

PROPOSAL 19 – 5 AAC 28.647. Aleutian Islands District Pacific Cod Management Plan. Modify vessel size limit for longline vessels in the Aleutian Islands District state-waters Pacific cod B season based on remaining guideline harvest level, as follows:

B season vessel length limits:

5 AAC 28.647 (d)(3)(B) is amended to read:

(ii) August 1 through December 31, may not be more than 125 feet in overall length if operating pot gear and not more than 60 feet in overall length for all other allowable gear types **except longline gear subject to 5 AAC 28.647(d)(3)(B)(iii) and/or (iv) which apply only when the federal directed fishery for Aleutian Islands Pacific cod is closed (i.e. no AI parallel fishery);**

5 AAC 28.647(d)(3)(B) adds new section (iii) for longline gear to read:

(iii) For September 1 to Dec 31, if the federal directed fishery for Aleutian Islands Pacific cod is closed, and the state-waters ‘B’ season GHL has not been taken by September 1, then there is no restriction on the overall length for vessels operating longline gear in the state-waters GHL ‘B’ season.;

5 AAC 28.647(d)(3)(B)(iv) adds new section (iv) for longline gear to read:

(iv) For August 1 to August 31, if the federal directed fishery for Aleutian Islands Pacific cod is closed, and more than 50% of the state-waters ‘B’ season GHL remains uncaught by August 1, then there is no restriction on the overall length of longline vessels in the state-waters GHL ‘B’ season after July 31; i.e. the length restriction in 5 AAC 28.647 (d)(3)(B)(ii) would no longer apply to longline vessels from August 1 to August 31.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Proposal to modify vessel length restrictions for longline vessels in the state-waters guideline harvest level B season.

The Aleutian Islands (AI) state-waters Pacific cod GHL is a percentage deduction from the federal ABC available to the federal fisheries. In recent years (2009–2014), approximately 50% of the AI state-waters allocation has not been caught. The uncaught AI state-waters Pacific cod allocation is then stranded and is unable to be rolled back into the federal fishery.

Most of the effort in the state-waters AI Pacific cod GHL fishery is in the ‘A’ season (and from trawl and pot gear). There has been very little effort in the ‘B’ season by any gear type—particularly since the ‘B’ season vessel length restrictions went into place. According to ADF&G, in 2014, there was no effort in any portion of the ‘B’ season by any gear type. In the early portion of the ‘B’ season (June 10 to August 1), there was no effort or harvest in both 2013 and 2014. In the portion of the ‘B’ season after August 1, there was no effort in 2014 and minimal effort and harvest in both 2013 and 2012.

In order to ensure full utilization of the AI state-waters Pacific cod GHL and to minimize stranded allocation, we propose the following additions to the Aleutian Islands District Pacific

Cod Management Plan to lift the vessel length restrictions on longline vessels in the GHL ‘B’ season (after September 1 and when there is available harvest opportunity in August). The proposal is to modify the length for longline vessels in the state-waters GHL fishery only (and not for the parallel fishery). Accordingly, the proposed modified length only applies when the federal directed fishery for Pacific cod in the AI is closed (i.e. no AI parallel fishery).

Rationale

1. Current management plan has resulted in uncaught allocation and stranded catch. “No action” will continue to result in uncaught allocation and stranded catch.
2. There has been little to no effort in the ‘B’ season in recent years (2012–2014) due to vessel length restrictions (and consistent availability of a processor).
3. Proposal does not seek to modify the current ‘A’ season management measures; i.e. maintains vessel length restrictions in the ‘A’ season designed to promote shore-side delivery.
4. Proposal does not seek modify the current ‘B’ season June 10–August 1 management measures; i.e. maintains opportunity for <60’ fleet in for June and July in the ‘B’ season (which has not been utilized in recent years).
5. Proposal does not seek to change the vessel length restrictions for longline vessels in the BSAI parallel Pacific cod fishery. Proposal only applies in the ‘B” season in the state-waters GHL fishery after August 1 and only when the federal directed fishing for Pacific cod in the Aleutian Islands is closed.
6. The 50% threshold at August 1 continues to allow harvest opportunity by the <60’ sector in the early portion of the B season, but if that effort does not materialize, then the length restriction for longline vessels is lifted August 1 (the same day the vessel length restriction is modified for pot gear in the current regulations).
7. The second trigger point of September 1 is also proposed where restrictions on longline vessels would no longer apply from September 1 to December 31. Longline gear has a proven historic record of being the gear type with the best capability to catch Pacific cod in the ‘B’ season in the Aleutian Islands. Not all gear types are as effective as longline gear when cod are less aggregated (a characteristic of the ‘B’ season). Weather conditions in the fall in the Aleutian Islands are severe and more suitable for larger vessels. The availability of a viable shoreside processor in the fall ‘B’ season continues to have considerable uncertainty.

Other solutions considered: 1.) Remove vessel length restriction for longline vessels in both A and B seasons, and: 2.) Remove vessel length restriction for longline vessels for the entire B season (June 10 to December 31).

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