



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
P.O. Box 21668
Juneau, AK 99802-1668

May 21, 2024

Mr. David Witherell, Executive Director
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
1007 West Third, Suite 400
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Dear Mr. Witherell:

We have approved amendments 54 and 55 to the Fishery Management Plan for Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs (RIN 0648-BM81). These amendments would revise two provisions of the BSAI Crab Rationalization Program (CR Program) to: 1) change active participate requirements for quota share (QS) established for catcher vessel crew (CVC) and catcher/processor crew (CPC), known as C shares, and 2) expand the exemptions for custom processing and remove the facility use cap.

Amendment 54 restarts the most recent consecutive 3- and 4-crab fishing years timeframe for meeting active participation requirements for all CVC QS and CPC QS holders in order to receive annual issuance of individual fishing quota (IFQ) and retain QS; authorizes the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to reissue QS that it had revoked between July 1, 2019 and the effective date of this final rule; removes the distinction between initial recipients and new entrants by allowing all CVC QS and CPC QS holders to meet participation requirements by participating in crew activity in any combination onboard fishing or tender vessels in commercial fisheries managed by the State of Alaska or a U.S. commercial fishery in Federal waters off Alaska for at least 30 days; clarifies the requirements to participate as crew in one crab delivery includes participation in the fishing trip that results in a crab landing; and expands the closed fishery exemption for CVC QS and CPC QS holders who hold QS exclusively in closed CR Program fisheries to apply to more than just a single closed CR Program fishery.

Amendment 55 removes the processor facility use cap that limits the amount a processor can process IPQ in the Eastern Aleutian Island golden king crab and Western Aleutian Island red king crab fisheries. Additionally, amendment 55 exempts custom processing of Bering sea snow crab IPQ with a south region designation, Bristol Bay red king crab IPQ, and Western Aleutian Island golden king crab IPQ processed east of 174° W. from being counted against a processor IPQ use cap. Existing crab processing facility and IPQ use caps were designed and implemented when crab TACs in all crab fisheries were at a much higher level than in recent years. A final rule to implement amendments 54 and 55 accompanies the FMP amendment and should publish in the *Federal Register* shortly.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Kurland".

Jonathan Kurland
Regional Administrator

