



Enforcement Committee

Background for C4 Crab Partial Deliveries

In April 2018, the Council received a proposal from the Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee (PNCIAC), requesting the Council consider removing a regulatory prohibition that bans vessels fishing for Crab Rationalization (CR) crab from conducting a partial offload of crab and then continuing to fish, prior to the offload of any remaining crab. In February 2019 the Council received a discussion paper on this issue and chose to move this action forward by identifying the following purpose and need and one action alternative for consideration in this Initial Review Draft Analysis.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of this action is to allow vessels participating in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Crab Rationalization (CR) Program to make partial deliveries of crab and then continue fishing before fully offloading all harvested crab. This action would be to remove Federal regulations that prohibit the continuation of a fishing trip subsequent to a partial offload of crab in the CR program. The need for this action is to provide operational flexibility to vessels to conduct their business in the safest and economically efficient manner and when emergencies or special circumstances arise, while also ensuring proper catch accounting.

Alternatives

Alternative 1 (No Action): Status quo is maintained. Vessels are prohibited from resuming fishing for CR crab on board a vessel once a landing has commenced and until all CR crab are landed, unless fishing in the Western Aleutian Islands golden king crab fishery.

Alternative 2: Remove the prohibition on resuming fishing for CR crab on board a vessel once a landing has commenced and until all CR crab are landed. This will allow vessels to make partial deliveries of CR crab and then continue fishing before fully offloading all harvested crab.

Option: In the event of a partial offload within a fishing trip, only entire tank crab contents may be offloaded. (Any tank started for offload must be fully offloaded.)

Safety at Sea Considerations:

Several harvesters testified about the proposal's benefits in increasing vessel safety (February 2019 Council meeting). These testifiers highlighted situations related to weather and ocean conditions where any additional operational flexibility could improve safety at sea.

As mentioned in Section 2.6.4.3 of the June 2019 initial review analysis, the degree to which an operational decision was motivated by safety versus efficiency can be difficult to tease apart. It seems unlikely to analysts that the proposed action would address *purely* safety issues that may arise, because the proposed action is additional *fishing* flexibility; i.e. allowing vessels to go back out fishing (or hauling gear) after part of an offload. If conditions are dangerous, the safest option would generally be not to continue fishing.

There are situations however, where the use of this flexibility might be related to poor ocean and weather conditions. For instance, this flexibility may be advantageous if a storm is forecasted and harvesters want to retrieve their gear from the grounds before they are done offloading. Offloading a whole vessel may take more than one day. Without this flexibility, a vessel operator may be tempted to retrieve gear in poor weather after the offload is complete; however, the harvesters are never obligated to retrieve gear in unsafe conditions. This decision would also be motivated by operational costs (loss of gear, loss of time, etc). Thus, safety-related circumstances are likely to include at least some personal economic motivation as well. Increased operational flexibility *can* improve safety at sea, but as always, this needs to be paired with rational judgement about risks.