

Record Comment for Proposal 362
Submitted by Alaska Bering Sea Crabbers
March 18, 2014

ABSC supports this proposal from the Department, but only if it is accompanied by a reduction in both escapement ring size and mesh size for bairdi crab. To preserve the biological integrity of the *Chionoecetes* population, ABSC fully endorses the modification of pot gear that allows for the escapement of female and sublegal crab. However, for pots targeting bairdi crab, ABSC would like to see **a reduction in the current escapement ring size down to 4.5 inches and mesh size down to 6.5 inches.** These measurements are based on recommendations provided by gear specialists and previous work they have conducted with the Department. Industry is retaining bairdi crab in both the east and west districts down to five inches (legal-size is 4.8' and 4.4', respectively). At the current ring and mesh size limits, which were established at a time when industry was targeting 5.5' bairdi, pot gear for bairdi crab is highly inefficient. In order to promote full retention (allowing for the highest CPUE possible) of industry preferred-size bairdi crab while also allowing for the full escapement of female and sublegal bairdi crab, a regulatory change in both escapement ring size and mesh size for bairdi crab needs to simultaneously accompany the change in escapement ring placement.