Bristol Bay Red King Crab Information

Appendix 2¹

The information in this appendix is a supplement to Section 4 of the Bristol Bay Red King Crab (BBRKC) Information discussion paper (Agenda Item D1). That section – *Item 3: Bottom Contact by Pelagic Trawl Gear* – includes maps and a time series line graph that show estimated bottom contact by pelagic trawl gear in the eastern Bering Sea from 2003 through 2021 (Figures 4-1 through 4-4). The map figures in the discussion paper compress estimations across periods of time (months or seasons, over the 2003-2021 period) for the purpose of concise presentation. The analysts realize, however, that readers might want a more granular look at how estimated bottom contact may differ in total amount and spatial distribution between years and within seasons (i.e., monthly). This appendix provides the full set of monthly bottom contact estimates for the entire study period.

The following materials² include:

- A continuous timeline plot with a monthly time-step (each month marked by a point) showing total estimated "Swept Area" within the studied area. This is directly analogous to Figure 4-4 in the discussion paper but sums monthly estimates across the areas that were broken out individually in Figure 4-4. This plot is a useful reference to put into context the estimated swept area (km²) that is shown in parentheses in the title of each monthly map (see next bullet).
- The bulk of this appendix is a catalogue of month-by-month maps that illustrate the estimated swept area in the region of interest. The analyzed period runs from 2003 through 2021. The start date is a function of the fact that the Fishing Effects model upon which the bottom contact adjustments used in the estimates are based begins in 2003. The 2003 start date does not hold any particular significance in terms of how the Bering Sea pelagic trawl (pollock) fishery operates or is managed, though management changes relating to salmon bycatch minimization are noted in Section 5 of the discussion paper. Each map identifies the month, year, and total estimated swept area in the title. The total swept area per month (km²) in each 5-kilometer grid cell is plotted in nominal terms but the colors are adjusted to a logarithmic scale to better illustrate contrast. This means that each major step on the color-scale bar includes ten units; e.g., ten steps between 0.1 and 1; ten steps between 10 and 100. The color scale runs from yellow (very low) to purple (very high). Without the scale adjustment, many grid cells would appear similar. The relative "weight" of dark/purple cells in these monthly maps is greater than those shown in the discussion paper where any cell with a swept area estimate greater than 5 km² has the same shading and cell estimates are somewhat muted by averaging across time periods (as in Figures 4-1 through 4-3).
- To better illustrate the generally consistent annual spatial cycle of bottom contact, the maps covering 2016 through 2021 are combined into an animation (GIF file) that is attached separately to the Council's April 2022 eAgenda. Watching this animated loop should familiarize the reader with intra-annual patterns. If the reader wishes to explore a particular year or a month more closely then he or she may look at the static maps provided here for each month of the 2003-2021 period.

The reader of this appendix should refer to the description of how bottom contact estimates (swept area; km²) are derived on pages 25-26 of the discussion paper. The maps display a new way to show the best available estimates of bottom contact by pelagic trawl gear that are built on the parameters used in the

¹ Prepared by Sam Cunningham (NPFMC)

² Maps produced by Fisheries, Aquatic Sciences & Technology (FAST) Lab at Alaska Pacific University (F. Restrepo) in coordination with NPFMC staff, 2022.

Fishing Effects (FE) model but are fundamentally different from that model and how its outputs are meant to be interpreted. The swept area calculations in this appendix, and in the discussion paper, are a straightforward estimate of when, where, and how much pelagic trawl gear may be contacting the seafloor. By contrast, the FE model is a cumulative representation of the impact of *all gears* on benthic habitat, accounting for not only bottom contact but also the susceptibility of biological and geological habitats and recovery from fishery disturbance.

The swept area estimates in this analysis take Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) tracks – which are comprehensive given this fleet's level of monitoring – and puts them through the "FE model" adjustment parameters that translate 'tow length' and 'maximum trawl width' to bottom contact. Those parameters have been reviewed by the SSC as part of the Essential Fish Habitat process. The calculation of bottom contact, or "swept area", is the result of a two-step process: (1) assigning pelagic trawl tow tracks a 'nominal width', and (2) estimating the proportion of the nominally swept area that was subject to bottom contact. The first step uses FE parameters to estimate how wide a trawl net is likely to be spread based on a variety of factors (e.g., vessel size/type, area, season, target, fishing depth); this is the nominal width. The second step interacts 'nominal width * tow length' with an adjustment for how often gear is estimated to be contacting the seafloor on a given tow using the information listed previously as well as empirical studies that link event-level characteristics to the probability of a trawl contacting the seafloor. This process is performed for every pelagic trawl tow in the studied area/period and estimates are projected at the 5 km grid level.

As noted throughout the discussion paper, this version of bottom contact estimates may be an essential tool for considering the impact of fishing gear on bycatch species and the benthic environment but these estimates are not analogues for direct impacts since they do not incorporate data on the time-specific location of bycatch species, the shell condition of crustaceans, or the nature of the substrate that is being contacted.



































































































































































































































































































































































































































