

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Council, SSC and AP members
FROM: Jim H. Branson
DATE: May 16, 1984
SUBJECT: Tanner Crab Fishery Management Plan

ACTION REQUIRED

Review of Tanner crab management decisions made by the Alaska Board of Fisheries. Provide direction to the Regional Director.

BACKGROUND

At the joint meeting held last March, the Council and Board discussed proposed regulatory changes for the 1984-85 Tanner crab fishery. In particular, the Council reviewed proposals for 3-S management, change of season dates, exclusive registration areas and pot limits. Board action on these and all other Tanner crab proposals are summarized as agenda item D-3(a). With final action on exclusive registration areas and pot limits deferred to the September meeting, only three decisions made by the Board have created regulatory inconsistencies with the plan. They are:

- (1) a lowering of the harvest guideline (ABC/OY) for Yakutat from 500,000-1,000,000 lbs. to 200,000-1,000,000 lbs.;
- (2) a regulation prohibiting registered Tanner crab vessels from registering for more than one Tanner crab fishery at a time and from concurrently registering for a crab fishery in another area; and
- (3) the elimination of the Bristol Bay storage area in favor of re-establishing the old federal area for storing crab pots.

The Tanner crab plan maintenance team has reviewed these three Board actions and make the following recommendations:

- (1) No action required at this time. The lowering of the ABC/OY range is considered insignificant do to the lack of stock assessment surveys in this area. Management of this fishery is conducted primarily on a CPUE basis. If biological conditions warrant, the Regional Director may use his field order authority to close this fishery. Therefore, we don't view this inconsistency as a problem in the short term and it can be eliminated as a housekeeping measure in the next substantial amendment.
- (2) No action required at this time. This regulation prohibiting simultaneous crab registration in different areas was proposed by ADF&G in response to concerns that illegal fishing might be occurring. For example, a vessel may be registered for Tanner crab in South Peninsula and for hair crab in Chignik. The vessel could illegally take Tanner crab from Chignik and report it as catch from South Peninsula. Such a situation could present an enforcement problem.

Federal Tanner crab regulations currently prohibit the simultaneous registration for more than one Tanner crab fishery at a time. Taking Tanner crab from one area and reporting it from another is illegal. However, the taking of hair crab from one area and reporting it as caught from another is a problem facing the state. The state is taking a step to solve this problem with the recent Board action. The PMT views the existing federal regulation as complimenting state efforts and so recommends maintaining the status quo.

- (3) Recommend that the Council direct the Regional Director to withhold or withdraw that portion of the Tanner crab regulatory amendment which would eliminate the old federal pot storage area for the Bristol Bay area. The Board approved a proposal to eliminate the current Bristol Bay pot storage area located north of the Alaska Peninsula in favor of re-establishing the old federal pot storage area located between 57° to 58° N. latitude, and 164° to 166° W. longitude (see Figure 1). This proposal was made due to changes in the location of the fishery. However, because the proposal was submitted under king crab and not under both king and Tanner crab, the state now finds itself with a king crab pot storage area and a Tanner crab pot storage area.

Federal regulations specify only one storage area, known as the "old federal area." NMFS has been trying for almost three years to amend the Tanner crab regulations by eliminating the old federal area and establishing the Bristol Bay area, to be consistent with the state regulations. The regulatory amendment is now ready for approval but NMFS has delayed final action until some direction can be provided by the Council.

The Plan Maintenance Team has contacted the authors of the proposal and their objective was to eliminate the Bristol Bay area and re-establish the old federal storage area for both king and Tanner crab pots [see attached letter, item D-3(b)]. The discussion at the joint meeting also made it clear that this was indeed the intent of the proposal. The state is currently examining ways of eliminating this inconsistency in its shellfish pot storage regulations.

The PMT recommends that the Council direct the Regional Director to withhold or withdraw that portion of the regulatory amendment that would eliminate the old area for the Bristol Bay area. By doing so, the Council will respond to the request by industry to return the old pot storage area and keep Tanner crab regulations consistent with recent Board action.

STATUS OF AMENDMENT #9

Amendment #9 which established a framework procedure for setting fishing seasons and updates MSY and ABC values, was approved by the Council for Secretarial review at the July 1983 meeting. We later learned that the Central Office was viewing the amendment package as structurally incomplete because of concerns over the adequacy of the RIR. In February, we met with Central Office staff on these concerns and agreed to make revisions where necessary. We sent the revised RIR to the Central Office on May 9, but we have heard nothing as to when the Secretarial review will begin.

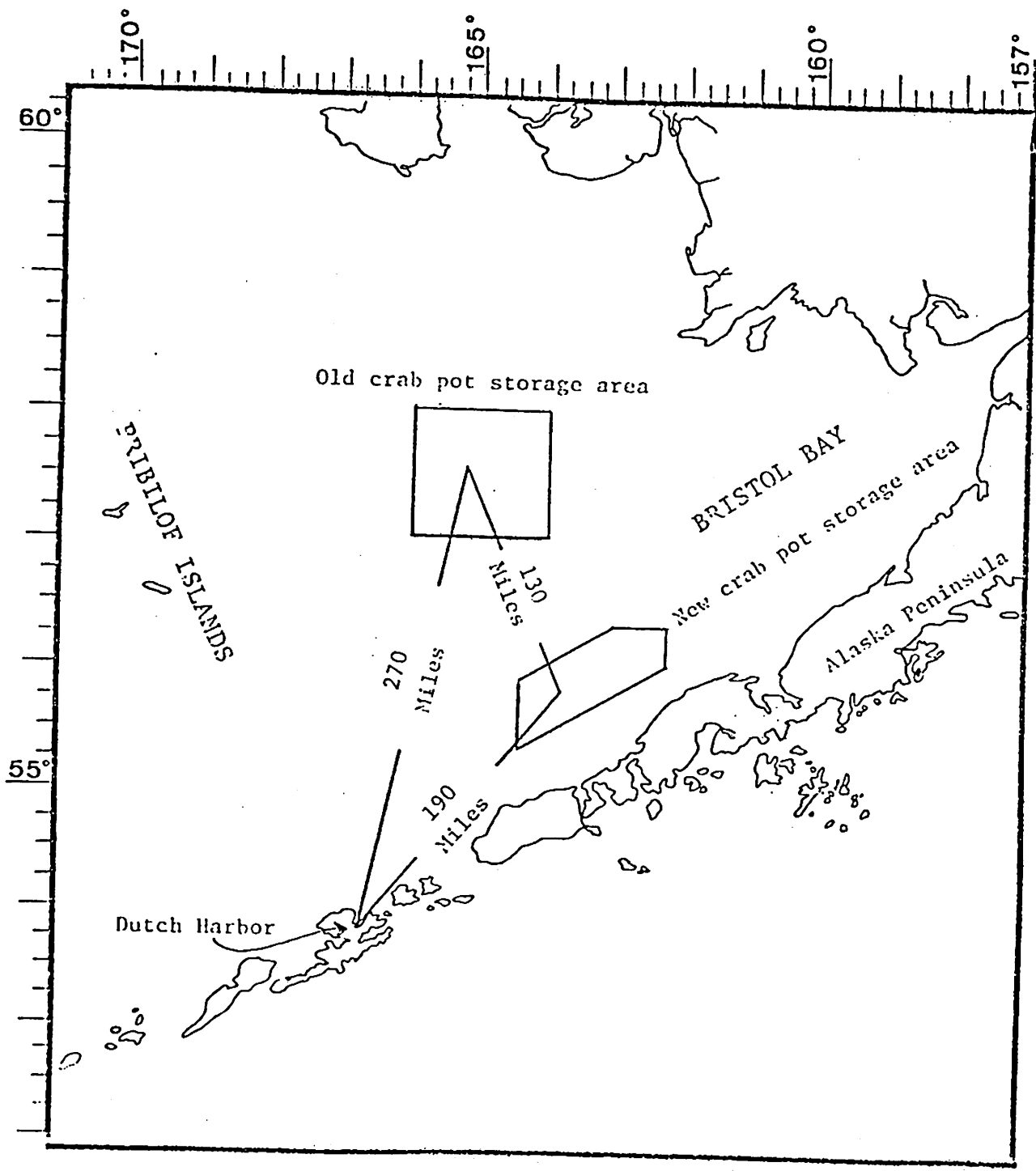


FIGURE 1. Locations and distances between Dutch Harbor and old and new crab pot storage areas in Bristol Bay.

SUMMARY OF BOARD ACTION ON TANNER CRAB
PROPOSALS OF MUTUAL BOARD/COUNCIL CONCERN

Preface: This summary assumes TC-9 (Amendment #9) is in place prior to the 1984-85 season. If TC-9 is not implemented, a plan amendment or an emergency rule may be required for the approved season proposals. Proposals marked with an asterisk indicate state action which might require a plan amendment.

A. SOUTHEASTERN - YAKUTAT

I. Seasons

The Board kept the existing season dates (Feb. 10 - May 1) rather than change to Jan. 15 openings due to ice conditions.

*II. Harvest Guidelines

The guideline harvest level for Yakutat was reduced from 500,000-1,000,000 lbs. to 200,000-1,000,000 lbs.

III. Gear

- a. No action was taken on pot escape rings and mesh size.
- b. Vessels were prohibited from fishing or storing pots in the water 10 days before the Tanner opening.

IV. Closed Waters - no action

V. Registration

Action on exclusive registration was deferred until the September meeting.

B. PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND

I. Registration

Vessels are now required to pre-register prior to the season opening date. This does not conflict with federal regulations.

C. COOK INLET - no action

D. WESTWARD

I. Seasons

All areas now open on January 15, except Adak which opens November 10.

II. Pot Limits

Action on pot limits was deferred until the September meeting.

III. Registration

Action on exclusive registration designation for South Peninsula and Chignik districts was deferred until the September meeting.

*IV. Gear

The Board has re-established the old federal pot storage area in favor of the Bristol Bay area. Council direction to the Regional Director is recommended.

V. Miscellaneous

The proposal to allow vessels to make up lost fishing time for aiding vessels in distress was rejected.

E. STATEWIDE

I. The proposal to allow a bait-up period with tank inspections beginning 120 hours after the season opening was rejected.

II. The Board did not approve the proposal to allow seven days for removal of Tanner gear following the close of an area.

*III. Registered Tanner crab vessels are now prohibited from registering for more than one Tanner crab fishery at a time and from concurrently registering for a crab fishery in another area.

IV. Season

These are the 1984-85 season dates for Tanner Crab as approved by the Board:

<u>Area</u>	<u>Open</u>	<u>Close</u>	<u>Opilio closure</u>
Kodiak	Jan. 15	April 30	
Alaska Peninsula (Chignik)	Jan. 15	May 15	
Eastern Aleutians (Dutch Harbor)	Jan. 15	June 15	
Western Aleutians (Adak)	Nov. 10	June 15	
Bristol Bay	Jan. 15	June 15	Aug. 1
Pribilofs	Jan. 15	June 15	Aug. 1
St. Matthew	Jan. 15	June 15	Aug. 1
Norton Sound	Jan. 15	June 15	Aug. 1
St. Lawrence	Jan. 15	June 15	Aug. 1
Cook Inlet	Nov. 1	May 31	
Prince William Sound	Jan. 5	May 31	
Southeast/Yakutat	Feb. 10	May 1	

