

## **D-2 Adak Management District red king crab Draft Feb.7, 2016**

### **Purpose and Need**

Historically, red king crab stocks in the Aleutian Islands have been defined by existing regulatory boundaries. Limited scientific information is available for Aleutian Islands red king crab to understand stock structure, distribution, and abundance. Information on stock structure continues to be lacking though there are likely distinct groups of red king crab that are geographically separated by deep water trenches in passes between the Aleutian Islands.

Under the BSAI crab FMP, management of red king crab in the Aleutian Islands is divided between a rationalized fishery west of 179° W long. (Petrel Bank District) and an open access fishery between 171° W long. and 179° W long. (Adak District). The State-managed open access fishery east of 171° W long. (Dutch Harbor District) is not included in the crab FMP. These three areas are treated differently and managed separately under State and Federal regulations. Due to low stock abundance, State and Federal managers have not opened any of these three fisheries to directed fisheries for over a decade. This precautionary management has ensured that none of these fisheries are subject to overfishing or are overfished.

Recognizing that any potential open access fishery in the Adak District would be managed by the State, and may occur predominately in State waters, Federal management of this fishery under the FMP is unnecessary. A reconnaissance survey in the Adak District in 2015 indicates concentrations of red king crab occur in State waters in this area. Removing the Adak District fishery from the FMP would allow the State to provide management in both State and Federal waters that is tailored to a small-boat fishery, if the stock condition improves. It would also allow the State to manage the Adak District and the Dutch Harbor District in close coordination. Removing the Adak District stock from the FMP would not be expected to result in any change to management practices that would result in additional harvests. The State has consistently demonstrated effective conservation and management of crab stocks within the rationalization program, under the FMP, and exclusively under State management. That sound management would be expected to continue if the stock in the Adak District is removed from the FMP.

### **Alternatives**

1. No Action
2. Remove western Aleutian Island red king crab east of 179° W long. (Adak District) from the BSAI crab FMP.