36 hours, go back out and look at their pots and harvest the crab and they would take them to the processor which was .?. In that month and a half the man that was running it, he said, "Tom, you'd better take over, I have to get back to someplace and do some work," so he let me stay there for about almost 3 weeks, no boss around, but as those people knew what they were doing, you didn't have to tell them anything because their crew. . .I'd go ahead and ask them, "how's your crew," and they said, "oh, they're a fine bunch of boys." We're teaching these boys something they'll never forget and I think that this superexclusive is one of those things that maybe some people like and some people don't, but I think I like it for the simple reason is, it gives the boys, with the 40-pot limit, the chance to get into a trade of their own because under the whole area up there, there's no fishermen; there's no salmon up there anymore. We might as well go ahead and go after the crab and the halibut. We sent the boat out there for halibut over to St. Lawrence; it took 12 hours to get over there. They set the hooks out for 12 hours; they came up with 10,000 lbs of halibut. They had to have authorization from the . . . the book read that you had to have your hold inspected by a person in Dutch Harbor, so we went to Fish and Game and said, what about this, and he says, no problem, we'll inspect it and you can go. [red light on. . .Chairman asked him to wrap up] O.K., well, I'll go ahead and say thanks for coming up, the red light is on; I'd better get out of here.

[no Council questions]

Charles Fagerstrom, Nome. Good afternoon. My name is Charles Fagerstrom and I'm a longtime resident of Nome and been in business there since 1967. Rather than go through my talk I'll just say that I support our Mayor and Mr. Johnson and Mr. Knight on their comments and also I support the recommendations of the Advisory Panel and that concludes my remarks.

[no Council questions]

Mike Rink, Bering Straits Economic Council which is the ARDOR(?) for the Norton Sound Region. In preparation for attendance at this meeting I talked to people throughout our region to gather their views about the crab fishery and my statement to you is a summation of their views. My comments are in support of a superexclusive designation for the Norton Sound red king crab fishery. The purpose of the designation superexclusive is an attempt to control the fishery by excluding certain and specific types of fishing activities. It can also be an attempt to promote and encourage the development of a particular fishery so that it serves a specific need that is not, or cannot be, served through normal or existing fishery rules or regulations. In the case of Norton Sound, the exclusive designation working in conjunction with the pot limit excludes large commercial fishing boats that

have the potential of taking the local quota of red king crab in the matter of just a few days. It opens up enormous potential for economic opportunity to regional people who have been denied entry into this fishery because of their inability to compete with large commercial vessels costing millions of dollars. They are people who desperately want to enter the fishery so that they may develop the skills and means of earning a living for themselves and for their families, and it's that simple and it's that basic. We can spend untold hours attending these meetings and offering testimony but we'll always get back to this same essential point. People want to earn a living, they want to make their own living. Superexclusive allows them entry into a fishery that can do just that--allow them the means to make a living. Other people here in this room have testimony involving great depth and detail; there's no shortage of information or an unwillingness to share the information. But when it's over we'll turn to this same position: we ask you to give us superexclusive so that we can enter the fishery that exists in our own front yard and earn a living for ourselves and our families. Thank you.

[no Council questions]

Arni Thomson testified on crab proposals they submitted and state/federal management problems and the efforts to improve. He did not testify specifically on the Norton Sound proposal, but was asked by Bob Alverson:

Alverson: Arni, you didn't make any comment on the Norton Sound issue that we'll likely vote on whether to send it out for public comment or not as an FMP. . .do you have any comments on that?

Thomson: Well, ACC submitted five proposals and some of those are directly related to conservation and management and our recommendation would be to prioritize our concerns, which are to develop a formal review process of guideline harvest levels, management strategies, within the SSC and AP here at the Council. How that takes place in terms of timing, that's a bit of a problem, I understand. We also have a recommendation in there for removing the allocative issues over into Category 1. In response to your question, I guess, our priorities are our priorities and . . .

Alverson: Well, sending this out as a plan amendment I guess that would be tantamount to treating it as a Category 1 item and I thought you might have something more along the lines that. . .I know ACC wants limited entry in some fashion out in the Bering Sea, do you see the Norton Sound issue on your issue on limited access in general, as a group thing that should be negotiated at some time in June, or seeing this thing get piece-mealed, do you have any comment on that?

Thomson: Well, I understand your question better now, and yes, as a matter of policy issues like the Norton Sound community fishery are something that we feel should be being addressed within the context of limited access. Limited access is a Category 1 item and if you take a package of traditional tools like superexclusives, trip limits, vessel size restrictions and serious gear limitations, further restrictive pot limits, that becomes an alternative under limited access. With the superexclusive designation in Norton Sound, essentially that's one fishery that our vessels are no longer participating in so it's going to disrupt catch histories in the comprehensive rationalization plan if there's any further superexclusives done, approved. I don't know if that answers your question.

Roy Ashenfelter, Northern Norton Sound Advisory Committee. I have two statements to make. There's quite a bit of representatives already from the Norton Sound region that have already mentioned [what he had to say], so I'll just leave it to two statements. As an advisory committee member I meet with Charlie Lee, the biologist for the Alaska Dept of Fish and Game. It was a month after the fishery, crab fishery, started, he was very excited about the way the crab fishery was

going. It allowed him to do research, to move the boats in and out, it provided data collection, . . . crab caught to ensure quality crab catch which provided for excellent analysis to ensure quality management decisions for the crab fishery in the Norton Sound region. My last statement is that we support the superexclusive crab fishery; this provides for a maximum use by allowing all vessels to participate in the fishery, and allows for control of quality and quantity of catch of crab and provided for consumption for the Norton Sound region, for the State of Alaska, and for the Lower 48. Thank you very much.

[no Council questions]

Jeff Stephan, United Fishermen's Marketing Assn, testified on various crab issues. . . nothing on Norton Sound.

John Jemewouk, Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation. On September 24, 1992 Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation submitted a petition to the State of Alaska Board of Fisheries to place on the Board agenda a request. . .to include the registration areas for superexclusive areas of Norton Sound. We were requesting the Board of Fish to consider that. . .[muffled, couldn't understand]. . .we went ahead and argued for a superexclusive registration for the Norton Sound red king crab fishery and we were successful and argued the merits of our request and convinced them on the different points that we felt that this area needed to be designated as superexclusive area. Some of the arguments we used were that this would provide an opportunity for the local herring fishermen to expand the use of their boats to include the fishing for crabs because the nature of the herring fishery is that it's over in just a matter of hours and we have this equipment sitting around; we wanted to use it in some of the areas and this was the most natural that we felt the fishermen could take advantage of. These are mostly small herring boats, they're small skiffs up to 32 ft which, when you look at Norton Sound, are just about ideal to use as boats to fish in that area. This would mean a real economic opportunity for the local fishermen; we wanted them to realize an economic gain that had been in the past going out; we felt that by using the smaller boats then they would be able to participate in the fishery and then go ashore and provide some other economic opportunities for other people that are living within those communities and I think that you've heard some testimony that Nome saw a really dramatic increase in economic opportunity and I think that they really appreciate the fact that the Board of Fisheries in their insight saw that and decided to change that designation to a superexclusive area. The opportunity that was created by the superexclusive status not only impacted them but it also impacted some other fishermen. Also, we had fishermen that fished in other areas had to make a choice of either fishing in one area or participating in the other fisheries. In the past we've always had big, large crab fleets coming up and taking the catch in a matter of days, one, two days, and sometimes it really affected the bottom line or economics of participating in that fishery. If you remember, two years ago during the fishery they only caught about 75,000 lbs of crab and that doesn't make any economic sense so we're creating an opportunity for them to make a choice. . .tape didn't overlap. . . .I think this came out true during this summer's crab fishery where the fishermen of that area managed to harvest up to the actual harvest guideline so it didn't go over; slowed it down so I think this was a real benefit for the managers and we supported them in their request for money to manage it in such a way that they would fully utilize the fishery. And I think those are some of the main points and I'd be glad to answer any questions.

[no Council questions]

end of public comment

Council Discussion/Action

[Clarence outlines what Council needs to do under agenda item]

Discussion/Action on Norton Sound issue only:

Samuelson: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to make a motion to create a superexclusive registration district in Norton Sound and send that proposal out for public review as a plan amendment and come back to us at the earliest possible date. [motion was seconded]

Speaking to the motion, it seems there was some confusion between the State Board of Fish and what they could do on superexclusive. Procedurally, this lays out the right procedure to take. We have a 15-0 with two abstention recommendation from the AP, and I feel that we'll be getting this back in December and so I'll bring that forth to the Council.

Lindeman: Mr. Chairman, I would just recommend that the Council also consider other alternatives than just establishing a superexclusive area. If you're going to request staff to do an analysis to consider in December you'll need alternatives other than . . .

Samuelson: Included in my motion.

Pennoyer: It seems to me this proposal puts the issue squarely where the judgement you got out of Commerce on the Board action left it, and that is it should be an FMP amendment if you're going to do it. Absent the analysis and review of it it's very difficult at this stage to decide which way you're going to go on it, but I'm going to support this motion just to get the air cleared on how to do this and I think basically by taking it up it's a tacit agreement that the Council will discuss superexclusive registration areas. It was a proposal of the Board, it has been a proposal of the public and supported by the AP and, obviously assuming some other staff is going to do most of the analysis work, I think I can support taking a look at it.

Mace: Well, this might be a good idea, but later in the week we're going to discuss the PAAG committee recommendation which we're assigning a hell of a lot of staff work developing PMPs and regulatory amendments and it might be well to view this in the context of a sort of a priority type thing because we're in the habit of going along and piece-mealing these charges of duties to do and I think we ought to at this meeting view them all at the same time and this may be the highest priority, I don't know, but I'd prefer waiting until we. . .

Alverson: Don't we have a tasking day when we look at everything we've recommended to the staff?  
[Yes, we do]

Pereyra: I can't support this motion and there's a number of reasons why I can't support it. First of all, as I think was brought out in some of the discussion on testimony is that it's going to encourage additional capitalization in the crab fishery and, my gosh, if there's one fishery which is highly overcapitalized, it's the crab fishery. We probably have an opie season which lasts a couple weeks this year so I think that this runs contrary to the whole approach we're trying to take in rationalizing the fisheries. Secondly, I think it negatively impacts a segment of our fleet that depends on multiple fisheries, has been involved in multiple fisheries. It is, in fact, that segment of the fleet which developed the fishery in this area and now we're going to be setting up some regulations which are highly discriminatory towards them and I don't feel that that is appropriate either. I think it also

will negatively impact traditional processors, in Dutch Harbor for example, that have processed crab taken from this area. They're essentially not going to have the opportunity to do that and I daresay that as we find our fisheries shrinking down, crab fisheries, taking more product away from them is, I don't think, is the right way to go. This in my mind is a limited entry proposal and I think it's putting the cart before the horse again and I think that we need to complete our discussions on our rationalization, again complete that, before we go ahead and decided whether we're going to use such a traditional limited-entry proposal as part of comprehensive rationalization of the crab fisheries. So I would much prefer to see us put this aside and to consider it within the context of the comprehensive rationalization program.

Krygier: I'm going to vote in favor of this proposal. I would suggest that a couple of the other options be incorporated into this proposal. One would be, obviously the status quo needs to be an option; another option would be exclusive area registration; and we have superexclusive, and you could do the superexclusive in Category 1 and in Category 2. The initialization of this proposal into Category 1 would take care of the only major concern I've heard from industry to date and that is the precedence setting. By formally put this into Category 1 you formally clear up the issue of whether or not the State does have the ability to utilize this issue and regardless of what was said earlier, the State was clearly convinced and we believe that an impartial judge would have agreed with us, that we did have that opportunity to use superexclusive. We are rather, in fact, approaching this avenue as a less divisive manner in which to look at this and gives a full opportunity to have comment from the public and to look at this within itself if in fact it is limited and takes away the precedential nature of this issue and the crab fleet has the assurance that will not proliferate beyond that one area.

Alverson: I would move a substitute motion that the superexclusive registration area for Norton Sound be added as an option to the crab limited entry options in the CRP analysis. [motion seconded]

In listening to the testimony of the residents of Norton Sound I have an empathy for their situation but also I have. . .I've seen the Council operate where we tend to spend a tremendous amount of energy trying to come up with regulations to treat our fellow citizens differently based on residence and it seems that there may be appropriateness in this, and I probably support exclusive registration if I could also get the Council to support a meaningful limited entry program for the rest of the crab fleet. I think you have an escrow situation here of the Bering Sea crab fleet having this massive open entry fishery and this one community grabbing a plum off of it and I don't begrudge them for asking for it, I might even support it if it was in the context of a broader negotiated limited entry package and so that's where I'm headed, and hopefully if we made a decision in June, I don't know how fast they things could get through, but it would surely be available for the '95 season; I don't know about the '94 season for the Norton Sound residents.

Lauber: O.K., call the roll on the substitute motion of Mr. Alverson's.

Millikan: Would you read the motion?

Pautzke: The substitute motion is to incorporate the superexclusive area for Norton Sound as an option in the crab limited entry options included in the comprehensive rationalization plan.

Samuelson: I'll be voting against the motion. Number one, superexclusive is not intended for Norton Sound folks alone. Superexclusive is to deal with the fleet, efficiency of the fleet moving into area. On the creation of the superexclusive in the Norton Sound it did not preempt anyone from Seattle, anyone from Southeast Alaska, anyone from the Alaska Peninsula from competing in that fishery.

So it wasn't preclusion for any one group of people and we saw some stats up on the wall the other day that showed what the fishery had gotten down to, a two-day fishery with 2800 pots involved. Now, this year we've got a 40-pot with 60 days in it. And we heard testimony that people came up from Bristol Bay; I know people from Sand Point that went up there and fished.

Mace: I need a ruling from the parliamentarian without prejudice to the motion. When can I call for tabling to a time certain to consider with agenda item D-6 [staff tasking]?

Lauber: You can do it at any time, you have the floor.

Mace: I move to table this item and take it up with agenda item D-6 under staff tasking and the PAAG recommendations. [motion seconded]

Lauber: All right, call the roll. The motion is to table to a time certain. . .

[discussion over whether motion is debatable]

Alverson: What would be on the time certain, the substitute motion or the whole item?

Lauber: . . .the whole item, you'd just lift it up and move it over to staff tasking.

Alverson: So, we'd open up this item and it'd be the substitute motion on the floor?

Lauber: That's right. Call the roll.

[motion failed, 7 to 4]

Lauber: O.K. We have the substitute motion by Mr. Alverson; call the roll.

[motion failed, 7 to 4]

Lauber: We have before us the original Samuelson motion, creation of a superexclusive Norton Sound area and other options.

Pennoyer: Before we proceed with that motion I'd like to find out clearly what we consider the alternatives to be analyzed and it strikes me that one alternative to deal with this is the question of putting it under a limited access program at some time in the future, and I'm not precluding, Bob, what your motion implied, I just want to set this issue we ruled on somewhat to rest by getting an analysis. And if that can be done by December, which we'll get to when we do staff tasking, it seems to me we've got status quo; superexclusive registration; exclusive registration area which could be done by the State; and status quo, by the way, includes the pot limit at the present time and the season; and then the potential for dealing with it under a limited access program in a year or two years or whenever it'll take place. So, it seems to me that's the range of alternatives and if somebody wants to change those, it seems to me it should be part of the motion so we know what we're dealing with.

Mace: Before I vote on it I've got to leave this dream world and find out who's going to do the work. At our PAAG meeting the other day we were informed that there wasn't one minute of economist time available. If we're going to continue on track with respect to our rationalization program and the other items that we have on the plate and so this business of saying let's do it



without really spelling out the resources really bothers me and that's why I proposed the tabling motion.

Pereyra: Following on Mr. Pennoyer's discussion, I think also, and I will offer this as a friendly amendment, that we should include as one of the alternatives ITQs because that is an alternative which can in fact address the problems which were raised by the proponents of this, so I would ask that ITQs also be included as one of the alternatives.

Lauber: Is that considered a friendly amendment by the author?

Samuelson: At this time I'm not going to entertain a friendly amendment.

Pereyra: If it's not going to. . .my feeling is that one of the requirements that we have under, I don't know whether it's the Executive Order 12291, or whatever it is, or under one of the regulations that we have to operate under, we have to include all the alternatives, all the reasonable alternatives and I'm saying this is a reasonable alternative and I don't see how we can go forward with this if in fact we're going to do it, without including this as a reasonable alternative.

Pennoyer: I guess I'm not totally clear how we do that in terms of analyzing the type of thing you're going to do when you get to comprehensive rationalization since none of us know what's that going to be. I had more in mind dealing with . . . whatever we do, there's going to be some impact of waiting two years or whatever it's going to take to be actually implement it. We haven't gotten to comprehensive rationalization on crab so it's a little bit tough to say exactly what we're going to if we're going to do anything. And I guess my analysis of what Bob was proposing is that part of the analysis would be an assessment of what disservice might occur if you waited a couple of years before doing this. I don't know if we're going to be able to analyze ITQs and specifically license limitation and all their detail for that purpose over the next two-year period of time but when we do comprehensive rationalization we'll have to take into account whatever we've done on all these allocations, cod and everything else.

Pereyra: But, what if it's the least-cost alternative? Sweeping it under the rug without even looking at it?

Pennoyer: No, I didn't say that; I said that basically to analyze all the types of things you might do under ITQs or all the types of things you might do under limited access is probably beyond the scope of anything we're going to do unless we wait for comprehensive rationalization.

Lauber: One of the things that we'll analyze would be the status quo, is that right? Well, under the status quo aren't we analyzing ITQs at the current time, so in effect it's rolled into it because when and if we have a ITQ or what ever rationalization scheme we go into on crab, the Norton Sound crab fishery I presume will be in it, won't it?

Pereyra: That's not status quo.

Lauber: Well, the status quo is not static, we're moving ahead. The status quo is we're looking at crab, aren't we, crab and groundfish. So, why isn't it?

Krygier: To speak to Mr. Mace's concern, we're already looking into hiring an economist to take care of this issue since obviously we are well aware of the fact that the Council is well overburdened; this issue we believe is of very high importance to the state; would resolve an issue between the

Board and Council and we're already looking at finding the team of people within our department and within NMFS who deal with crab to put that position together which would not interfere with most of the existing amendments that are out on the table.

Lauber: Are we going to wind this up here real quick; if we're not, we're going to recess because we're past the time that I said we were going to adjourn because of the previous commitments of other people. Do you want to try to vote on it now or you want to wait until tomorrow morning.

Samuelson: I made the motion hoping we could wrap it up tonight.

Pereyra: I have one further comment following on to Dr. Krygier's comment. That is, given the comment that was made, that isn't good enough for me because that sounds like the fox guarding the chicken coop to me and I think if we're going to do this it's got to be, particularly something as contentious as this is likely to be, I think it's got to be done in a format that's let's say is as unbiased as possible. And I'm not saying that the research would be prejudiced in any way, but I'm just saying that it's going to be a perception out there and I have some concern that if we go forward with this we're going to wind up setting the whole comprehensive rationalization program back another notch and we keep doing that.

Millikan: As I recall, I and several others in June were very adamant that we had to look at our workload and that we had to ask for plan amendments and then prioritize those plan amendments and this one's just sort of slipping in under the door. I really am favorably inclined to let the public comment on the Norton Sound issue. Given we had adequate time, or if I knew we had adequate time, I'd favor this motion, but I've got to be consistent in terms of prioritizing and if I'm not going to get a chance to look at what's on the table and how long it's going to take and how much it's going to impact the Council and NMFS, I can't vote for it.

[several calls for the question]

Lauber: The motion, just to remind you, is this is to be developed and sent out for review and then it comes back before the Council. Anyway, let's call the roll.

[motion carried, 7 to 4]

End of this issue.

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members  
FROM: Clarence G. Pautzke  
Executive Director  
DATE: September 15, 1993  
SUBJECT: Crab Management



ESTIMATED TIME 2 HOURS
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**ACTION REQUIRED**

- (a) Receive report on the status of Bering Sea crab stocks and recommended Guideline Harvest Levels.
- (b) Review management proposals and Plan Team report and take action as necessary.

**BACKGROUND**

Bering Sea Crab Survey

Though the "Report to Industry on the 1993 Eastern Bering Sea Crab Survey" is not yet available, Dr. Bob Otto, NMFS-Kodiak, will provide you with a summary from this report. In addition, attached as Item D-1(a) is a summary of the Guideline Harvest Levels recommended by ADF&G for the 1993/1994 Bering Sea Crab fisheries. Staff will provide a report on these recommendations and an overview of the approaching Bering Sea crab fisheries.

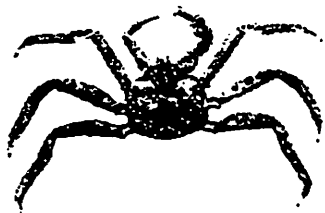
Bering Sea Crab FMP Amendment Proposals

At the June meeting, the Council decided to solicit crab proposals for possible amendments to the BS crab FMP. The Council also suggested that a meeting be held with the Alaska Board of Fisheries sometime this fall or winter to address the issues raised by industry representatives and fishermen. The Council's intent is that these actions will serve to address issues of concern recently expressed, including state authority or non-authority over super-exclusive registration, public involvement in the annual establishment of GHs, the appeals process presented in the FMP, and bycatch of crab in directed crab fisheries.

Staff solicited proposals in July, and received a number of proposals by the August 16, 1993 deadline. The crab plan team met in Anchorage on August 27, 1993 and reviewed the amendment proposals. Attached at Item D-1(b) is a summary of the proposals received and a copy of the plan team's report.

The Plan Amendment Advisory Group will meet on Monday morning, September 20, 1993 to review these proposals in addition to reviewing groundfish amendment proposals. PAAG recommendations will be summarized under Agenda item D-6, Staff Tasking. After receiving this information, the Council can decide which proposals to develop further given staff availability.

# COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



## NEWS RELEASE

ALASKA DEPARTMENT  
OF FISH & GAME



STATE OF ALASKA  
Department of Fish and Game  
Carl L. Rosier, Commissioner

Westward Region  
211 Mission Road  
Kodiak, AK 99615

Jeffrey P. Koenings, Director  
Commercial Fisheries Management  
and Development Division

Contact: Rance Morrison  
Area Shellfish Biologist  
Dutch Harbor, Alaska

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: August 24, 1993

### ATTENTION BRISTOL BAY/BERING SEA KING CRAB FISHERMEN

Preliminary analysis of the National Marine Fisheries Service crab stock assessment survey of Bristol Bay and the Bering Sea indicate the following:

St. Matthew Blue King Crab. Sufficient numbers of blue king crab exist to allow a harvest of approximately 4.4 million pounds.

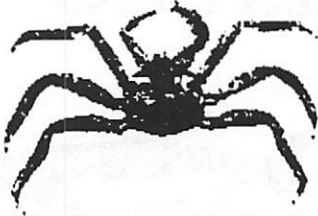
Pribilof Islands Red King Crab. A surplus of approximately 3.4 million pounds of red king crab are available for commercial harvest.

Pribilof Islands Blue King Crab. Survey results indicate blue king crab in this area are at levels similar to last year when no commercial fishery was allowed. Anticipated difficulties in managing a harvest on red king crab without exceeding the allowable harvest of blue king crab has forced the Department of Fish and Game to forego any harvest of blue king crab in this area.

Due to limited time prior to the September 15 opening date of the St. Matthew and Pribilof area, preliminary harvest guidelines are being released prior to final analysis. Minor adjustments to the harvest guidelines may occur in one or both of these areas prior to the fishery.

Bristol Bay Red King Crab. Population levels of red king crab in the Bristol Bay area appear similar to numbers encountered in last year's survey indicating a harvest guideline at or slightly above that set for the 1992 season. Additional analysis is ongoing and release of a specific guideline harvest number is expected by September 15, 1993.

# COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



## NEWS RELEASE

ALASKA DEPARTMENT  
OF FISH & GAME



STATE OF ALASKA  
Department of Fish and Game  
Carl L. Rosier, Commissioner

Westward Region  
211 Mission Road  
Kodiak, AK 99615

Jeffrey P. Koenings, Director  
Commercial Fisheries Management  
and Development Division

Contact: William E. Nippes  
Westward Region Shellfish/  
Groundfish Management Biologist  
Kodiak, Alaska

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: September 8, 1993

### ATTENTION BRISTOL BAY KING AND BERING SEA TANNER CRAB FISHERMEN

Additional analysis of the National Marine Fisheries Service crab stock assessment survey of Bristol Bay and the Bering Sea indicates the following:

St. Matthew and Pribilof. There are no changes to the guideline harvest levels (GHL) release on August 24, 1993. The St. Matthew blue king crab fishery GHL is 4.4 million pounds. The Pribilof GHL is 3.4 million pounds for red king crab. The Pribilof blue king crab fishery will be closed.

Bristol Bay Red King Crab. Abundance of legal male red king crab in Bristol Bay appears to have increased significantly over numbers observed during last year's survey. As a result a guideline harvest level (GHL) of 16.8 million pounds has been established for the 1993 fishery.

Bering Sea Tanner Crab. Survey results indicate a decline in Bering Sea *C. bairdi* Tanner crab. As a result a GHL of 19.7 million pounds has been established.

Bering Sea Snow Crab. Survey results indicate a decline of approximately 50% in the numbers of male *C. opilio* crab 4 inches and larger available for harvest, resulting in a GHL of 105.8 million pounds.

Due to inherent limitations in survey precision in-season adjustments to the GHLs in any or all areas may be necessary.

**Crab Amendment Proposals  
8/16/93**

**AGENDA D-1(b)  
SEPTEMBER 1993**

• Manage Pribilof Island Blue and Red King crab as one district; calculate the biomass of both species as one for harvestable stock in that district.

Randy Walton 7  
2 N. Ridge View Dr  
Portland Angles, WA  
206-452-3730

• St. Mathews Island/BSAI Crab. Authorize experimental fisheries for purposes of obtaining fisheries information; namely a pot survey for the area in conjunction with the traditional trawl survey.

George Knowles  
P.O. Box 804  
Bothell, WA 98041  
20-6486-0707

• Establish a superexclusive registration area for the Norton Sound king crab fishery.

Alaska Board of  
Fisheries  
P.O. Box 25526  
Juneau, AK 99802  
907-465-4110  
Laird Jones

• Repeal the BSAI king and Tanner Crab FMP; return all management of crab to State of Alaska.

Alaska Board of  
Fisheries

• Add legal male Bristol Bay Red king crab to threshold level; review current threshold level for other king and Tanner crab stocks.

Kris Poulsen & Assoc.  
1143 NW 45th St.  
Seattle, WA 98117  
206-783-6708

• Include accountability by management in the Crab FMP, reintroducing peer review process.

Kris Poulsen & Assoc.

• Move minimum size limits, GHLS, districts, subdistricts, and sections, fishing season, sex restrictions, pot limits, registration areas, and closed waters from Category 2, and Other in Category 3, to Category 1 in FMP.

Kris Poulsen & Assoc.

• GHL process should be moved from Category 2 to Category 1 of the Crab FMP. Include all crab, instead of only legal size male Bristol Bay red king crab in the exploitation rate.

Kris Poulsen & Assoc.

• Factor discard mortality into the GHL process.

• Lower exploitation rate considerably from its 20% value and implement a lower legal size limit.

• Allow industry to set the size standard as is seen in the Opilio fishery.

• Combine harvesting of species in the same location and the closure of areas with high populations of females and immature males should be implemented to reduce the effects of discard mortality.

Crab Proposals, continued

• Review and clarify framework-type management measures outlined in Category 2 of the crab FMP, i.e., pot limits and registration areas. Review and clarify the discretionary management measure in Category 3 listed as "other."

NMFS-Alaska Region  
P.O. Box 21668  
Juneau, AK 99802  
907-586-7228

• Allocative measures in Category 2, pot limits, exclusive and superexclusive area designations and "other" measures to Category 1, specifically, trip limits and vessel length restrictions.

Alaska Crab Coalition  
3901 Leary Way NW,  
Ste 6  
Seattle, WA 98107  
206-547-7560  
Arni Thomson

• Bring the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands hair crab fisheries and snail fisheries under the framework jurisdiction of the crab FMP.

Alaska Crab Coalition

• Revise the process for developing the GHs for crab fisheries, by placing GHs in Category 1, and specifically requiring scientific peer review by the Crab Plan Team and NPFMC SSC and AP.

Alaska Crab Coalition

• Revise the federal appeal process in the FMP to insure that appeals are completed in a timely fashion, prior to the opening of crab seasons that will be affected by new regulations.

Alaska Crab Coalition

• Change State of Alaska crab observer program to become a federal observer program, but maintain existing levels of coverage.

Alaska Crab Coalition



**SUMMARY OF BSAI CRAB PLAN TEAM MEETING**  
Friday, August 27, 1993  
Anchorage, Alaska

The Bering Sea Crab Plan Team met in Anchorage on August 27, 1993 to review submitted FMP amendment proposals. Members present included Kim Spittler (NMFS), Rance Morrison (ADF&G), Ken Griffin (ADF&G), Peggy Murphy (ADF&G), Brent Paine (NPFMC) and Bob Otto (NMFS). Bill Nippes (ADF&G) and Jerry Reeves (NMFS) were unable to be in Anchorage but were connected to the meeting by teleconference. Members of the public in attendance included Ron Miller, Eric Fry, Roy Ashentelster, Jon Zuck, Tim McKeeler and Karl Ohls. Ron Berg and Jonathan Pollard (NMFS-AKR) were present via the teleconference.

Overall, on a ranking scale of high, medium and low, the plan team ranked just two proposals as high (#3 and # 9) , one low (#11), and recommended no ranking for the remaining 11 proposals. The team believes that for 90 percent of crab management issues, the framework approach currently present in the crab FMP is appropriate and works well. The team believes that analysis of the proposals ranked high by the team will address concerns raised regarding joint federal-state oversight of Bering Sea crab management. What follows is a summary of the plan team recommendations for individual amendment proposals.

**#1: Manage Pribilof Island blue and red king crab as one district; calculate the biomass of both species as one for harvestable stock in that district.**

The team did not rank this proposal and recommends the Council not endorse it. The team felt this proposal provides no real advantage and could result in overfishing of either stock.

**#2: Authorize experimental fisheries for purposes of obtaining fisheries information; namely a pot survey for the area in conjunction with the traditional trawl survey.**

The team recommended not ranking this proposal, as the State of Alaska currently has the authority to conduct experimental fisheries which could include additional survey work.

**#3 Establish a superexclusive registration area for the Norton Sound king crab fishery.**

The plan team ranked this proposal as high.

The team believes that the FMP can be further clarified in regards to registration designation. This could minimize appeal action. The team also felt this issue should be limited to the Norton Sound king crab fishery. Amount of staff time would vary depending on the scope of the analysis.

**#4 Repeal the BSAI king and Tanner Crab FMP; return all management of crab to State of Alaska.**

The team recommended no ranking of this proposal.

**#5 Add legal male Bristol Bay Red king crab to threshold level; review current threshold level for other king and Tanner crab stocks.**

The Crab Plan Team recommends that specification of thresholds remain status quo to allow incorporation of the best scientific information as it becomes available.

Thresholds are not quantified in the crab FMP but defined as the minimum size of a stock that allows sufficient recruitment so that the stock can eventually reach a level that produces MSY. The FMP further states thresholds should reflect the best scientific information available. The State of Alaska's (State) Management Plan for Westward Region King Crab Stocks specifically sets thresholds for Bristol Bay and Kodiak red king crabs and the St. Matthew and Pribilof Islands blue king crabs using criteria developed by the Crab Plan Team in the Environmental Assessment (EA) for Amendment 1 to the crab FMP dated Nov. 20, 1990. Currently, no threshold values have been adopted for snow or Tanner crab stocks in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands.

The State plan estimates the threshold for Bristol Bay red king crab at 20% of the equilibrium level of female crabs  $\geq 89$  mm carapace length as estimated from a Ricker stock-recruitment model fit with trawl survey produced by those females. This method indirectly incorporates male abundance through the stock-recruit curve.

Since trawl survey estimates of abundance are more reliable for males than females in St. Matthew and Pribilof Islands areas, thresholds are expressed as numbers of mature males and assume that threshold levels relative to average spawning stock abundance are the same as for Bristol Bay red king crabs.

Recently modeling work on Bristol Bay red king crab has resulted in development of a new stock-recruitment relationship where the spawning biomass is a function of the mature male abundance (i.e., includes legal abundance). This study is undergoing peer review and if endorsed by the scientific community, will be brought before the State for consideration in determining thresholds.

**#6 Include accountability by management in the Crab FMP, reintroducing peer review process.**

The plan team was sympathetic to the idea of expanded peer review but recognized that a review analogous to that applied in groundfish plans was probably not feasible within current time constraints. Time constraints are conditioned by the following factors:

- 1) short interval between surveys and season openings;
- 2) heavy Council burden relative to the groundfish plans during the fall months; and
- 3) timing of molting in crab populations relative to surveys and decision making.

The team feels that review of a SAFE document might be feasible. This review would have to occur at the September Council meeting since surveys are not completed until mid-August and most major fisheries open before December. Alternatively, a review could be conducted after fisheries have been completed in the Spring.

The Team asks Council guidance as to the form and timing of expanded procedures.

- #7 Move minimum size limits, GHLS, districts, subdistricts, and sections, fishing season, sex restrictions, pot limits, registration areas, and closed waters from Category 2, and Other in Category 3, to Category 1 in FMP.**

The team recommends no ranking of this proposal.

- #8 GHIL process should be moved from Category 2 to Category 1 of the Crab FMP. Include all crab, instead of only legal size male Bristol Bay red king crab in the exploitation rate. Factor discard mortality into the GHIL. Lower exploitation rate and implement a lower legal size limit. Allow industry to set the size standard. Combine harvesting of species in the same location.**

The team recommends no ranking of this proposal.

The annual development of the Bering Sea preseason guideline harvest levels is a dynamic process dependant on utilizing the most recent information available, and applying this information through analysis and statistical modeling. Scientists from both the NMFS and ADF&G are currently using the most current scientific information available to set GHLS and manage crab stocks.

Due to the timing of the Bering Sea surveys and the openings of the early fall fisheries, only a limited time presently exists to analyze, discuss, amend and release the GHLS to the public in a timely fashion. Placing the GHIL process into Category 1 of the FMP would only mean that this process would be considerably lengthened. This added layer of review by the Council would slow development of the GHLS. To release the preseason harvest guidelines under the proposal, the current season opening dates for the fall fisheries would have to be delayed and/or rescheduled, or the previous years' survey information would have to be used to set GHLS in the current year. In addition, the Council would have to schedule a special meeting or allow time during the September meeting to address crab management after the survey information became available.

Concerning the bycatch issue, the Alaska Board of Fisheries has recently implemented new regulations addressing this issue. Information on crab bycatch in the crab fisheries is being collected and may be useful in determining future GHLS.

- #9 Review and clarify framework-type management measures outlined in Category 2 of the crab FMP, i.e., pot limits and registration areas. Review and clarify the discretionary management measure in Category 3 listed as "other."**

The plan team ranked this proposal as one of high priority.

Some type of protocol is necessary for dealing with Category 2 management measures (those that can be frameworked-in the-FMP).—Two specific areas, pot limits and registration areas, have already been challenged due to the ambiguous nature of the guidelines. The plan team felt that other areas in this category could be similarly challenged and therefore may also warrant clarification.

The "other" area in Category 3 (discretion of the State) was identified as one which potentially may be challenged. Possible alternatives for amending this section of the FMP include deleting the "other" area in Category 3, retain it with additional clarification, or remain as currently written. Team members recognized that the management measures identified in the FMP do not necessarily

represent the only measures possible therefore request Council clarification of what issues are included in the "other" area.

The plan team felt these issues can be resolved with clarification of the intent of the Council and also consultation and input from the Board of Fisheries in regards to its role in the management of the BSAI crab fisheries.

**#10 Allocative measures in Category 2, pot limits, exclusive and superexclusive area designations and "other" measures to Category 1, specifically, trip limits and vessel length restrictions.**

The Team recommended no ranking of this proposal.

**#11 Bring the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands hair crab fisheries and snail fisheries under the framework jurisdiction of the crab FMP.**

The team gave this proposal a low ranking.

The team felt that until state management of these fisheries was shown to be inadequate, that management of these fisheries should remain with the State of Alaska.

**#12 Revise the process for developing the GHGs for crab fisheries, by placing GHGs in Category 1, and specifically requiring scientific peer review by the Crab Plan Team and NPFMC SSC and AP.**

The team recommended not ranking this proposal, thus supporting the status quo.

Guideline harvest levels (GHLs) are estimated through a cooperative review of current and historic survey and catch data by Alaska Department of Fish and Game and National Marine Fisheries Service staff and in accordance with the harvest rate policy of the Board of Fisheries (Board) and Section 8.2.2 of the crab FMP. GHLs are calculated annually using the most recent survey estimates of abundance. Typically, the survey is completed by mid-August. Estimates of abundance are generally available by late August at which time king crab GHLs are computed and released to the public. The first major king crab fisheries in the Bering Sea begin September 15.

The plan team felt placement of the GHL management measure in category 1 could risk rational management of crab fisheries in the BSAI. The crab plan team agreed insufficient time was available from the time GHLs are calculated until the first crab fisheries of a season to allow annual review of GHLs in the Council process such as provided for TACs in the Groundfish FMP.

The crab plan team felt the methods used to calculate GHLs receive regular peer review through the Board process. Specific methods are outlined in the State's Management Plan for Westward Region King Crab Stocks and the EA for Amendment 1 to the Crab FMP.

Team comments on Proposal #6 also apply to the second part of this proposal.

**#13 Revise the federal appeal process in the FMP to insure that appeals are completed in a**

**timely fashion, prior to the opening of crab seasons that will be affected by new regulations.**

The plan team did not rank this proposal.

The team was sympathetic to revision to the appeals process, but felt that an appeal process is difficult to complete in a timely fashion, regardless of how it is constructed.

**#14 Change State of Alaska crab observer program to become a federal observer program, but maintain existing levels of coverage.**

The team did not rank this proposal.

The team felt that due to the imminent implementation of the Research Plan, this issue should be deferred until evidence indicates that the Research Plan does not address the issues presented in this proposal.

# Alaska House of Representatives

AGENDA D-1  
SEPTEMBER 1993  
SUPPLEMENTAL

**Richard Foster**  
P.O. Box 1630  
Nome, Alaska 99762-1630  
907-443-5036  
Fax 907-443-2162

State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182  
907-465-3789  
Fax 907-465-3242



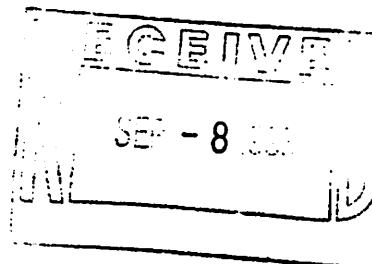
**Chairperson**  
Transportation Committee

**Military and Veterans**  
Affairs Committee

**Member**  
Finance Committee  
Bush Caucus  
Majority Whip

## *Eighteenth Legislature*

Richard B. Lauber, Chairman  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
P.O. Box 103136  
Anchorage, Alaska 99510



Dear Mr. Lauber;

I am writing in support of a superexclusive crab fishery for the Norton Sound Area. The fishery was very successful this past season. Several boats were involved over a two month period. Because of the longer season there was an opportunity to sell live crab which brought a much higher price than selling to an off-shore processor. This market could be expected to grow in future years.

The economic benefit that accrued to the region cannot be overlooked. For years communities bordering the Bering Sea have benefited very little from the resources that lie off their coast. At the same time millions of dollars in welfare and public assistance are spent to off-set the lack of any economic development. It is time to look at this as a critical issue. When a large fleet harvests the quota for a fishery in days and delivers to off shore processor smaller operators are forced from that harvest.

During this year's season, it was demonstrated that those participating have the ability to harvest the quota. Most persons who participated felt good about their participation and the fishery. Developing fisheries in the Y-K Delta and Norton Sound have provided a much needed economic stimulus to the region that ought not be

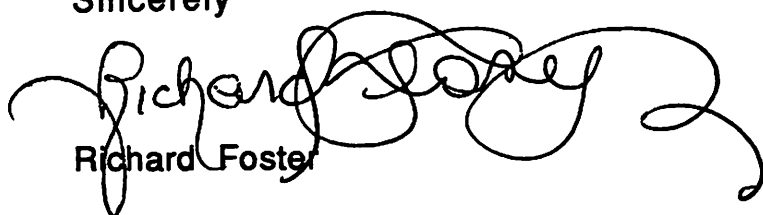
Alakanuk, Chevak, Erim, Emmonak, Gambell, Golovin, Hooper Bay, Kotik, Koyuk, Marshall, Mekoryuk, Mountain Village, Newtok, Nightmute, Nome, Pilot Station, Pitka's Point, Russian Mission, St. Mary's, St. Michael, Savoonga, Scammon Bay, Shaktoolik, Sheldon Point, Stebbins, Toksook Bay, Tununak, Unalakleet, White Mountain

Staff: Elizabeth Walters, Jeannie Smith, Clinton Gray, Dr. Larry La Bole

ignored because of other strong interests. It is time to look at what can be realistically done to improve the economy of Western Alaska and this is one area where there is a renewable resource and where the people who live there will become involved if an opportunity exists.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely

A highly stylized, cursive handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is written in a fluid, continuous style with many loops and flourishes, particularly around the 'R' and 'F'.

Richard Foster



# CITY OF NOME

P.O. BOX 281 - NOME, ALASKA 99762  
TELEPHONE (907) 443-5242

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
Writer's Direct Dial - (907) 443-2175

September 9, 1993

Rick Lauber, Chairman  
NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL  
P.O. Box 103136  
Anchorage, AK 99510



RE: Norton Sound Crab Fishery

Dear Chairman Lauber:

The recent crab fishery in Norton Sound produced significant economic benefits for Nome and the surrounding region. The success of this fishery is attributable to the utilization of a fleet of small fishing vessels. Enclosed are two recent articles from the Nome Nugget Newspaper highlighting the success of the fishery.

Clearly, previous crab fisheries provided little benefit to Nome and surrounding communities as they existed entirely offshore and consisted of large mobile vessels. The "derby" style of that fishery made it economically impossible for smaller, less mobile vessels to participate due to short seasons, lasting only several days, and the disparity in harvesting power between these groups. Hence, **this crab fishery located in *our own back yard* has been inaccessible to the people of this region.**

The positive economic impact of the recent Norton Sound Crab Fishery is sufficient to warrant consideration of onshore enhancements. The City of Nome is willing to take an active lead role in developing an infrastructure to assure the success of the Norton Sound Crab Fishery. We believe an improved small boat harbor is essential for a localized crab fishing fleet to optimize their market potential. For example, selling live crab to in-state markets derived the greatest economic return on the resource. The marketing of live crab provides the greatest impact to the local economy. Fresh summer crab was available to people of this region for the first time.

The City of Nome has prepared a small boat harbor plan. It is ready for final design and construction. A project such as this is a major financial commitment for a small community. **Before considering *any* investment in long term fishing infrastructure, the community needs assurance that this fishery will continue to provide economic benefits to the community through local participation in the fishery.**



Rick Lauber, Chairman/NPFMC  
September 9, 1993  
Page 2

Onshore processing and handling is being investigated by several local businesses as an alternative to the previous off-shore processing. Existing freezer plants and storage facilities which are fully operable, but inactive due to insufficient demand, are being reevaluated in light of the potential long term crab fishery.

**The true potential of this small local fishery will not be attained without assurances of the super-exclusive fishery status.** This will aid fishermen in acquiring the needed financing for vessels and equipment to safely utilize the harvest. Our region desperately needs this type of economic development to survive. Chum salmon runs were so poor this year a request for emergency Federal funding was made for this region. Gold mining, Nome's economic backbone, is drastically declining as well. The future of this region depends on accessing our local resources.

We support making this small fishery available to everyone interested, but on an "equal footing," where local fishermen and businesses can compete for the resources. The super-exclusive status and pot limits provide the framework for this local industry to be fully utilized by all.

The City of Nome firmly believes the Alaska Board of Fisheries' decision to make Norton Sound Crab Fishery super-exclusive was in the best interest of the region and provides for the greatest benefit of the local resources. It was correct from a national perspective, as well, maximizing crab values and decreasing the need for governmental transfer costs for areas devastated by poor salmon and herring runs. **We strongly support this super-exclusive status as a long-term fishery plan for the Norton Sound Crab Fishery.**

Sincerely,

**NOME COMMON COUNCIL**

  
by. John K. Handeland  
Mayor

cc: City Council Members  
Alaska Board of Fisheries  
The Honorable Walter J. Hickel

Enclosures

# Fish fever hits Nome

is the first of a two part look at the changing face of the Norton Sound crab and halibut fisheries and what it may mean for the region.

By Mark Cardinal

It's no Homer. No Kodiak, either, and it's certainly no Dutch Harbor.

## Weather

Sunrise	8/26/93	7:26 a.m.
	9/2/93	7:47 a.m.
Sunset	8/26/93	10:39 p.m.
	9/2/93	10:14 p.m.
High temp.	8/19	53°
Low temp.	8/23	30°
Peak wind	8/19	56 mph SE
Precip. to date		9.12 in.
Normal precip.		8.60 in.

Data from the National Weather Service Nome

But make no mistake, Nome started to resemble a fishing port this summer.

For the last few months, this backwater on the Bering Sea was the sole source of live king crab and fresh halibut in the state. The volume of product that moved across the city's docks wouldn't turn the head of a Unalaska highliner. However, it provided a needed shot in the arm to the city's economy and made a handful of entrepreneurs stand up and take notice.

While they didn't get rich, even a few of the professional fisherman who worked the grounds this year are scrambling to find a niche in the region's new community based fisheries. One crabber — from Seattle, no less — called the Norton Sound

experiment "fishing the way it ought to be."

Still, this year's changes may prove as fleeting as sub-arctic summer sunshine. Everything rests in the hands of the bureaucrats and politicians who devised the regulations that created community based fisheries.

To hold onto their share of the offshore wealth, the community and regional groups whom the regulations were intended to serve must prove they can translate special access to certain fisheries into a stable rural economy while fighting off attacks from vested interests like the Seattle-based Alaska Crab Coali-

*Continued on page 4*

## •Fish

*Continued from page 1*

tion, who oppose any restrictions on their own access to the resource.

start with crab.

the total summer-commercial harvest of Norton Sound king crab has topped 11 million pounds over 15 years, people in Nome have rarely been able to see, much less buy live crab during the summer. Until this year, the crab fishery has belonged by default to a fleet of big catcher boats and catcher-processors who steamed up from Seattle, Dutch Harbor and Kodiak and caught the quota in less than a week.

The big boats didn't return this year, discouraged by both a bust last season and regulations, created by the state Board of Fisheries which made a Norton Sound a super exclusive registration area with a 40 pot limit

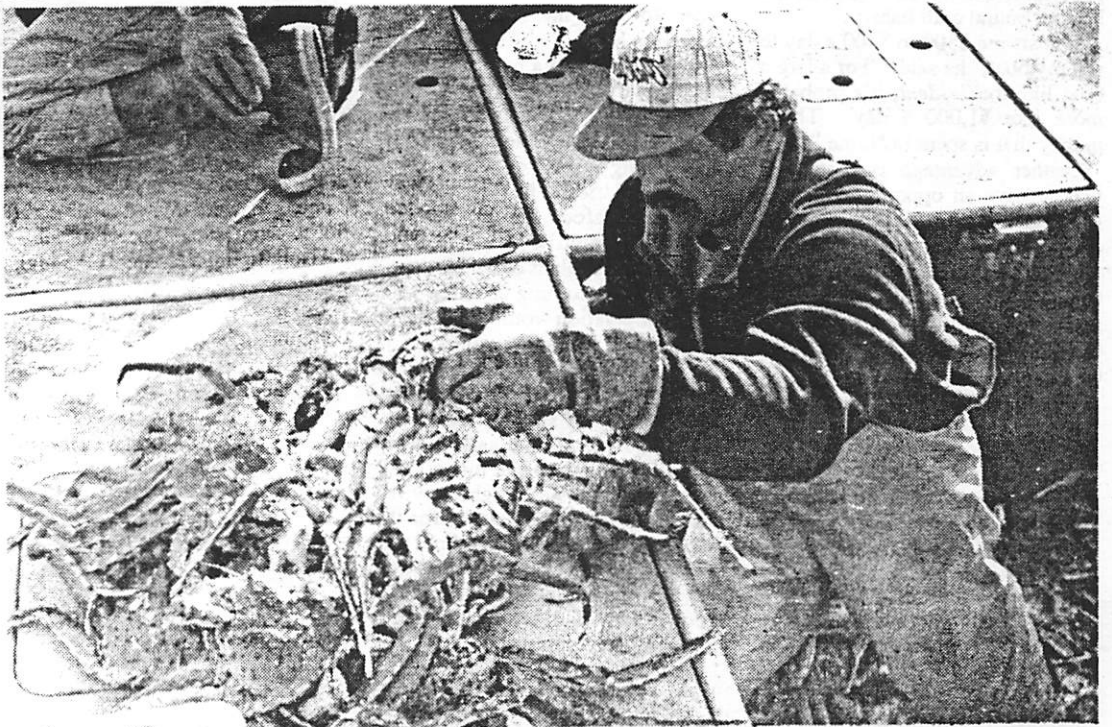
— 50 pots for vessels over 125 feet in length.

Super exclusive meant that a vessel fishing in Norton Sound, the state's smallest crab fishery, couldn't fish

king crab elsewhere, an unlikely proposition for the owner of a million dollar boat that has to turn a profit or return to the bank.

The Alaska Crab Coalition success-

*Continued on page 6*



FROM POT TO POT—David Whitmire of Homer unloads live crab at the dock of Nome Harbor. Live crab could become the basis of a new Nome industry. Photo Mark Cardinal

## •Fish

Continued from page 4

fully appealed the superexclusive designation to the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Dept. of Commerce on July 15. Commerce Secretary Ron Brown overturned the designation, basing it his decision on the opinion that it was discriminatory and violated the Bering Sea crab fisheries management plan. The pot limits, however, stuck.

It was enough to change the face of the fishery. This year it has taken a fleet of as many as 14 smaller boats and one medium size processor almost two months to catch the bulk of the fishery's 340,000 pound quota. It's looking more and more like the entire quota will be caught before the season ends on Sept. 3.

The longer season benefited Nome and the region in several ways. First, a longer fishery means more money is spent locally. A big boat can carry all the fuel and supplies it needs for a three or four day derby-style opening and its crew need never come ashore.

Fishing day-in and day-out for a couple of months, the amount of money spent by the crew of a small boat can add up, said Homer fisherman David Whitmire. Whitmire and a partner brought two 32-foot herring bow pickers over from Unalakleet to participate for the first time in the Norton Sound crab fishery.

"It costs me \$300 to \$400 a day to run my boat," he said. "For a larger boat like the *Trident*, it's probably more like \$1,000 a day. That's the money that is spent in Nome."

Another advantage is that local people have an opportunity to buy live crab that once went solely to an offshore processor, where it was frozen and shipped to distant markets. The timing of the season makes it the only live crab on the market this time of year. Handled carefully, the crab can be shipped to markets on the west coast and beyond for a premium price. The slower pace of the fishery also results in a better survival rate for the crab.

"It's worth a lot more to everybody as live crab," Whitmire said. "Selling it live on the beach you can double what you can make selling to a processor. When the whole fishery took place 30 miles or more offshore, never see anything, not a crab. Shipping live you need boxes and people on the beach who you can keep employed getting them to market."

Like some of the other crabbers with smaller boats, Whitmire is selling his smaller crab to the offshore processor the *Karla Fay*, for \$1.25 a pound and "hi-grading" as many of his larger crab as possible to consumers in Nome for \$8.00 for a three to four pound crab. Bulk buyers pay a flat rate of \$2.00 per pound.

from Seattle and Dutch Harbor have seen the potential in shipping live crab out of Nome. Wanting to get in on the ground floor and beat the competition, most will reveal few details about their plans.

One Nome man is buying hundreds of pounds of crab a week and keeping them alive in tanks filled with seawater hauled from 15 miles offshore. He is selling both locally and shipping them out, although he won't say where.

Mike Rink, co-owner of the *Lucky Swede*, has shipped out both live crab and halibut to markets in Anchorage. Rink said his first shipment of crab died enroute, but that after learning a few tricks, he's been getting more than 95 percent of his shipments to market alive.

Rink said he's done better on crab than halibut, but he's still lost money overall. He figures he'll be over the learning curve and making money next year.

The owner of *Osterman Fish*, perhaps the largest shippers of live crab in the state, has expressed an interest in forming a partnership with Rink. Working out of Dutch Harbor, Richard Osterman said he ships more than half a million pounds of live crab a year. He plans to be in Nome this

week to look into expanding his operation here.

Live crab is still a new product to most buyers, but it could prove to be a major trend in the industry. The freshest seafood is the best seafood and nothing beats live, he said. Once a customer tries it, he won't choose processed seafood, if he has a choice.

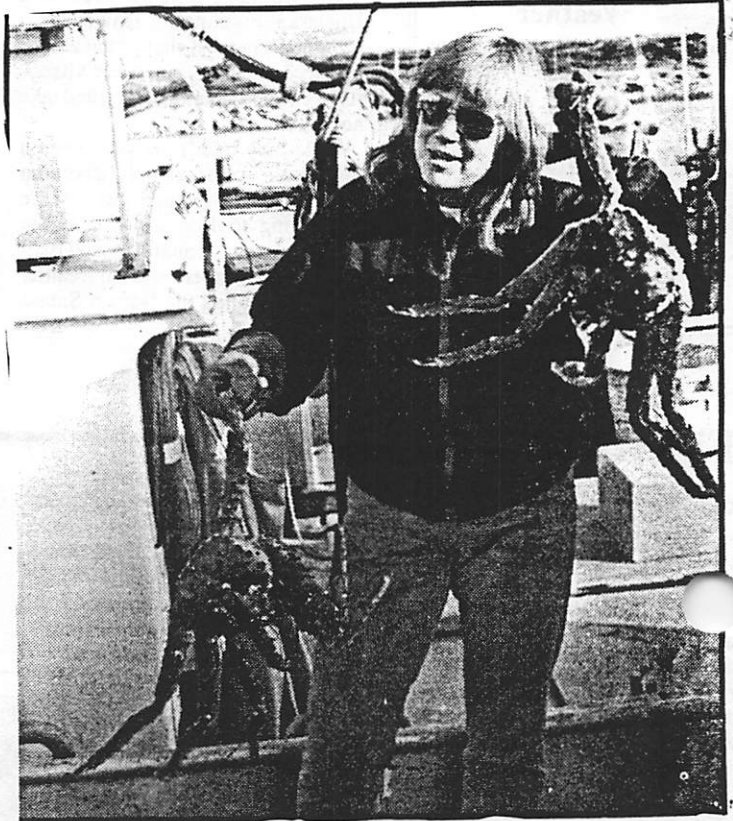
"I think it would be jumping the gun to say what our plans are at this time," he said. "I'm coming up to see what kind of operation would be feasible. At this point, I sense it would work on a limited basis."

For the time being, the best approach is to stay small and flexible.

"Small is good," he said. "Even though I'm one of the biggest live shippers in the state, right now it's too small, too much hassle, for the big guys to jump into. Big dinosaurs eat up a lot of grass and sh\_t big piles. If you stay flexible, you can get a good return and provide employment for a community."

Like Whitmire, fisherman Jay Hebert of Seattle said he's enjoyed participating in a slow-paced fishery that hasn't been screwed up and turned into a battleground like so many others in the state by too many fisherman competing for a shrinking resource.

He's fed up with the raw deal he and the other fisherman are getting from the processor, *Karla Fay*. The low price of crab coupled with the high



**SATISFIED CUSTOMER**—Like many Nome residents Laura Kosell enjoys buying king crab right off the boat Photo by Mark Cardinal

\$1.25 a pound and "hi-grading" as many of his larger crab as possible to consumers in Nome for \$8.00 for a three to four pound crab. Bulk buyers pay a flat rate of \$2.00 per pound.

More than 6,000 pounds of live crab has been sold over the dock to people in Nome, according to Fish and Game estimates. By Monday, about 311,000 pounds had gone to the processor ship. Larger boats which can't get into the Nome jetty are forced to sell almost exclusively to the processor.

"If they let big boats in again they'll stay out and deliver to the processor, Nome won't see any crab," said Whitmire. "Big boats are not going to work for the community..."

"This fishery is positioned to do the town a lot of good. Logistically, it's close to shore, there's a good airport to ship crab out live, and the fleet hangs around to buy fuel and food from local economy... It's not a huge shot of money, but it's something."

While not a real money maker, the crab fishery has been enjoyable. Whitmire and his partner said they make expenses most days and the equivalent of construction wages on good days. All it would take is a major repair to the boat, however — as almost happened Monday when they damaged the boat's engine hitting a floating log — to put them in the red.

Local entrepreneurs and others

resource.

He's fed up with the raw deal he and the other fisherman are getting from the processor, *Karla Fay*. The low price of crab coupled with the high price he's being charged for bait is erasing his profit margin. With his foot in the door, he'd like to see the fishery go to limited entry and be restricted to small boats and cut the offshore processors out entirely.

"This is fishing as it's meant to be," he said. "We're sitting on a real comfortable fishery here without getting into the head butting that goes on in places like Bristol Bay. This fishery can be salvaged."

Hebert is putting together a business partnership with Nome resident Chuck Fagerstrom that will involve processing and perhaps shipping live crab. Like Osterman and the others, he wouldn't talk specifics, except to add that he wants to work with the community to provide jobs for local residents as well as make a profit. Cooperation with local communities is missing from too many fisheries.

"You can butt heads, or you can jump rope," said Hebert. "I'm to the point where I'd rather jump rope."

*Next week: A look at the role of the Community Development Quota groups, threats on the horizon and what is know about the resource itself.*

# Slow-paced fishery benefits region

*This is the second part of a series looking at the changing face of the Norton Sound king crab and halibut fisheries*

By Mark Cardinal

After nearly two months, the Norton Sound red king crab fishery came to a close Saturday. Everyone from the Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game to fisherman hauling in the catch hailed the fishery as a success.

Such consensus is rare in the state's increasingly volatile fisheries and lends promise to the notion that

community based fisheries ushered in last year with the adoption of Community Development Quota program can work for the benefit of rural Alaskans.

Fish and Game was pleased with the outcome because the 340,000 quota was caught (within two percent) and because the slower pace allowed biologists to micromanage the fishery to the benefit of the resource.

Fisherman were satisfied because they caught crab, made a little money, and left feeling like they got in on the ground floor of a niche fishery, that many view as the way of the future. Most of those who participated plan to come back next year, including the owners the sole processor that came to serve the fishery this year. Ten thousand pounds of the quota went through Nome on its way to markets.

Community Development Quota groups like the Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association were able to put people from their region to

*Continued on page 2*

Weather		
Sunrise	9/2/93	7:47 a.m.
	9/9/93	8:08 a.m.
Sunset	9/2/93	10:14 p.m.
	9/9/93	9:48 p.m.
High temp.	8/26	65°
Low temp.	8/31	34°
Peak wind	8/26	18 mph SE
Precip. to date		9.12 in.
Normal precip.		9.23 in.
Data from the National Weather Service Nome		

## •Fishery

*Continued from page 2*

though many fisherman griped about the low price of \$1.25 a pound, the fishery probably would have failed without the presence of the processor, which purchased more than 97 percent of the quota.

The makeshift onshore operations that sprung up to purchase crab would have been hard pressed to handle much more than the 10,000 pounds they did. That may change next year (assuming the superexclusive character of the fishery is maintained) as their operations grow larger and more sophisticated. Although larger boats will always find it hard to deliver in the shallow harbor, the higher prices offered onshore should encourage smaller boats to deliver to the beach.

The Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation, the CDQ group representing Norton Sound region villages, successfully argued for the super exclusive designation. The group continues to work toward regulatory protection for community based fisheries. A top goal is the upcoming reauthorization of the Magnuson Act with a provision to

extend the CDQ program for four additional years.

However, NSEDC had a relatively small role in the crab fishery itself. Loan officer Charles Soxie said fisherman expressed interest in the loans for crab gear before the season started, but that only a few applied for loans. He wasn't sure if the fisherman who received the loans actually fished.

"We funded a couple, but not as much as I thought we would," he said. "People put out feelers, but very few followed up on it."

NSEDC Executive Director John Jernewouk said fisherman from the region were cautious and waited to see what would happen to the super exclusive designation and pot limits. The corporation resisted the jumping into the fishery with boats of its own or with money for processing facilities, he said, because people in this region have seen fisheries projects come and go. When they go, so does your investment.

"Our approach has been to get involved slowly only after we make

*Continued on page 5*

## •Fishery

*Continued from page 3*

sure an investment is sound and not to jump in without studies," he said. "Crab is a good example. We were very interested in getting involved, but we knew the Alaska Crab Coalition had appealed the super exclusive. Our fisherman could have spent thousands of dollars only to have it overturned. That's what eventually happened."

The success of the Norton Sound crab fishery ultimately depends on the health of the resource. The population of legal males (Only male crab are harvested) is only now rebounding from overfishing in the late '70s and early '80s.

The estimated population of harvestable crab was between 8 and 11 million pounds in 1978. By 1983, the harvestable amount had plummeted to about 2 million pounds.

"We allowed 60 percent of the legal males to be taken in those days," Lean said. "Now were shooting for about 10 percent. There were no large males left then. Now we have a full spectrum of male crab sizes."

Lean said current estimates put the amount of harvestable crab at about 4 million pounds in all of Norton Sound. Given a 10 percent mortality rate and 30 percent recruitment rate — the percentage of the population that passes from illegal to legal size in the span of a year — the population appears to be growing at about 10 percent a year.

Lean said the state is disappointed that the National Pacific Marine Fisheries Service will not conduct trawl surveys of Norton Sound crab this summer, as they had planned. Without an accurate survey, he said:

"We won't be upping the quota in the near future. It's taken 10 years to double the population with the current 10 percent harvest rate."

Next week: *A look at the St. Lawrence Island halibut fishery*

## RESULTS OF THE 1993 NMFS BERING SEA CRAB SURVEY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document summarizes data presented in the NMFS Processed Report "Report to Industry on the 1993 Eastern Bering Sea Crab Survey". For further information, contact Dr. Bradley G. Stevens or Dr. Robert Otto, NMFS, P.O. Box 1638, Kodiak, AK 99615. Phone (907) 487-4961. GHL = Guideline Harvest Level.

### Red king crab (*Paralithodes camtschatica*) Bristol Bay.

Legal males: 7.3 million crabs; up 49%.  
Pre-recruits: 100% increase.  
Large Females: 28% increase.  
Outlook: Increased estimates are largely due to concentration of crabs at few stations, and may not reflect a real increase in population. Juveniles are at an all-time low and declining.  
GHL: 16.8 million lbs.

### Red king crab (*Paralithodes camtschatica*) Pribilofs District.

Legal males: 2.5 million crabs; up 212%.  
Pre-recruits: No significant change.  
Large Females: 112% increase.  
Outlook: Increased estimates of legal crab reflect concentration at few stations, and should be viewed cautiously. Smaller crab are poorly estimated.  
GHL: 3.4 million lbs.

### Pribilof Islands blue king crab (*P. platypus*) Pribilof District.

Legal males: 1.0 million; No significant change.  
Pre-recruits: 29% decrease.  
Large Females: No significant change.  
Outlook: Population low and stable. Trends not detectable.  
GHL: Fishery closed for 1993.

### St. Matthew blue king crab (*P. platypus*) Northern District.

Legal males: 3.6 million; 57% increase.  
Pre-recruits: 36% increase.  
Large Females: Not well estimated.  
Outlook: Population high (Rank 2/16) with good recruitment for future.  
GHL: 4.4 million lbs.

### Tanner crab (*Chionoecetes bairdi*) Eastern District.

Legal males: 20.6 million; 50% decrease.  
Pre-recruits: 38% decrease.  
Large Females: 58% decrease.  
Outlook: Population average, but declining as strong year class expires.  
GHL: 19.7 million lbs.

Snow crab (C. opilio) All districts combined.

Large males: 135 million; 48% decrease.

Pre-recruits: 24% decrease.

Large Females: No significant change (decline offset by increased recruitment?).

Outlook: Large crab will continue to decline as strong year class expires, but strong recruitment of juveniles should reach fishery in 2-4 years.

GHL: 105.8 million lbs.

Hair crab (Erimacrus isenbeckii)

Total males: 11.8 million; 194% increase.

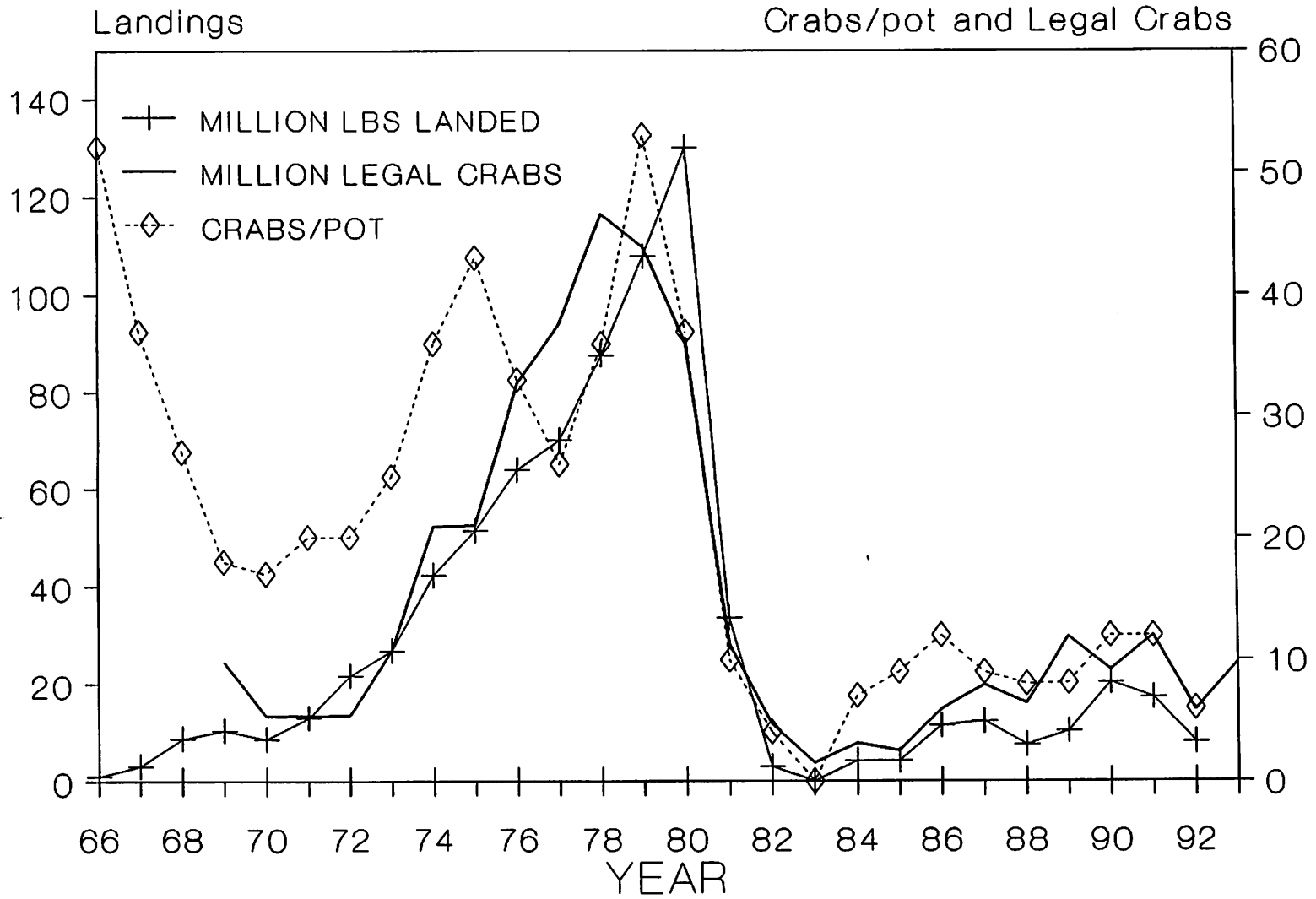
Large Females: 168% increase.

Outlook: Population increase probably reflects poor assessment in recent years, but is consistent with recruitment indices over last 5 years.

GHL: Pribilofs: 2.5 million lbs.

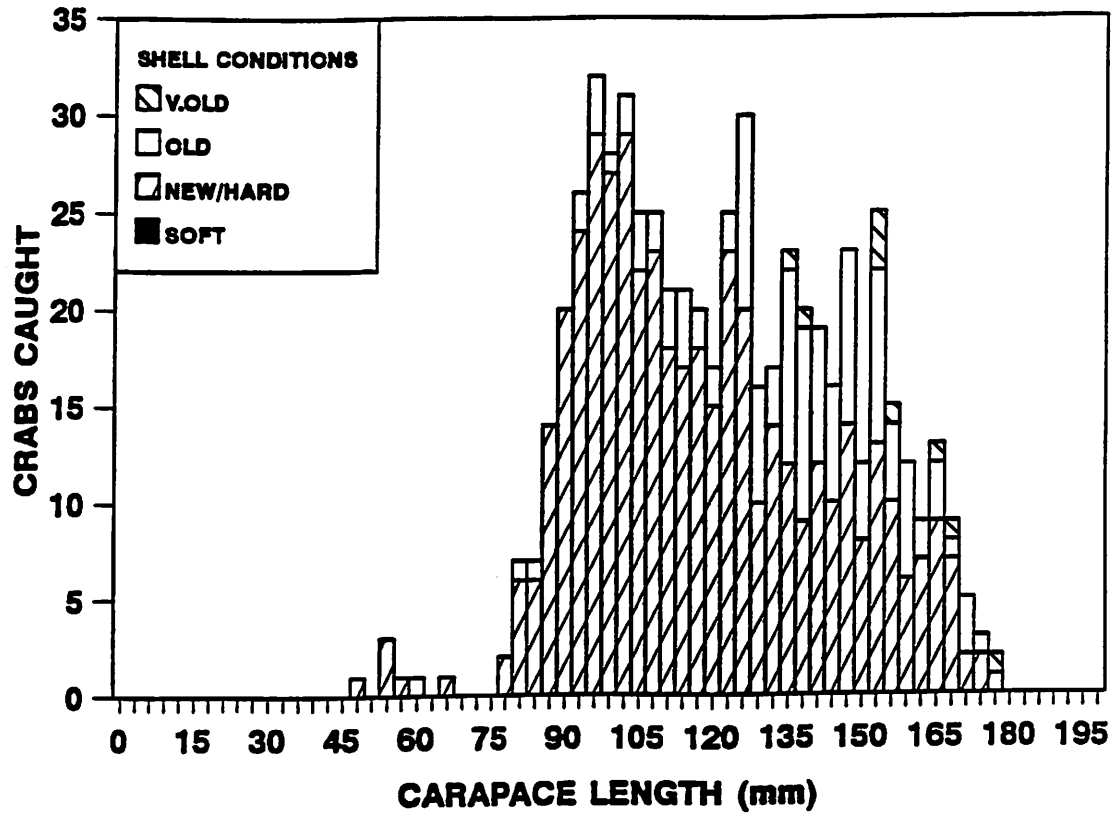
Bristol Bay: 0.5 million lbs.

# Red King Crab, Bristol Bay & Pribilofs

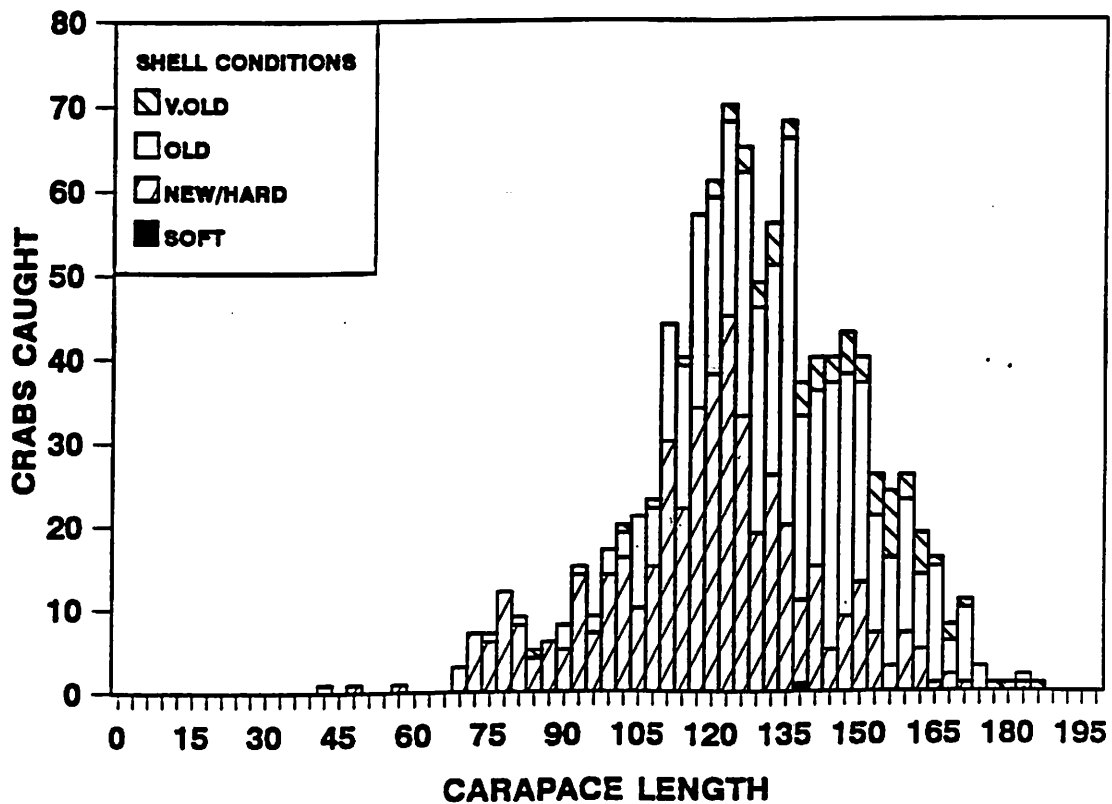




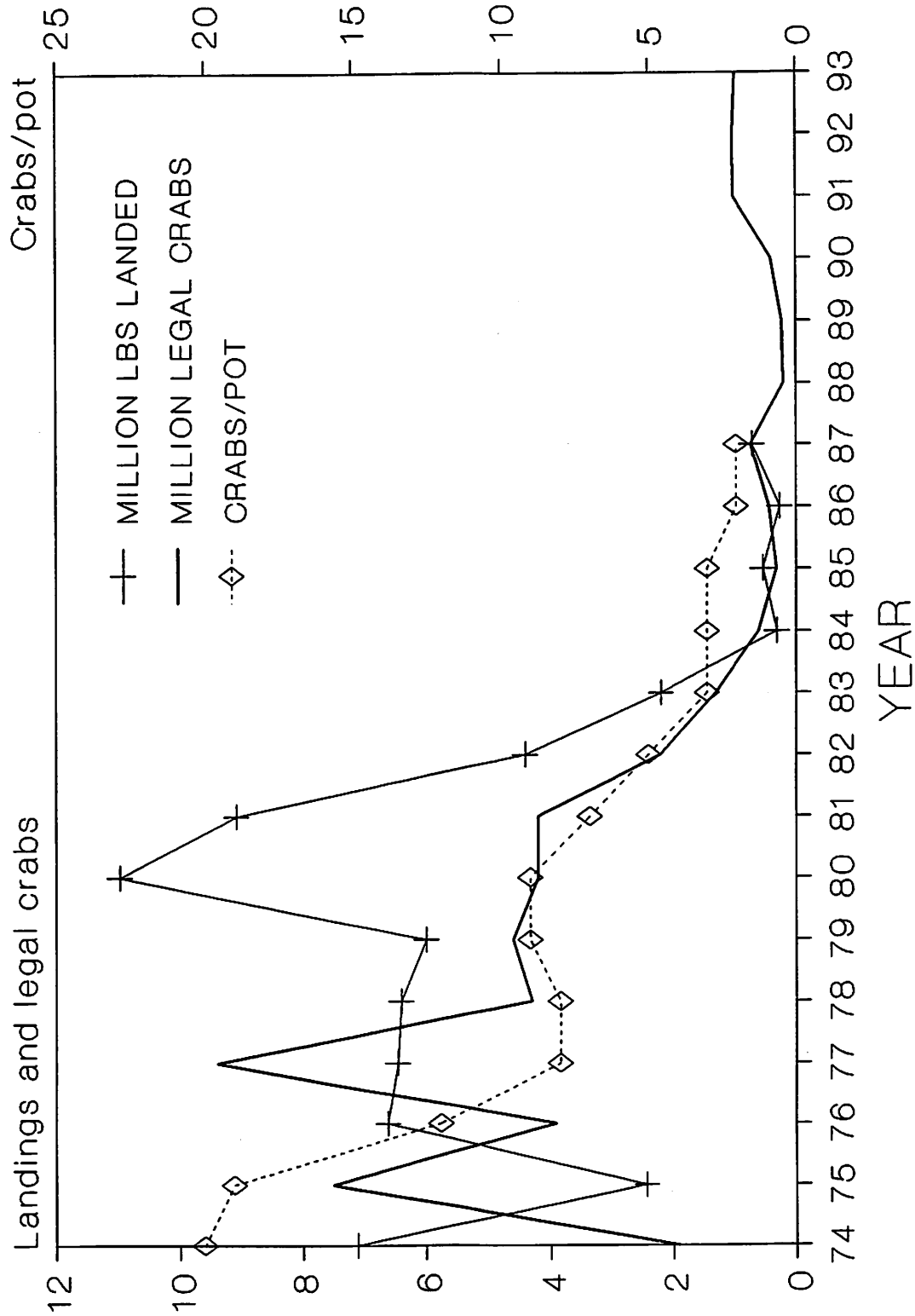
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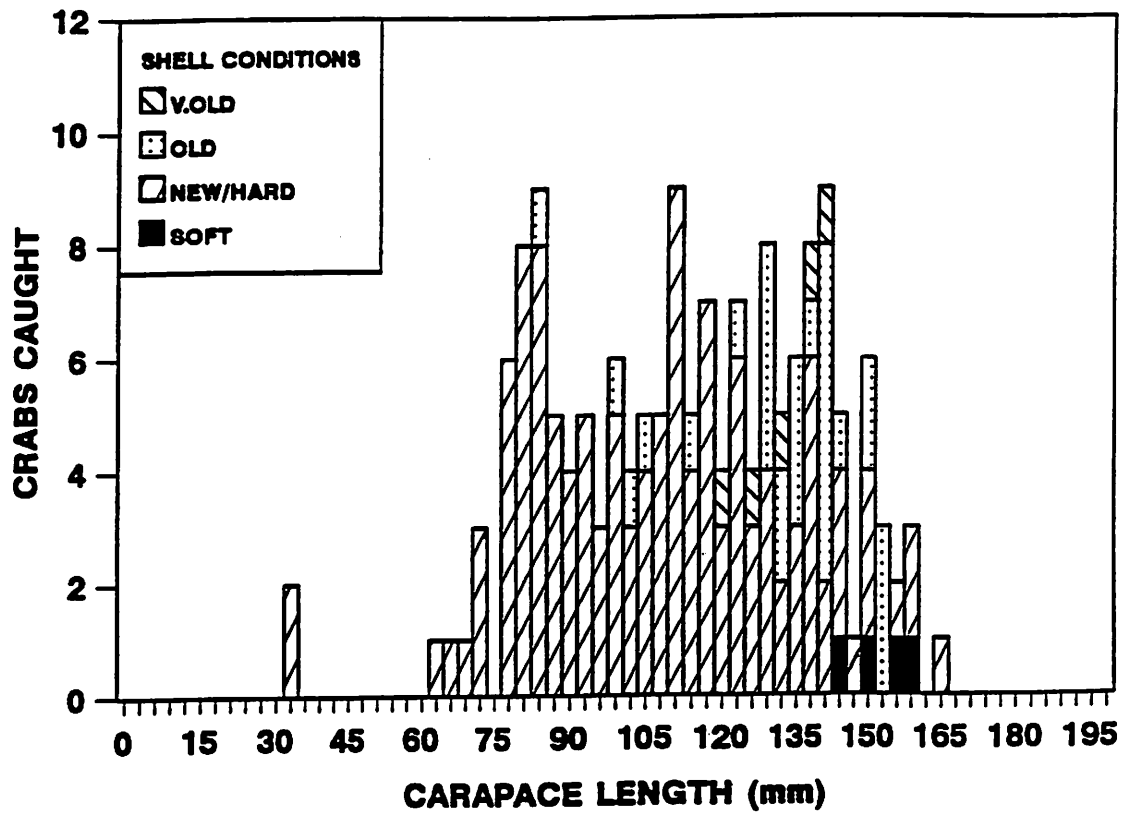
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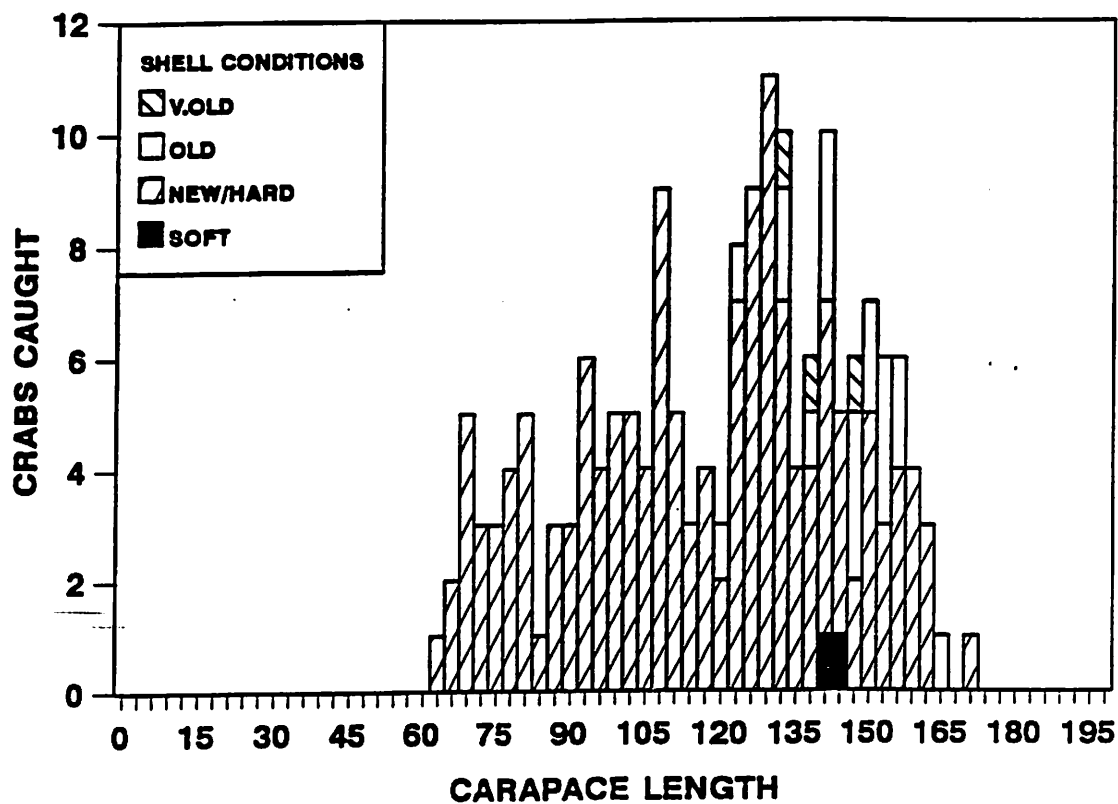
# Blue King Crab, Pribilof District



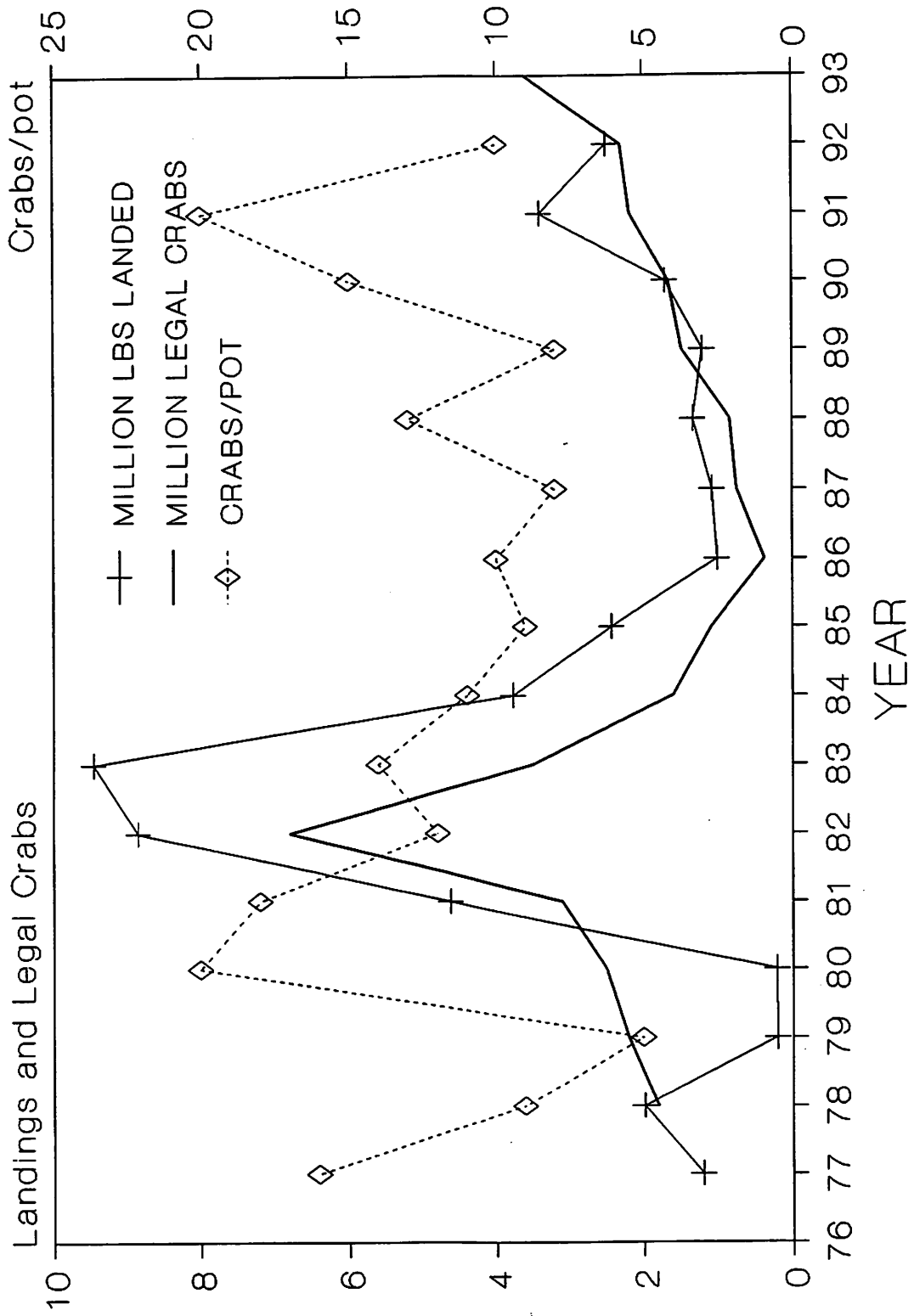
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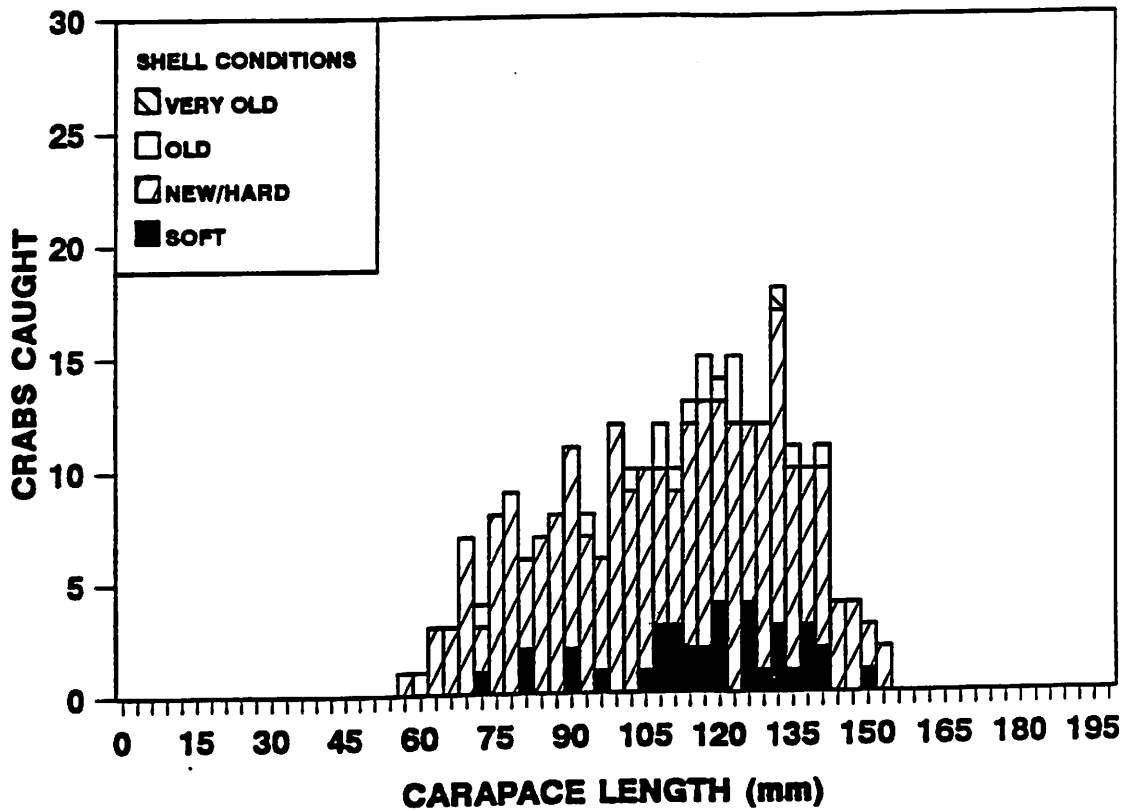
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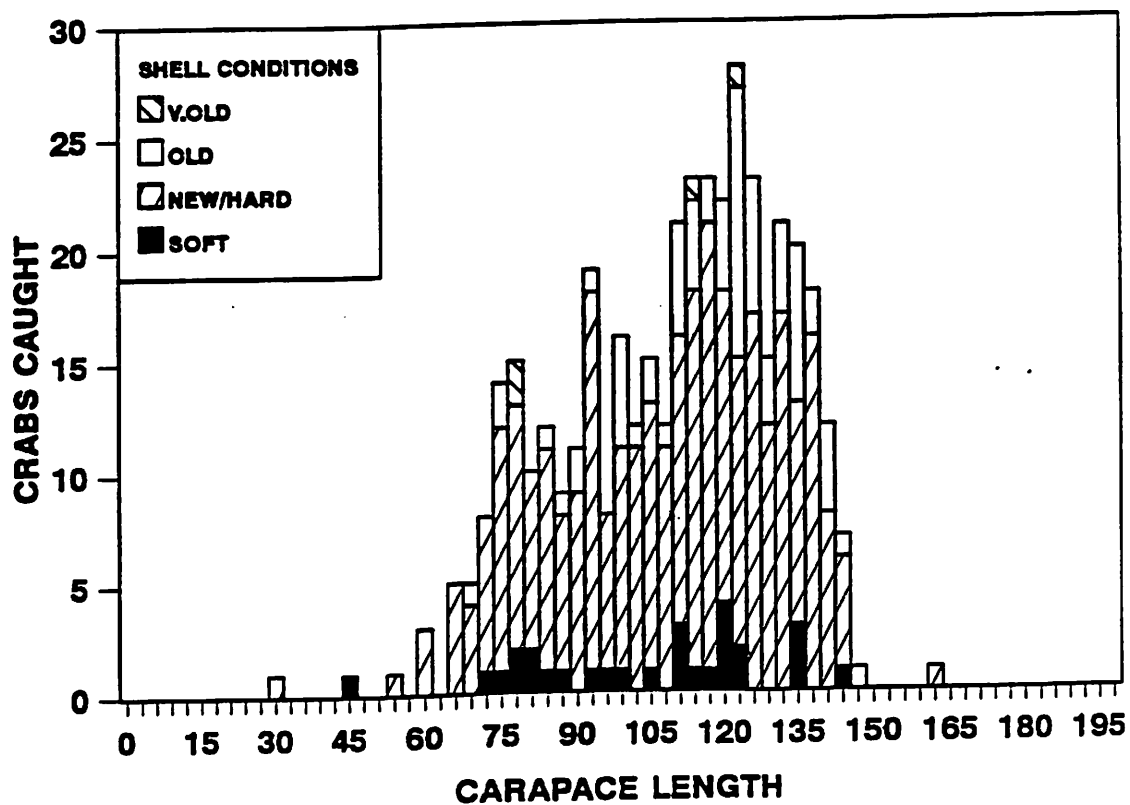
# Blue King Crab, Northern District



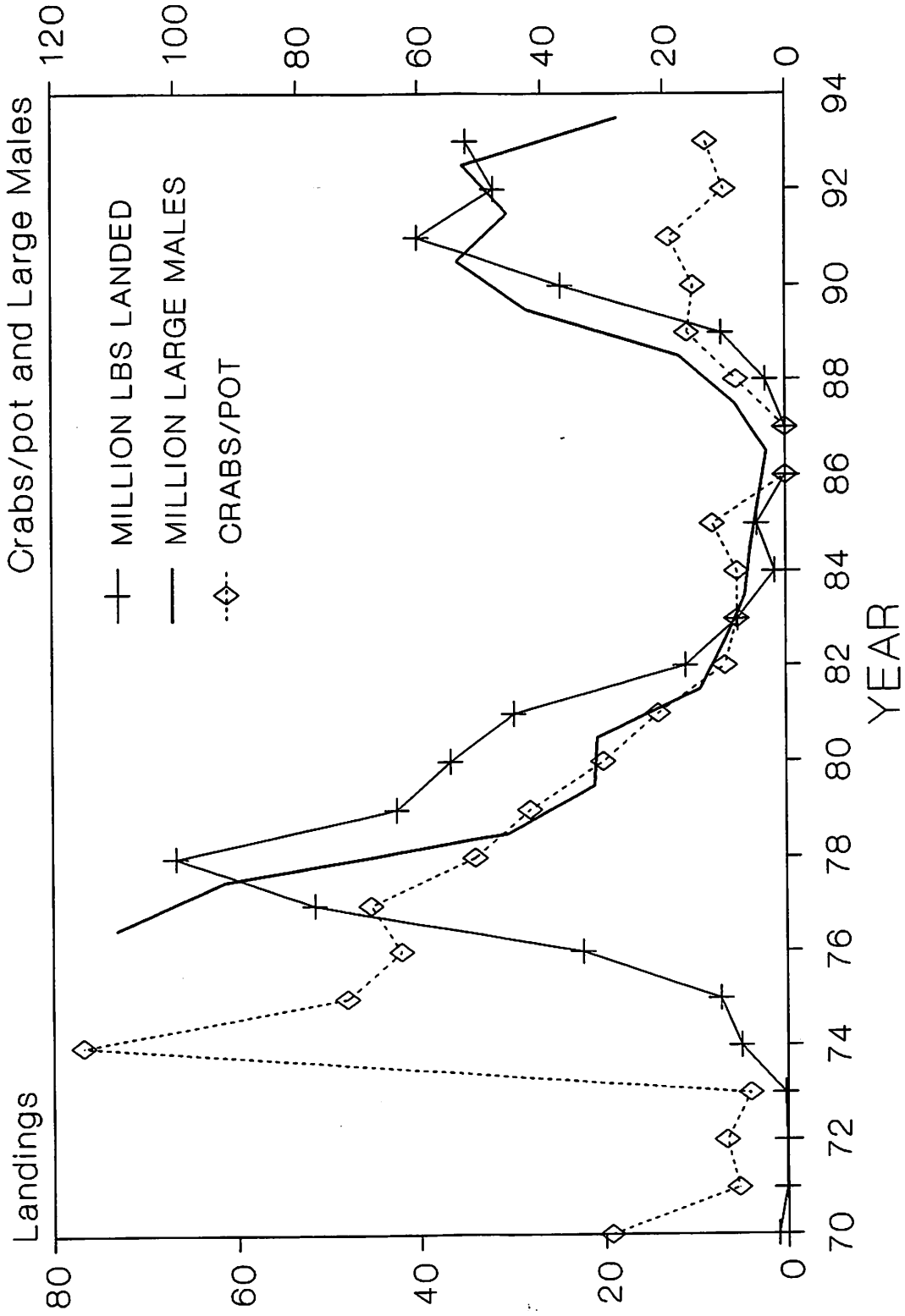
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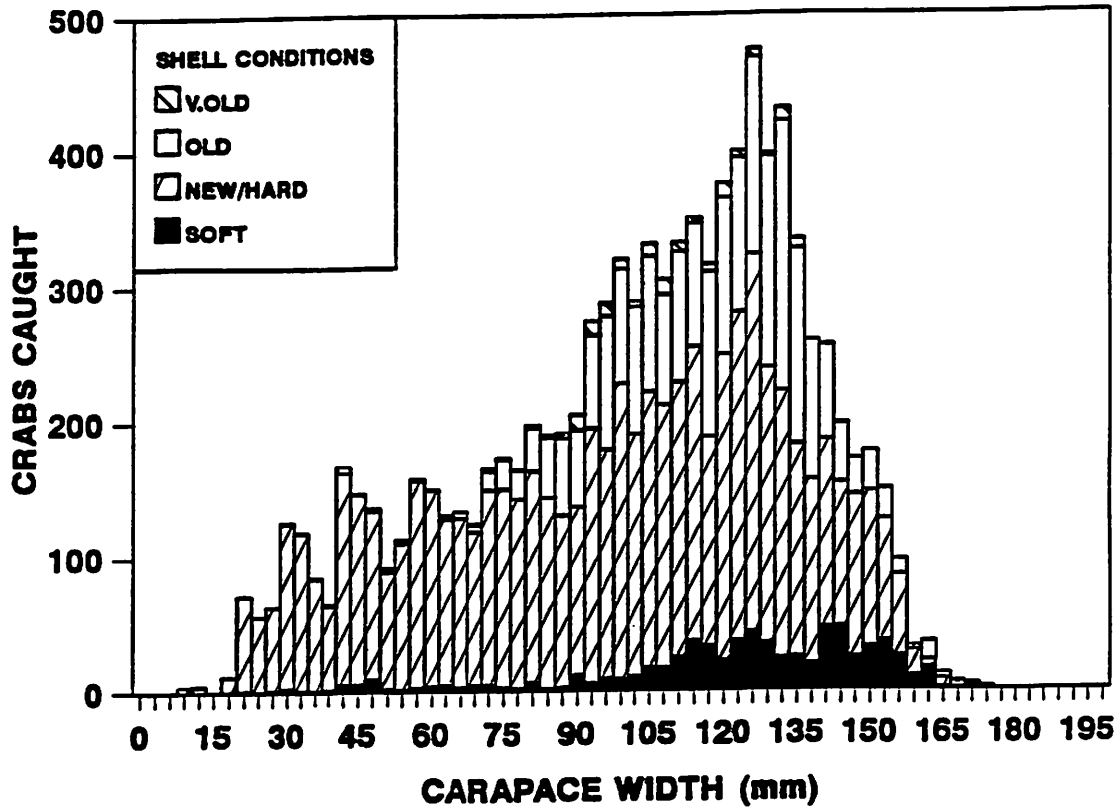
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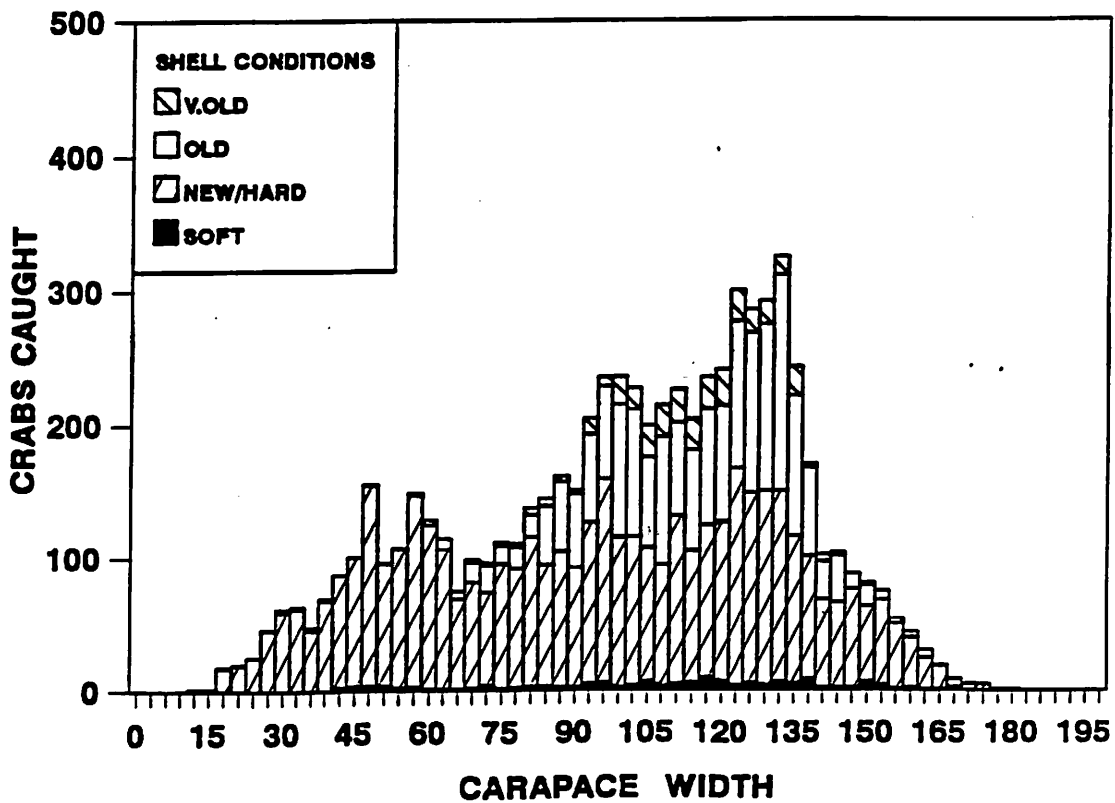
# C. bairdi, Eastern District



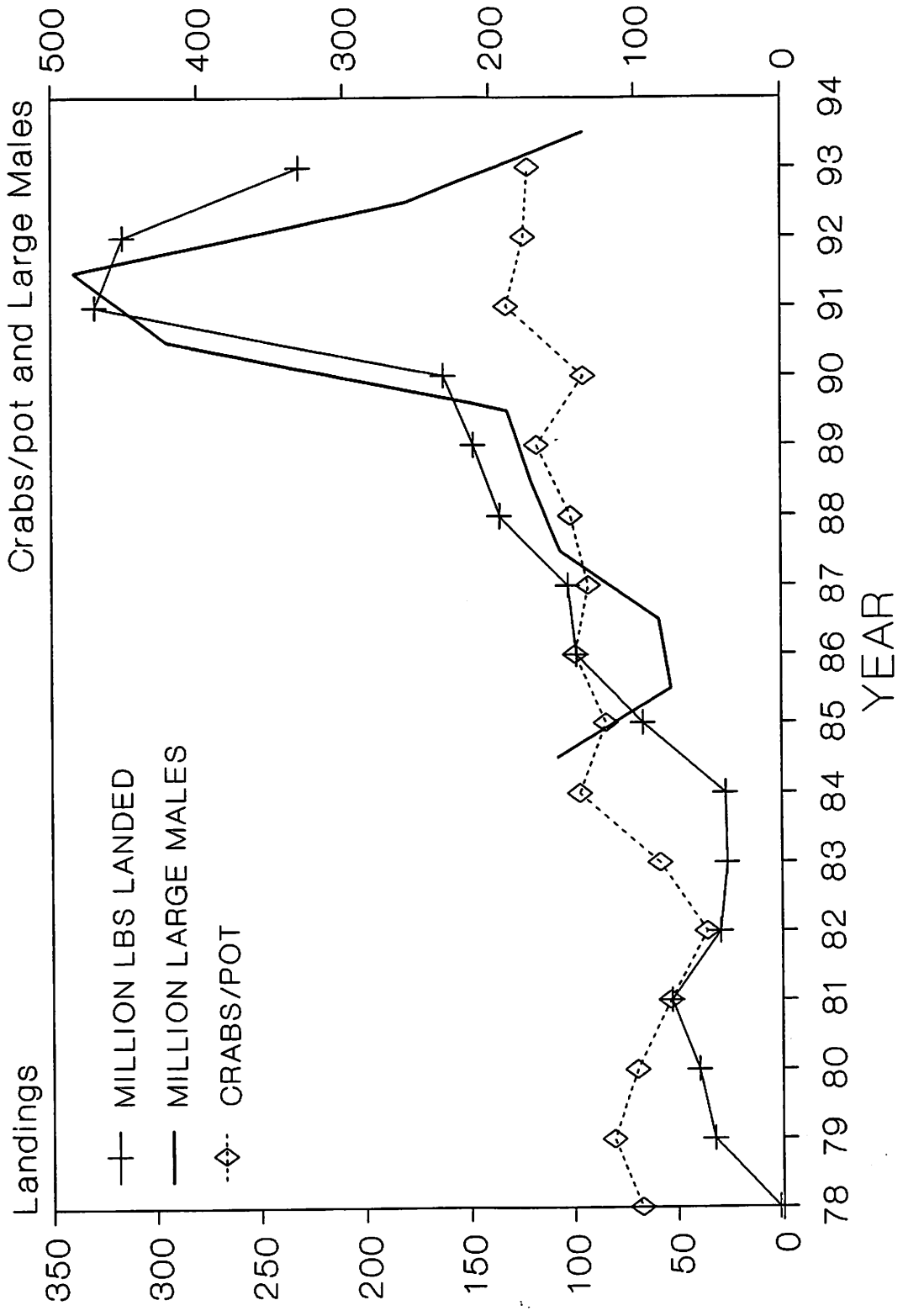
# 1992 TANNER CRAB MALES BY 3 mm INTERVALS



# 1993 TANNER CRAB MALES BY 3 mm INTERVALS

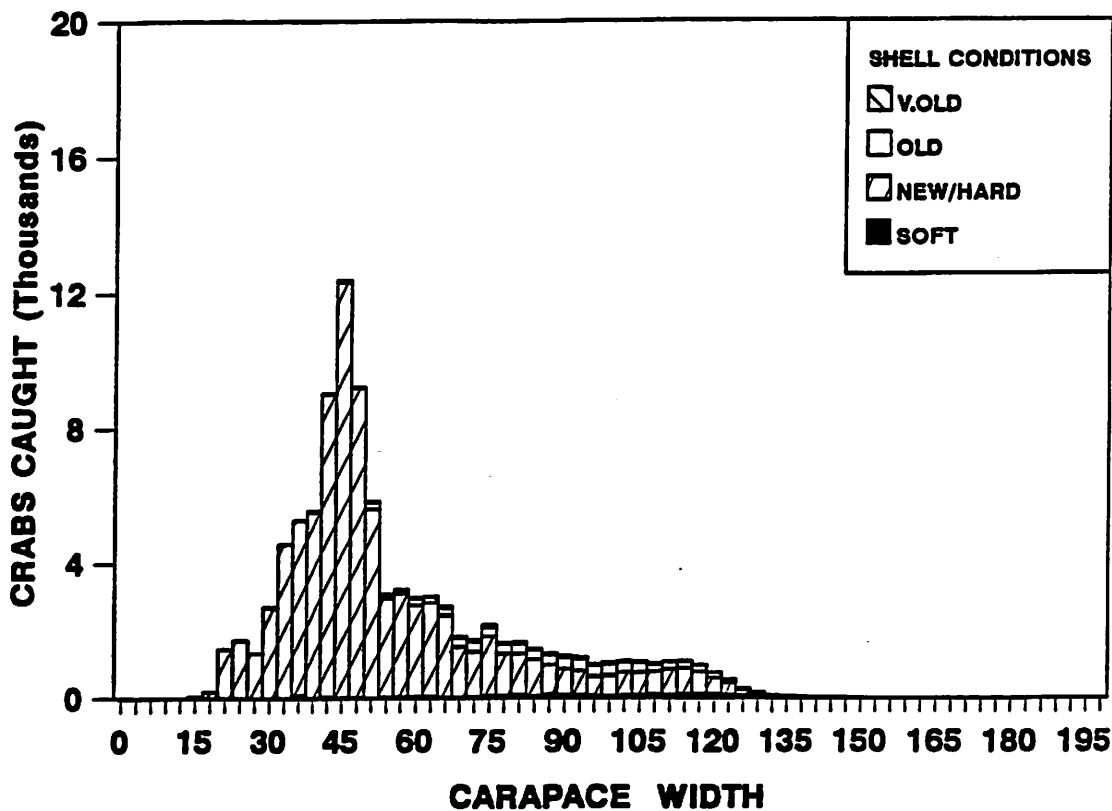


# C. opilio, all Districts

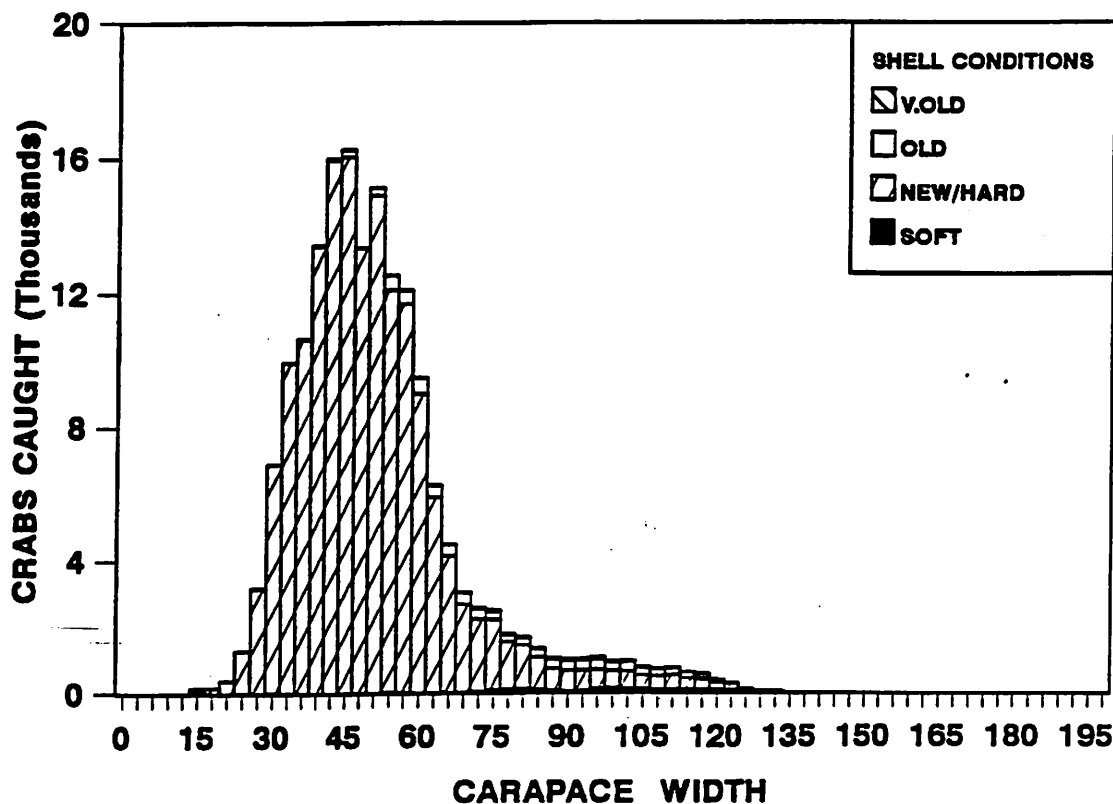




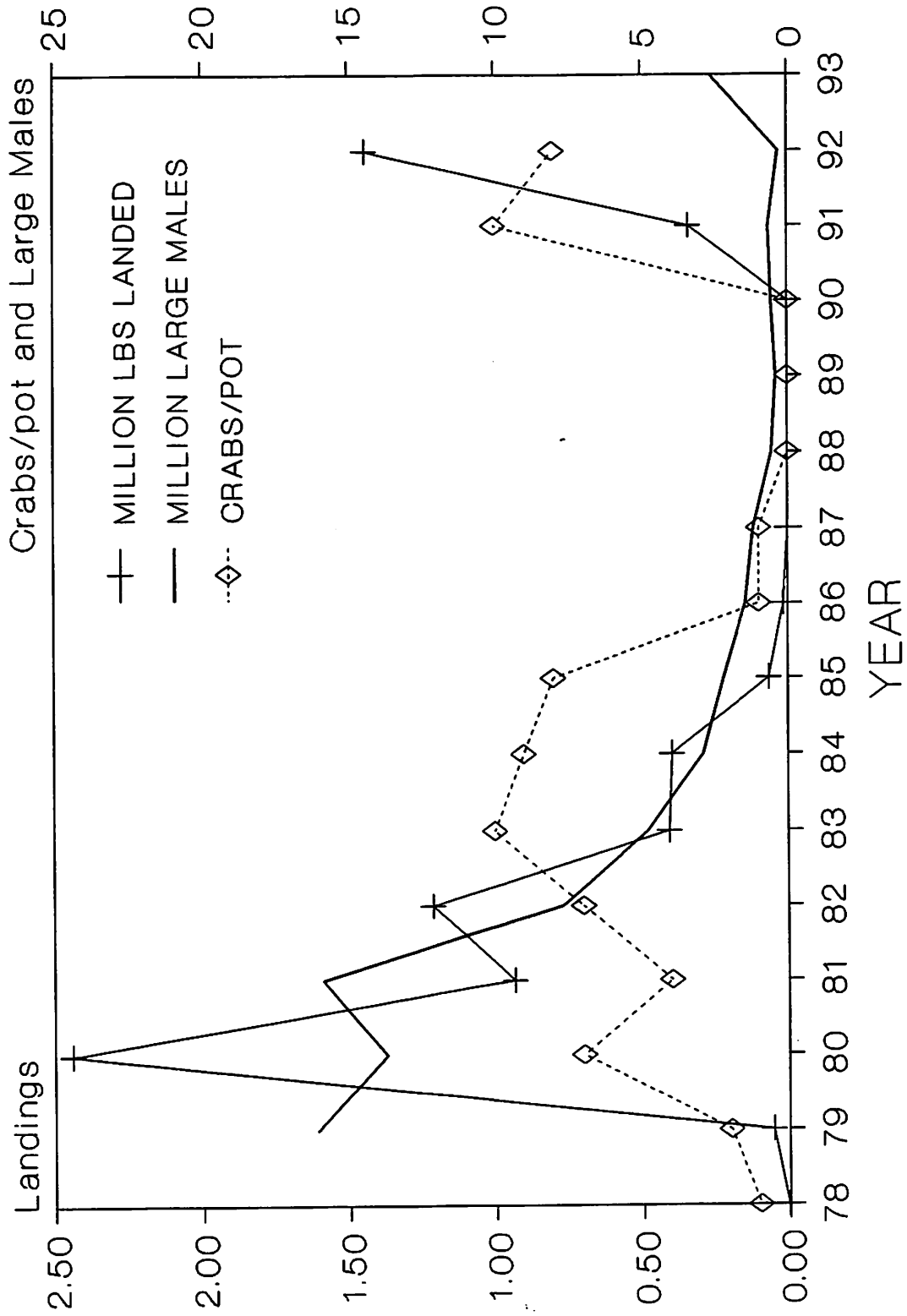
# 1992 SNOW CRAB MALES BY 3 mm INTERVALS



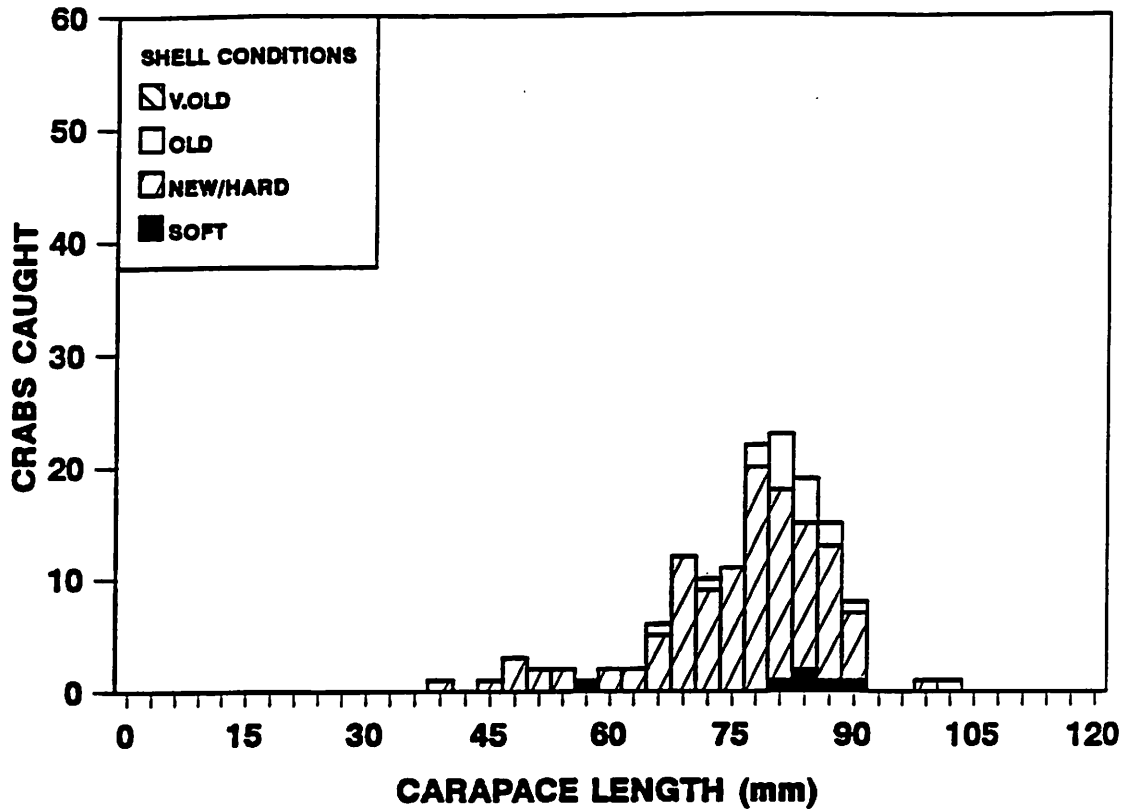
# 1993 SNOW CRAB MALES BY 3 mm INTERVALS



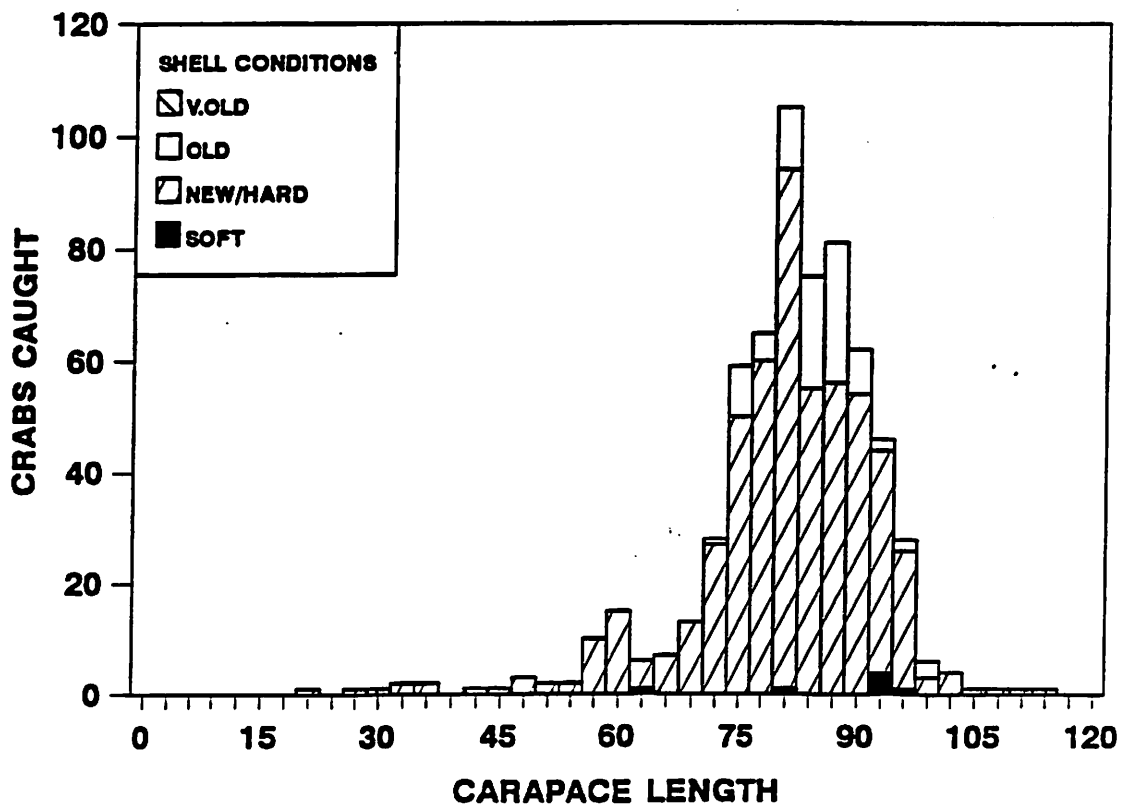
# Hair Crab, Erimacrus isenbeckii



## 1992 MALE HAIR CRAB BY 3 mm INTERVALS



## 1993 MALE HAIR CRAB BY 3 mm INTERVALS



DRAFT

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF  
FISH & GAME  
DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES  
JUNEAU, ALASKA

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES  
SERVICE  
ALASKA REGION  
JUNEAU, ALASKA

STATE/FEDERAL ACTION PLAN  
FOR MANAGEMENT OF  
COMMERCIAL KING AND TANNER CRAB FISHERIES  
SEPTEMBER, 1993

PURPOSE: To foster improved coordination and communication between National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) with respect to crab management under the Fishery Management Plan for the Commercial King and Tanner Crab Fisheries in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Area (FMP). Interagency action groups will implement this coordination.

BACKGROUND: The FMP approved in 1989 establishes a State/Federal cooperative management regime that defers crab management to the State of Alaska with Federal oversight. No immediate Federal regulations are necessary to implement this FMP. The Secretary of Commerce defers to the State's regulatory regime providing it is consistent with the FMP, the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson Act) and other Federal law.

A management goal and specific objectives are identified in the FMP. ADF&G, in consultation with NMFS, recommends to the Alaska Board of Fisheries (Board) appropriate management measure(s) for a given year and geographical area to accomplish the objectives. Three categories of management measures are available for consideration: (1) those that are specifically fixed and require an FMP amendment to change, (2) those that are framework-type measures which the State can change without an FMP amendment but following specified criteria, and (3) those measures that are neither rigidly specified nor frameworked in the FMP. The measures in categories (2) and (3) may be adopted as State laws subject to the appeals process outlined in the FMP.

The State is not limited to only these measures. Any other management measures must be justified based upon consistency with the FMP objectives, the Magnuson Act, and other applicable Federal law.

Overall, the FMP has efficiently managed the crab fisheries. The framework approach has worked well for the majority of crab management issues. However, Category 2 management measures have been appealed to the Secretary (specifically, pot limits and registration areas). Members of the industry also have criticized Board actions with respect to Category 2 measures (setting of guideline harvest levels). To prevent future contentious problems, NMFS and ADF&G will adopt this action plan to more formally implement State/Federal cooperation in crab management.

ACTION: Four action groups, described below, will expedite this joint coordination.

- a) Research Planning Group

- b) Crab Plan Team
- c) State/Federal Policy Group
- d) Council/Board Consultation Group

#### Research Planning Group

The purpose of this group will be to consider long-term crab research priorities, current research activities, and each agency's particular research interests. The group will include NMFS, ADF&G and university crab biologists as well as representatives from NMFS/Fisheries Management Division; Alaska Fisheries Science Center and ADF&G/Division of Commercial Fisheries/Extended Jurisdiction Program. Some of these individuals also may be members of the Crab Plan Team.

The development of a long-term plan for applied crab research will help foster a healthy exchange of ideas among fishery biologists and managers on particular needs. The plan will focus on development of optimal long-term harvest policies. The plan also will function as a vehicle to coordinate the expenditure of crab funds and to seek additional funding for critical research.

The group will meet annually for a one- or two-day period at a time and place convenient for the majority of group members.

#### Crab Plan Team

Though individual members of the Plan Team have always participated in the development of guideline harvest levels (GHLs), public perception is that this is an ad hoc process. The purpose of a Plan Team review will be to formally incorporate its input in the GHL process. The FMP calls for Plan Team input in the preparation of an annual area management report to the Board. This report includes a discussion of the current status of GHLs and support for different management decisions. This report is reviewed by the State, NMFS, and the Council, and available for public comment on an annual basis.

The annual development of the preseason GHLs is a dynamic process dependent on using the most current information available and applying this information via analysis and statistical modeling. Scientists from NMFS and ADF&G are currently involved in this process.

Due to the timing of the Bering Sea surveys and the openings of the early fall fisheries, only a limited amount of time exists to analyze, discuss, amend and release the GHLs to the public in a timely fashion. To release preseason GHLs that have been reviewed using a Council process, such as that used to establish annual groundfish harvest specifications under the groundfish FMPs, would require that current season opening dates for the fall fisheries be delayed and/or rescheduled, or the previous year's survey information would have to be used to set GHLs in the current year. The latter option could interfere with the FMP management objective of biological conservation. In addition, the Council would have to schedule a special meeting or allow time during the September meeting to address crab management after the survey information became available. The Plan Team will meet annually to review GHLs in a session that is open to the public.

State/Federal Policy Group

The purpose of the State/Federal Policy Group will be to review and discuss crab management issues prior to Board and/or Council review. This group will include senior staff and legal counsel and will meet annually, or more often if necessary. Most issues can be more easily resolved with interagency agreements rather than FMP amendments. For instance, prior to final Board action, this Policy Group could determine if crab management proposals are consistent with the FMP and reflect an appropriate and desired management strategy. Also, this group will be included in the review of FMP amendment proposals considering many of them are political in nature. Their recommendations will be forwarded to the Board, providing guidance as the Board establishes management regulations.

Council/Board Consultation Group

NMFS and ADF&G suggest that a Consultation Group composed of a subcommittee of Council and Board members be formed in order to meet on an annual basis to focus on crab issues. (These meetings could occur at one of the regularly scheduled Council or Board meetings.) This joint subcommittee could review staff data on the status of crab stocks and fisheries and both public and staff information regarding crab management and then provide guidance to the respective Council and Board on pertinent crab issues. Council and Board representatives would benefit by meeting for the sole purpose of discussing crab-related issues.

Both NMFS and ADF&G agree to jointly request Council and Board concurrence on these action groups and their role in the cooperative management of the king and Tanner crab fisheries in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands.

This State/Federal Action Plan for Management of Commercial King and Tanner Crab Fisheries has been approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Steven Pennoyer  
Director, Alaska Region  
National Marine Fisheries  
Service

\_\_\_\_\_  
Carl L. Rosier  
Commissioner  
Alaska Department of  
Fish & Game

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date