

September 30, 2022
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Dear NPFMC members,

I've been working in fixed gear fisheries in Alaska for more than a decade. Still, at 32, I'm a pretty young fisherman, and I have placed a lot of stock in the future of our state's fishing industry. I live and work out of Unalaska with my partner. We have family on the island and like many coastal Alaskans, we also rely on the strength and diversity of the ocean to keep our community thriving. I want to continue working hard to maintain the resources that fuel vibrant coastal Alaska communities like Unalaska and I hope that you do to.

We are in a particularly exceptional period in the Bering Sea crab fishing industry. The status quo is not working for our crab stocks. It's failing the Crab Rationalization Program, and worse, it's failing the reliant fishing communities. This is a pivotal point where proper leadership and regulations could save both the crab stocks and the small, unique communities that rely on those.

I urge the Council to consider how heavily coastal communities like Unalaska rely on the Bering Sea crab industry. Quota cuts have been detrimental to the crab fleet. Crew are unable to keep work and are beginning to look elsewhere to feed their families. As someone who lives in Unalaska, my options beyond fishing are limited. The city as well relies on this economy, which has made Unalaska the growing and wonderful community it is today. The Unalaska City School District is dependent on funding from the city to maintain its standing as a top district in the state. If the city can't provide that full funding because it isn't bringing in as much money through the crab industry, our students, families and the entire community will suffer. The directed crab fisheries for bairdi/Tanner, Bristol Bay red king crab and snow crab are critical for this community, which has been named the top fishing port in the nation by volume for over 25 years. As an expecting father, I hope my child will get to grow up and be proud Unalaska as the small but thriving fishing community it has the potential to still be.

There are a number of ways we could work to preserve resources, while also sustaining the fishery – and there are even more reasons why it is important to do so. A small, directed crab fishery for bairdi, BBRKC and snow crab are critical to keep our crews working and keep businesses thriving. Not to mention, they are key in gathering at least some data on the fishery for the stock assessment and for understanding the resource. Crab should be a higher priority species for bycatch and other management in the Council, considering its level of conservation concern. While it should remain below endangered salmon, it should be above halibut and herring – which are not at a conservation concern level. High density areas and centers of abundance for crab should be protected, as should broodstock and molting or mating crab. PSC limit management must be improved: limit floors should be removed, PSC should be managed across a stocks range and limits should be updated based on current status of the stocks. All sectors should encourage voluntary measures to

minimize bycatch of crab. These are just a few reasons why it's important to maintain this direct fishery and possible ways to help ensure it has a future in Alaska's economic landscape.

We work very hard in our crab, pot cod sector to limit regulatory discards. We stood down in the king crab savings area. We collaborated with other vessels to report hot spot areas and leave those areas that have crab in them. We want to preserve crab stocks and reduce regulatory discards, which is why we have gladly worked with one another as well as the Council to follow regulations and stringently and honestly observe and respond to the ecosystems we work in. This fishery is not just an economy for many of us. It's a lifestyle, a vocation and something we take great pride in. We want to preserve its future, the communities that thrive off it *and* the crab stocks that nourish it. In order to preserve that balance, the Council must consider the needs of fishing communities alongside the responsibility of conservation among fishing sectors. If this crab fleet is left to emaciate, it will cause waves of devastation to individual fishermen, but more importantly it will devastate the unique coastal communities that make Alaska special.

I support the positions outlined in the Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers' comment. Thank you for considering my input.

Miguel Camacho Castillo