



## D2 Bristol Bay Red King Crab Info Paper

October 2022 Council Meeting

### Action Memo

- Council Staff: Sam Cunningham
- Other Presenters: Dr. Kelly Cates (NMFS); Dr. Ben Daly (ADF&G), Krista Milani (NMFS)
- Action Required:
1. Review comments submitted under Request for Information (RFI)
  2. Review discussion paper
  3. Determine whether to initiate consideration of a future action through either a subsequent discussion paper or by establishing a Purpose and Need Statement and alternatives for analysis
  4. Consider any statements of support for specific research consistent with understanding the BBRKC stock, as desired.

### Background

In April 2022, the Council reviewed a discussion paper on an array of topics relating to Bristol Bay red king crab (BBRKC), including life-history, management and stock assessment boundaries, bottom contact by pelagic trawl gear, and issues related to dynamic season or area closures. The Council made a two-part [motion](#) that established the content of this agenda item. First, the Council made an open request to the public for feedback on topics including – but not limited to – voluntary measures that could be implemented as soon as 2023 to avoid BBRKC and reduce crab mortality in non-directed fisheries, measures to reduce discard mortality in directed crab fisheries, research that could inform development of flexible spatial management measures or gear modifications that would reduce impacts on crab or better evaluate unobserved mortality of crab due to trawl gear interactions. Second, the Council requested a new discussion paper with six focus areas. The discussion paper is a separate document from the one reviewed in April, not a revision (links to April [paper](#) and [appendix](#)). While there is some overlap in subject areas, the two discussion papers should be viewed as additive – along with public comments that have been submitted – in forming a basis for the Council’s consideration of any future actions related to promoting the BBRKC stock and/or managing Federal groundfish fisheries that may interact with that stock directly or indirectly. A list of the topics in the discussion paper is included at the end of this memo.

The Council’s request for information (RFI) was published in the Federal Register ([87 FR 34255](#), June 6, 2022) and publicized through the Council website and at the June 2022 Council meeting. Seventeen written comments were received by the September 23 deadline; they can be viewed on a dedicated web page on the NPFMC [meetings portal](#). Staff have also provided an attachment under the October D2 agenda item that lists the commenters and broadly categorizes the elements of the RFI that were addressed in each comment, where applicable. RFI comments are additional to written comments submitted directly to the Council’s electronic agenda under this D2 item.

The discussion paper covers six topics as defined by the Council motion:

1. Impacts of annual or seasonal closures on pelagic trawl, groundfish pot, and longline gear in the RKCSA
2. Sources of BBRKC mortality across Federal groundfish fisheries and directed crab fisheries (BBRKC and Tanner crab). Note: in addition to data tables organized by management area and timing, this section describes crab mortality rate estimation, observer coverage, and methods used/available to consider bottom-contact of groundfish gears. Appendix 1 provides a more detailed description of crab bycatch estimation methods for BSAI groundfish fisheries.
3. Scientific information needed to establish dynamic closed areas
4. Information needed for Amendment 80 to establish rolling hotspot closure system
5. Impact of groundfish predation on BBRKC
6. Impact analyses on hypothetical changes to Pacific cod fishery: (1) prohibit Pacific cod pot gear in NMFS Area 512; (2) establish RKC hard cap prohibited species catch limits for pot gear.