

Response to RCs 43 and 62

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Both of these RCs were submitted to the Board very later and it has been difficult to respond to all the statements in these two RCs.

The scallop fishery already does, and has, provided Alaskans with equal access to the scallop fishery. The Kodiak scallop fishermen who are attending this Board of Fisheries meeting can attest to that.

RC 43 and 62 ask the Board to limit vessel size in the state water scallop fishery to less than 80 feet. These two RCs do not discuss the massive and serious impacts that vessel size limitations would have on coastal communities where scallops are delivered, on the local fishermen who have invested substantial amounts in their boats, and on the vessel owners of boats greater than 80 feet that would have their crews and families put on the beach and seriously affected if they could no longer participate in Alaska's scallop fishery. The reallocation desired by RCs 43 and 62 would have significant economic and social impacts that RCs 43 and 62 do not discuss.

RC 43 indicates that the legislature terminated what it calls a corporate fishery ownership system. However, the state senate passed an extension of the vessel based limited entry system for Korean hair crab and weathervane scallop on a 19-1 vote. The bill has been stopped by the house special fisheries committee, not the legislature. The governor's office, ADF&G, CFEC, and the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council all supported passage of the vessel based limited entry system that has been held up in the house special committee on fisheries.

RC 43 indicates that a group is able to solidify control by essentially paying people to stay in other parts of the country instead of coming to Alaska to fish for scallops. There is no information to support that statement.

RC 43 indicates that bycatch is a problem because of the dredges used, but the department has mandated 100% observer coverage and this has kept very tight control on minimizing bycatch: the department's reporting requirements and observer coverage insures that a scallop fishery can be immediately shut down if bycatch limits are reached.

In short, imposing a vessel length limitation in this fishery would not benefit the fishery, would not benefit bycatch, would harm coastal communities, would not benefit the scallop resource, and it would not benefit local Alaskans that have boats greater than 80 feet and which have participated in this conservatively managed fishery for decades.