

**North Pacific Fishery Management Council**  
**C- 4 BBRKC closure area**  
**June 11, 2023**

The Council revises the alternatives as follows and requests staff incorporate additional information below for a second initial review, per the Scientific and Statistical Committee recommendation. Deletions are shown in ~~strikethrough~~ and additions are in **bold**.

Alternative 1: No action (status quo)

Alternative 2: Implement an annual closure of the Red King Crab Savings Area ~~and Red King Crab Savings Subarea~~ to all commercial groundfish fishing gears. The existing closure for non-pelagic trawl gear is not changed **under Option 1. Option 2 modifies the trigger to close the Red King Crab Savings Subarea for non-pelagic trawl.**

The closure would be in effect:

Option 1: If ADF&G does not establish a total allowable catch (TAC) the previous year for the Bristol Bay red king crab fishery.

Option 2: If the total area-swept biomass for BBRKC is less than 50,000 mt.

Suboptions (apply to either Option):

Suboption 1: Exempt hook-and-line gear from the closure

Suboption 2: Exempt pot gear from the closure

Alternative 3: Implement a closure of NMFS Reporting Area 512 to fishing for Pacific cod with pot gear.

The closure would be in effect:

Option 1: If ADF&G does not establish a total allowable catch (TAC) the previous year for the Bristol Bay red king crab fishery.

Option 2: If the total area-swept biomass for BBRKC is less than 50,000 mt.

Revise the analysis as follows:

- Consult with stock assessment authors to better summarize the biological consequences (stock-level impacts) of different levels of PSC in the RKCSA/RKCSS and Area 512 at current levels of BBRKC abundance.
- Include information to evaluate the relative importance of the RKCSA/RKCSS and Area 512 with respect to the entire BBRKC stock.
- Discuss potential for continuation of the 2023 winter pot sampling project.
- Enhance the analysis and discussion of tradeoffs to bycatch and fishing operations for the groundfish fisheries that would be affected by the action alternatives.
  - Incorporate the Appendix 2 analysis on halibut, salmon, and crab PSC into the EA/RIR; expand the analysis of PSC impacts to include PSC data from the past 10 years; and analyze PSC impacts under Alternative 3 in addition to Alternative 2.

- Include analysis of tradeoffs for halibut bycatch that includes the Amendment 80 sector's historic use of the RKCSS based on years prior to 2020 when the total BBRKC PSC limit was set at 99,000 and 32,000 crabs.
- Consult with groundfish fishery participants to gain local knowledge on fleet response to the action alternatives.
- Incorporate SSC recommendations as practicable for additional steps to more accurately portray the likely range and certainty of costs and benefits of the proposed alternatives.
- Describe rationale for 50,000 mt area-swept trigger and the likelihood of the BBRKC stock being above that threshold in the next 10 – 15 years given the most likely projected ecosystem conditions.
- Discuss tradeoffs and merits of 50,000 mt area swept trigger compared to current trigger for closure of the RKCSS to fishing by non-pelagic trawl gear.
- Further explore actions that could be implemented through framework agreements for the pot CV sector and trawl sectors. The actions would have similar goals to the proposed alternatives to reduce BBRKC mortality in the RKCSA and Area 512, respectively, but would be more dynamic and responsive to seasonal spatial distribution of BBRKC and focus avoidance on more discrete areas of relatively higher female BBRKC abundance.
- Remove the pelagic trawl gear definition discussion from Section 4 (to be addressed separately).
- Include information from ongoing and potential projects to address gear-seafloor interactions for all gear types and BBRKC distribution.
- Request NMFS and the Enforcement Committee, in consultation with industry, identify ways to revise the pelagic gear performance standard to be enforceable. Continue to incorporate this discussion into Section 4. To better understand and evaluate this issue, the discussion should also include a full time series of pelagic gear crab PSC after the large mesh introduction in 1993 and an accurate description of catch accounting issues for observers, including the number of annual violations in the same time period (1993 – 2023).