

Agenda Item: B-2

**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME****REPORT TO THE NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL****December 6, 1993**

Fisheries managed under delegated authority to the State of Alaska since the last council meeting include crab, salmon and demersal rockfish.

BERING SEA KING AND TANNER CRAB FISHERIES: The Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) king crab fisheries started with the opening of the Dutch Harbor brown king crab fishery on September 1. Five vessels registered for the fishery and caught approximately 750,000 pounds before moving to the Adak red and brown king crab fishery that opened on November 1.

On September 15, blue king crab in the Saint Matthew Island section and red king crab in the Pribilof Island district opened. Traditionally, the Pribilof Island district has harvested blue king crab, but the 1993 summer NMFS trawl survey indicated a larger harvestable abundance of red king crab this year. Due to the low abundance estimate for blue king crab, the department decided not to conduct a commercial fishery on the blue king crab stocks, but set a 3.4 million pound guideline harvest level (GHL) for the red king crab only. This is the first commercial king crab fishery in the Pribilof Island district since 1988. At the same time, a 4.4 million pound blue king crab GHL was set for the Saint Matthew section.

Both of these areas were opened with new pot limits set by the Board of Fisheries (board) during their February meeting. The Saint Matthew sections pot limit was 75 for vessels over and including 125 foot over all length, and 60 for vessels under 125 feet. In the Pribilof district, the pot limits were 50 and 40 respectively.

A total of 92 vessels, 72 less than the 1992 season, registered for the Saint Matthew fishery, and 112 vessels registered for the Pribilof Island red king crab fishery. Both fisheries lasted six

days and were closed when it was estimated that the pre-season GHL was reached. The Saint Matthew fishery yielded 3.0 million pounds and the Pribilof fishery produced 2.6 million pounds. The department discussed re-opening both fisheries, but due to lack of public interest and support in returning to the areas while other major fisheries were taking place, the fisheries remained closed.

New buoy tags were issued for the 1993/94 fisheries. Rather than using a tag that was stuck to the buoy, the department issued a tag that "tied" to the buoy. Reports indicate that the new tag retention is highly acceptable and the department is not faced with the same situation it faced during the fisheries last year when tags began falling off the buoy bags and the state consequently suspended the tag requirement prior to the opening of the Tanner crab season last November.

On November 1, the Bristol Bay red king crab fishery opened with a 250/200 pot limit and a 16.8 million pound GHL, almost 5 million pounds more than the 1992 GHL. New regulations also allowed the retention of *C. bairdi* Tanner crab during the king crab fishery. A total of 290 vessels and over 64,000 pots were registered for the fishery. The fishery lasted 9 days and preliminary estimates show the harvest at 14.2 million pounds of red king crab and 3.5 million pounds of Tanner crab harvested. On November 20, ten days after the closure of the king crab fishery, new regulations open the area west of 163° West longitude to the remainder of the 19.7 million pound *C. bairdi* Tanner crab GHL. The *C. opilio* Tanner crab fishery is scheduled to open on January 15, with a pre-season GHL of 105.8 million pounds.

The Adak king and Tanner crab fisheries also opened on November 1, with only a few vessels registering for that fishery. To date, 0.4 million pounds of red king crab and there are no reports of brown king crab having been landed. Additional vessels entered the fishery after the closure of the Bristol Bay red king crab fishery, bringing the total to date to 11.

SALMON TROLL FISHERY: The 1994 troll chinook accounting began on October 1, 1993, but as in 1992, the opening was delayed 10 days and is currently scheduled to continue through April 14, 1994. The catch to date is 16,200 fish. The Alaska hatchery percentage appears to be low at this time.

SOUTHEAST ALASKA DEMERSAL SHELF ROCKFISH FISHERY: The directed lingcod fishery was closed on September 22 when the end of the annual GHR was reached. In addition, the directed DSR fishery was closed on November 9 when TAC was achieved. The 10% bycatch limit was implemented in conjunction with the directed fishery closure. Little bycatch is anticipated since the Gulf is closed to longlining and the lingcod dinglebar fishery is also closed.

New Board regulations adopted will: 1) make the state's

management area boundaries compatible with the revised federal regulatory districts; 2) allow setting of DSR bycatch limits by emergency order; 3) set GHR for DSR in the East Yakutat section of the Southeast Outside District; 4) assure future compatibility between state and federal opening dates for sablefish; 5) prohibit transport of bait-caught sablefish into federal waters, closing the loophole which has allowed fishers to have sablefish onboard before an opening; 6) set bycatch limits for sablefish in the 0-3 mile zone the same as those in the 3-200 mile zone in adjacent management areas; 7) adoption of a lingcod management plan, which will allow an expansion of the winter closure out to the 3 mile line that will provide better protection for nest-guarding lingcod, and a harvest-per-unit-of-habitat based harvest level for each of the state's management areas. This new plan controls total fishing mortality whether taken in the directed fishery or as bycatch. Once the harvest objective for an area is reached, lingcod will become a prohibited species for the remainder of the year.