



## C6 St. Matthew Island Blue King Crab Rebuilding Plan Initial Review

December 2019

### Action Memo

Council Staff: Jim Armstrong  
Other Staff: Katie Palof, ADFG (SSC and AP only)  
Action Required: 1. Review the initial review draft of the EA.  
2. Determine whether to release the document and schedule final action.  
3. Select a Preliminary Preferred Alternative, as appropriate.

### BACKGROUND

The Council is considering action to implement a rebuilding plan for the St. Matthew Island blue king crab (SMBKC) stock by amending the BSAI King and Tanner Crab FMP. On October 22, 2018, the NMFS Alaska Region notified the Council that the SMBKC stock was overfished and a rebuilding plan must be implemented within two years. Based on the best available scientific information on the biology of the St. Matthew Island blue king crab stock and environmental conditions, the time period to rebuild the stock will exceed 10 years, as considered under section 304(e)(4)(A)(ii) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

Options for a rebuilding plan were identified by the Council in June 2019 and include a prohibition on directed harvest throughout rebuilding (Alternative 2 / Option 1) or allowing direct harvest during rebuilding under the State of Alaska's harvest strategy (Alternative 2 / Option 2). In contrast, Alternative 1, (no action) would not implement a rebuilding plan.

The estimated times for rebuilding under the alternatives are >40 years (Alternative 1), 14.5 years (Alternative 2, Option 1), and 25.5 years (Alternative 2, Option 2). Only the Options under Alternative 2 accomplish rebuilding within the NS1 definition of  $T_{max}$  (28.5 years) according to the projections.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) that is necessary as part of the decision making process to implement an FMP amendment has been prepared for review at this meeting. The SSC will review the analyses provided in the EA, determine the technical merit of its characterizations of stock rebuilding under the alternatives, and make recommendations, as needed for improvement of those analyses. The Council will receive the SSC recommendations and determine if the EA is adequate to release to the public, with any requested changes by the Council and SSC.

Final review and selection of a preferred alternative will be done at a subsequent Council meeting and must provide adequate time for implementation of the rebuilding plan by October 22, 2020.