

Pacific Northwest Crab Industry Advisory Committee (PNCIAC)

Meeting Minutes and Recommendations

2.24.2025 9-11 am AKT

ATTENDEES

Committee Members: Sean Dwyer (Chair), Lance Farr (Vice Chair), Elizabeth Reed, Steve Minor, Dean Fasnacht, Jake Jacobsen, Gary Painter, Mark Casto, Edward Poulsen, Dana Rudy (Secretary, non-voting)

(Committee members not in attendance: Brett Reasor)

Quorum = greater than or equal to 50% (>=5)

Others in Attendance:

NPFMC staff - Sarah Marrinan
ADFG staff – Karla Bush, Mark Stichert, Caitlin Stern
NOAA Fisheries staff – Andrew Olson, Brian Garber-Yonts
ABSC Staff - Cory Lescher, Jamie Goen
Mateo Paz-Seldon
Heather Mann
Maggie Nelson
Doug Wells
Rick Laitinen

AGENDA

1. BOF Proposals (283, 287, and 288)
2. Other business

MINUTES

Chairman Sean Dwyer called the meeting to order.

1. BOF Proposals

Proposal 283 – Longline pot gear for bairdi in the Bering Sea:

Discussion of bottom impacts of longlining vs single pots. Hard to evaluate impacts, because it's uncertain how many boats would switch to longlining if it was allowed.

Many comments on how longlining can increase safety and efficiency but also increases the potential for gear conflicts. Mentioned that we should use satellite buoys on longline strings. Noted that the black cod fishery longlines pots, uses satellite buoys, and experiences very little gear conflict.

ABSC won't have a position on this proposal until after their Board meeting on Thursday.

BOF has wide latitude – they could adopt this proposal as is, adopt it with amendments, table it for next cycle, or reject it. The BOF has the authority to define gear, ADFG doesn't expect to hear from federal offices on this proposal.

One member noted they would like to see an analysis of the bottom contact footprint with longlining pots. Another noted they would like to see information on the spatial overlap with groundfish fisheries. Another member noted that while this proposal would give crabbers the ability to longline, they had doubts it would be implemented fleet wide and it would take time to see gear changes.

MOTION (Jake/Elizabeth): PNCIAC supports BOF Proposal 283.

PASSED Unanimously (8Y, 0N).

Proposal 287 – Align TAC setting with preferred size for bairdi

Legal sizes are different – 4.8” in the east and 4.4” in the west, but preferred is 5” (our best understanding of size at maturity)

ADFG indicated that for this to move forward, a preferred size should be specified. Noted that if preferred size was legal size, TACs would be identical in the east. In the west, you would have a 12% average increase in TACS (between 0-50% annually). The higher TACs would be a result of higher CPUEs and less crab discarded. Mark Stichert reminded PNCIAC on how ADFG sets TACs.

ADFG noted that the staff comments for this proposal indicate that escape mechanisms should be scaled with a change in preferred size. This year’s TAC was based on 4.4” males, but the gear is still selecting for 5” males.

Comments that escape mesh selectivity isn’t perfect – theoretical vs in practice. Some think the mesh size now is fine.

Not a lot of animals are getting to 5” in the west, so lowering the preferred size better matches the biology of the stock. At 5”, you have a lot of terminally molted “dirty” crab.

Rationale to recommend preferred size at 4.5” and not 4.4” – leaves a bit of a buffer for boats to avoid landing undersize crab.

MOTION (Edward/Jake): PNCIAC supports a market or preferred size of 4.5” in the west.

PASSED Unanimously (7Y, 0N)

ADFG wants continued dialogue with harvesters about gear scaling conversions and gear modifications.

Noted that PNCIAC is not addressing changes in preferred size of eastern bairdi, because there would be functionally no change in TACs.

Proposal 288 – Align TAC setting with preferred size for opilio

Preferred size is 4” and legal size is 3.1”. Unlike bairdi, there is not a clear indicator for size at maturity. Similar to Proposal 287, ADFG opposes the proposal because it lacks a defined size, and also opposes because of the uncertainty about opilio biology and maturity right now. They don’t want to make changes where they wouldn’t understand the consequences. Stressed that an MSE is needed, which would hopefully be done before the next BOF cycle.

Noted that the Canadian and Russian legal size is 3.75”.

Noted that without ADFG’s support, and the uncertainty around opilio biology, this proposal is unlikely to pass.

NO MOTION.

2. Other business

Noted there are several other proposals from ADFG, but there are generally housekeeping actions.

ADJOURN 10:45 am AKT