

Submitted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game at the request of Board Member Jensen.
October 19, 2017

PROPOSAL X – 5 AAC 32.146. Southeastern Alaska Area Dungeness Crab Fisheries Management Plan and 5 AAC 32.110. Fishing Seasons for Registration Area A. Repeal the Southeastern Alaska Area Dungeness Crab Fisheries Management Plan and adopt fixed-length summer and fall fishing seasons, as follows:

5 AAC 32.110. Fishing Seasons for Registration Area A. In Registration Area A, male Dungeness crab may be taken or possessed only as follows:

(1) from 8:00 a.m. June 15 through 11:59 p.m. August 15 and from 8:00 a.m. October 1 through 11 :59 p.m. November 30 [, IN ALL WATERS OF REGISTRATION AREA A OTHER THAN THOSE WATERS SPECIFIED IN (2) AND (3) OF THIS SECTION;

(2) FROM 8:00 A.M. OCTOBER 1 THROUGH 11:59 P.M. NOVEMBER 30, IN THE WATERS OF

(A) SECTION 13-B THAT ARE IN THE SITKA SOUND SPECIAL USE AREA DESCRIBED IN 5 AAC 32.150(10);

(B) WHALE PASSAGE NORTH AND WEST OF A LINE EXTENDING FROM 56° 05.65' N. LAT., 133° 07.30' W. LONG. TO 56° 05.85' N. LAT., 133° 06.40' W. LONG.; (3) FROM 8:00 A.M. OCTOBER 1 THROUGH 11:59 P.M. FEBRUARY 28, IN (A) DISTRICT 1; (B) DISTRICT 2; AND (C) SECTION 13-B, EXCEPT THE WATERS OF SITKA SOUND SPECIAL USE AREA DESCRIBED IN 5 AAC 32.150(10)].

[5 AAC 32.146. SOUTHEASTERN ALASKA AREA DUNGENESS CRAB FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PLAN. IN THE ABSENCE OF ADEQUATE STOCK ASSESSMENT, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL MANAGE THE DUNGENESS CRAB FISHERY IN REGISTRATION AREA A (SOUTHEASTERN ALASKA) USING A PRECAUTIONARY APPROACH. WHEN STOCKS ARE ASSESSED TO BE LOW, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL, SUBJECT TO THE COMMISSIONER'S AUTHORITY UNDER 5 AAC 32.035, REDUCE THE HARVEST OF LEGAL DUNGENESS CRAB AND REDUCE THE HANDLING OF NONLEGAL, LIGHT, AND SOFT-SHELL DUNGENESS CRAB BY COMPLYING WITH THE FOLLOWING:

(1) NO LATER THAN 14 DAYS AFTER THE START OF THE SUMMER DUNGENESS CRAB FISHING SEASON SPECIFIED IN 5 AAC 32.110, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ESTABLISH A PROJECTION OF HARVEST THRESHOLDS FOR THE SEASON;

(2) IF THE DEPARTMENT PROJECTS THAT THE ENTIRE SEASON'S CATCH OF LEGAL DUNGENESS CRAB WILL BE

(A) 1.5 MILLION POUNDS OR LESS, THE DEPARTMENT WILL CLOSE THE SUMMER DUNGENESS CRAB FISHING SEASON NO SOONER THAN 21 DAYS AFTER THE SEASON OPENED, AND THE FALL DUNGENESS CRAB FISHING SEASON SPECIFIED IN 5 AAC 32.110 WILL NOT OPEN;

(B) MORE THAN 1.5 MILLION POUNDS, BUT LESS THAN 2.25 MILLION POUNDS, THE DEPARTMENT WILL CLOSE THE SUMMER DUNGENESS CRAB FISHING SEASON NO SOONER THAN 28 DAYS AFTER THE SEASON OPENED, AND THE FALL DUNGENESS CRAB FISHING SEASON WILL BE OPEN FOR 30 DAYS;

(C) MORE THAN 2.25 MILLION POUNDS, THE SUMMER AND FALL DUNGENESS CRAB FISHING SEASONS WILL OCCUR AS SPECIFIED IN 5 AAC 32.110; (3) IF THE DEPARTMENT DETERMINES THAT HARVEST PROJECTIONS FAIL TO MEET THE THRESHOLD FOR A SEASON AS DESCRIBED IN (2)(C) OF THIS SECTION DUE TO SOFT-SHELLED CRABS EARLY IN THE SUMMER DUNGENESS CRAB FISHING SEASON, THE DEPARTMENT MAY OPEN THE FALL DUNGENESS CRAB FISHING SEASON AS SPECIFIED IN 5 AAC 32.110.

(3) IF THE DEPARTMENT DETERMINES THAT HARVEST PROJECTIONS FAIL TO MEET THE THRESHOLD FOR A SEASON AS DESCRIBED IN (2)(C) OF THIS SECTION DUE TO SOFT-SHELLED CRABS EARLY IN THE SUMMER DUNGENESS CRAB FISHING SEASON, THE DEPARTMENT MAY OPEN THE FALL DUNGENESS CRAB FISHING SEASON AS SPECIFIED IN 5 AAC 32.110.]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The *Southeastern Alaska Area Dungeness Crab Fisheries Management Plan* (plan) specifies a modified size, sex, and season (3-S) management approach for the Southeastern Alaska Area Dungeness crab fishery. Under the plan season length is determined by projecting total season harvest using effort and harvest from the first two weeks of the season as fishery performance indices. Projected total season harvest is compared to regulatory harvest thresholds and season length is set at one of three lengths specified in the plan. The plan went into effect in 2000 and regulatory harvest thresholds were adopted based on harvest levels observed on the late 1990s. Increased Dungeness crab depredation by sea otters since adoption of the plan has changed areas fished and harvest patterns and current regulatory harvest thresholds may no longer be appropriate. The Southeastern Alaska Dungeness crab fishery is the largest Dungeness crab fishery in Alaska and the only one conducted under a regulatory management plan rather than a simple 3-S approach. This proposal would establish a fixed season length equivalent to the current maximum season length allowed in the plan similar to the 3-S approach used in other Alaska Dungeness crab fisheries.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Board of Fisheries.