

**NPFMC ADVISORY PANEL
Motions and Rationale
April 2025 - Teleconference**

D2 GOA Tanner Crab Motion

The following is the substitute motion which passed. The original motion is located at the bottom of this document is ~~strikeout~~.

The AP recommends that the Council request an expanded discussion paper that includes the best available scientific information to define the problem, methods for evaluating existing and potential new fishery closures to protect GOA Tanner crab and more data to capture the importance of the two stat areas to the shorebased catcher vessel fleets. Rather than a third standalone discussion paper, this expanded discussion paper should combine the February 2024 and April 2025 discussion papers with updates and should also include the following:

What is the problem:

- Provide tanner crab fishing mortality both from the groundfish fleets and within the directed fishery itself (both harvests and bycatch).
- Information that could explain the cyclic nature and success of tanner crab recruitment events.
- Information that could explain why the most heavily fished area has the highest abundance of tanner crab compared to other areas that are lightly fished.

Best available science to develop and remove closure areas:

- Literature review of the science regarding the effectiveness of static closures on reduction of bycatch and habitat disturbance, including trade-offs with open areas.
- Best available science for determining closure elements: boundaries and timing.
- How best to design seasonal closures, closures based on recruitment events, other biological criteria (e.g. molting) and the tradeoffs for these types of closures compared to annual closures.
- Set of goals and measurable objectives that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of crab closures.
- Criteria for maintaining and removing closures.
- Appropriate time periods for re-evaluation of closures and potential actions that could be taken during the evaluation process.

Staff should work with the SSC to provide recommendations for these topics.

Importance of the statistical areas 525702 and 525630:

- Overlay all closure areas that affect each fishing sector to understand what is truly open for fishing.
- Provide additional ADF&G survey crab per kilometer towed heat maps (Figure 5) to show any shifts in annual distribution of Tanner crab in stat areas 525702 and 525630. This should be a separate figure for each year from 2012 – 2024, rather than combined years.

- Provide additional ADF&G survey area swept heat maps to show any shifts in annual distribution of Tanner crab in stat areas 525702 and 525630. This should be a separate figure for each year from 2012 – 2024, rather than combined years.
- For the catcher vessel sectors only, provide the volume of NPT, PTR, POT groundfish harvests and the directed Tanner crab fisheries harvests in stat areas 525702 and 525630, for the years 2012 - 2024.
- Table 6 should be revised in such a way that separates CV and CP operations without disclosing confidential information.
- Develop a better method for demonstrating how important these stat areas are to the different groundfish sectors. For example, a heat map of fishing effort by stat area for the CV sector for NPT, PTR and pot harvests for the years 2012 - 2024 in the CGOA.

Substitute Motion passed 12-9

Rationale in Favor of Substitute Motion

- *Several AP members noted that Kodiak relies on all fisheries and gear types to keep harvesters, processors, and the community whole. They referenced public testimony regarding the importance of statistical areas 525630 and 525702 to the Kodiak trawl catcher vessel fleet and noted concern with closing those areas without first formulating objectives for monitoring the success of new closures or existing crab closure areas. AP members also noted that rushing this action could cause additional harm to the Kodiak processors since they rely on trawl volume to stay open for smaller fisheries, and the industry is already under significant stress.*
- *AP members in support of the motion did not believe that there was not enough information presented in the discussion paper, or in combination with the February 2024 discussion paper, to inform whether there is a problem or to inform the development of a Purpose and Need Statement and range of alternatives.*
- *The maker of the motion noted their intent to combine all three prior discussion papers to make it easier to compare and evaluate all information analyzed to date.*
- *While the motion maker noted that some of the information requested could be included in an Initial Review, they felt that the information request was better suited for an expanded discussion paper.*
- *The maker of the motion noted that a third expanded discussion paper was not intended to delay action; rather, they felt it was the best process to collect the best available science to inform the effectiveness of static closures and how to develop new dynamic areas with metrics.*
- *The AP discussed and heard in public testimony that there are numerous static closures around Kodiak Island, including the Type I and II King Crab and Marmot Bay Tanner Crab Protection area that, despite being closed since 1987 and 2014, respectively, do not hold the majority of the Tanner Crab biomass.*
- *It was noted by some AP members that the ability to reopen existing crab closure areas should be considered under this Agenda item because new crab closure areas would likely threaten the ability of the Kodiak trawl fleet to remain in business.*
- *It was also noted that while regulatory action to constrain the trawl fishery continues to be contemplated and implemented, the GOA trawl fisheries are still forced to operate without the*

cooperative management tools afforded to all other trawl fisheries in the North Pacific, limiting the ability of the trawl fleet to be responsive in-season.

- *Members of the AP felt the original AP motion was not responsive to concerns voiced by some public testifiers and members of the trawl fishery as far as moving to smaller, more dynamic closers in the area that would have continued access to these areas open to both crab and trawl fishermen.*
- *Additionally, there were concerns expressed by the AP that no objective criteria were identified to periodically review keeping this area, or other areas, closed to trawling or reopening this or other areas in the future if continued closure proved to be ineffective.*

Rationale in Opposition to Substitute Motion

- *Some AP members felt the substitute motion was a departure from the intent of the action as there was not a focus on the protection of Tanner crab.*
- *Some AP members believe the Council can move forward with Tanner Crab Protections by implementing closures now versus the consideration of reopening areas simultaneously.*
- *Other AP members expressed a concern that the substitute motion did not provide enough structure to move the action forward in a meaningful way and that an initial review was appropriate despite there being a need to further narrow the proposed closure areas.*
- *In regards to the motion makers' concern about the lack of scientific data available to implement a closure area, one AP member suggested that NMFS' policy guidance on National Standard 2 notes, which states "the fact that scientific data is incomplete does not prevent preparation or implementation [of an FMP]," applied to the issue at hand.*
- *Some AP members did not think that a review of other Kodiak-area trawl closure areas should be considered under this action because doing so would further complicate the action, increase the amount of staff resources needed, and attract additional interest from stakeholders. Others noted that if a review process were eventually developed, it would apply to this new closure area.*
- *Some AP members thought that the information requested in the substitute motion could be included in an initial review rather than a discussion paper.*
- *Some AP members expressed concern that the substitute motion was not responsive to the majority of written and oral testimony, which asked for the motion to stay focused on the protection of Tanner Crab.*

The AP recommends that the Council move the Tanner Crab Protections Discussion to initial review.

Purpose & Need Statement: : The purpose of this action is to consider closure areas for the protection of centers of abundance and corresponding habitat for Gulf of Alaska (GOA) Tanner Crab (*Chionoecetes bairdi*) from groundfish fishing impacts. Significant biomass of crab are identified to be present in the proposed area closures throughout the year and consistently through time. Kodiak's harvesting and processing sectors depend on diverse access to various fisheries including crab and groundfish. Tanner Crab harvests are an important economic driver for the local economy. This action is intended to help ensure the sustainability and productivity of Tanner Crab.

This proactive approach aims to balance competing uses of marine resources and diverse social and economic goals for sustainable fishery management, including protecting long-term resource health. The Council seeks to minimize bycatch, ensure the sustainability of the Tanner Crab population, and reduce impacts where practicable.

Alternatives

1. Status Quo

2. Statistical Area Closures Implement annual or seasonal closures in statistical areas 525702 and/or 525630.

A) Year-Round

a. Groundfish Pot & Trawl (NPR & PTR) gear

b. Trawl (NPT & PTR) gear

_____ c. NPT gear

_____ d. Review

_____ a. 3-5 yrs

_____ b. 7-8 yrs

_____ c. 10yrs (or in cycle with the GOA FMP Review

~~B) Seasonal (February 15–June 15)~~

~~a. Groundfish Pot & Trawl (NPR & PTR) gear~~

~~b. Trawl (NPT & PTR) gear~~

~~c. NPT gear~~

~~———— d. Review~~

~~———— a. 3–5 yrs~~

~~———— b. 7–8 yrs~~

~~———— c. 10yrs (or in cycle with the GOA FMP Review)~~

Note: Year-round and seasonal closures are not mutually exclusive and can be considered separately for different gear types within individual areas.

~~3. Partial Area Closures~~ Identify and evaluate more refined closure areas within the broader statistical areas to maximize protection for Tanner crab.

~~A) Option 1 (See Map 1)~~

~~1) Year-Round~~

~~a. Groundfish Pot & Trawl (NPR & PTR) gear~~

~~b. Trawl (NPT & PTR) gear~~

~~———— c. NPT gear~~

~~———— d. Review~~

~~———— a. 3–5 yrs~~

~~———— b. 7–8 yrs~~

~~_____ c. 10yrs (or in cycle with the GOA FMP Review~~

~~_____ **2) Seasonal** (February 15-June 15)~~

~~_____ a. Groundfish Pot & Trawl (NPR & PTR) gear~~

~~b. Trawl (NPT & PTR) gear~~

~~c. NPT gear~~

~~_____ d. Review~~

~~_____ a. 3-5 yrs~~

~~_____ b. 7-8 yrs~~

~~_____ c. 10yrs (or in cycle with the GOA FMP Review~~

~~B) Option 2 (See Map 2)~~

~~1) Year-Round~~

~~a. Groundfish Pot & Trawl (NPR & PTR) gear~~

~~b. Trawl (NPT & PTR) gear~~

~~_____ c. NPT gear~~

~~_____ d. Review~~

~~_____ a. 3-5 yrs~~

~~_____ b. 7-8 yrs~~

~~_____ c. 10yrs (or in cycle with the GOA FMP Review~~

~~———— 2) Seasonal (February 15–June 15)~~

~~———— a. Groundfish Pot & Trawl (NPR & PTR) gear~~

~~b. Trawl (NPT & PTR) gear~~

~~c. NPT gear~~

~~———— d. Review~~

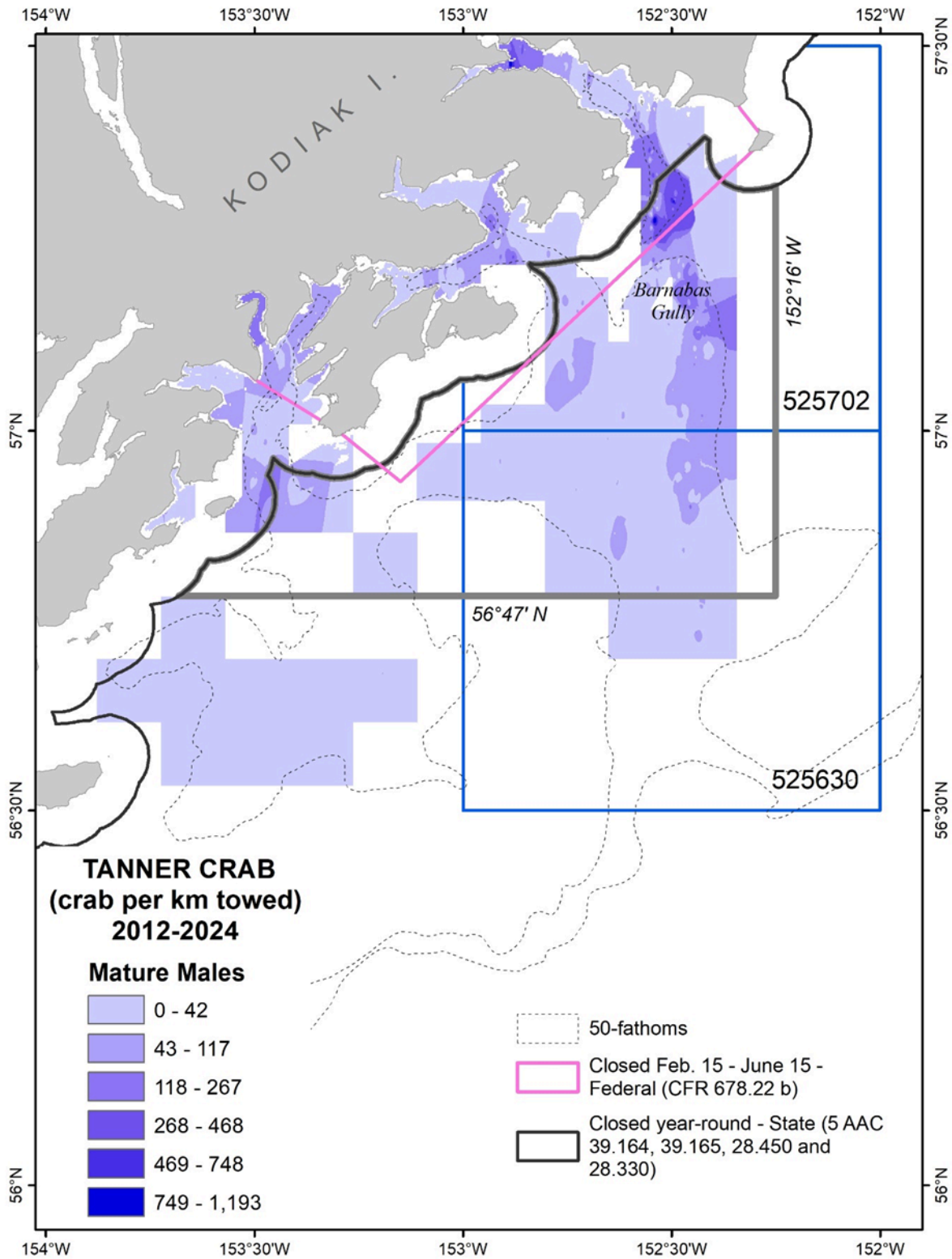
~~———— a. 3–5 yrs~~

~~———— b. 7–8 yrs~~

~~———— c. 10yrs (or in cycle with the GOA FMP Review)~~

~~*Note: Year-round and seasonal closures are not mutually exclusive and can be considered separately for different gears and may be applied to partial area analyses.*~~

Map 1: Applies to Alternative 3a options 1 and 2



Map 2: Applies to Alternative 3b options 1 and 2

