

**Amendment 43  
to the Fishery Management Plan for  
Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs.**

**Deletions are stricken and additions are in bold.**

1. Section 6.2.4, “Pribilof Islands blue king crab (*Paralithodes platypus*)” is revised to read as follows:

6.2.4 Pribilof Islands blue king crab (*Paralithodes platypus*)

NMFS declared Pribilof Islands blue king crab overfished on September 23, 2002, because the spawning biomass estimated from the NMFS trawl survey was below the minimum stock size threshold of ~~6.6 million pounds specified in this FMP.~~ The Council developed a rebuilding plan for the Pribilof Islands blue king crab stock ~~to within one year, as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act in section 304(e).~~ ~~The rebuilding plan is sufficient to rebuild the stock to the Bmsy level, the rebuilding time period satisfies~~ **satisfy** the requirements of section 304(e)(4)(A) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act; ~~and the plan complies~~ **comply** with the national standard guidelines at 50 CFR 600.310(e). **In 2009, NMFS reviewed this rebuilding plan and notified that Council that this stock had not made adequate progress toward rebuilding. The Council analyzed the best available information on Pribilof Island blue king crabs and fishery mortality and recommended additional conservations and management measures to rebuild the stock and prevent overfishing in accordance with section 304(e)(7) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act.**

**With the implementation of Amendment 103 to the BSAI FMP, all fishery management measures practicable have been taken to greatly eliminate Pribilof Island blue king crabs catch and protect Pribilof Island blue king crabs habitat. These measures are intended to promote adequate progress toward rebuilding.**

**Based on the best available information on the biology of the stock and environmental conditions, NMFS estimates that the time period to rebuild the stock will exceed 10 years, as allowed under section 304(e)(4)(A)(ii) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The causes of the Pribilof Islands blue king crab stock decline are thought to be predominantly due to environmental changes that inhibit blue king crab reproduction. For this stock to rebuild, the stock would likely require multiple years of above average recruitment and/or a change in environmental conditions to increase larval productivity around the Pribilof Islands. It is not possible to predict future recruitment success, however, changes in stock abundance are assessed in the annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation Report for the BSAI king and Tanner crab fisheries.**

~~The rebuilding plan approved by the Council in October 2003 contains a conservative harvest strategy to improve the status of this stock. This is a framework rebuilding plan because the FMP~~

~~defers to the State the authority to develop harvest strategies, with oversight by NMFS and the Council (see Section 8.0). The rebuilding plan is estimated to allow the Pribilof Islands blue king crab stock to rebuild, with a 50% probability, to the  $B_{msy}$  level in less than 10 years. The stock will be considered “rebuilt” when the stock reaches  $B_{msy}$  in two consecutive years.~~

**This is a framework rebuilding plan because the FMP defers to the State the authority to develop harvest strategies, with oversight by NMFS and the Council (see Section 8.0).** The rebuilding plan utilizes the harvest strategy developed by ADF&G and adopted by the Alaska Board of Fisheries. The rebuilding harvest strategy, ~~which~~ closes the fishery until the stock is rebuilt. **The stock will be considered “rebuilt” when the stock reaches  $B_{MSY}$  in two consecutive years.** ~~;~~ **This harvest strategy** should result in more spawning biomass as more larger male crab would be conserved and fewer juveniles and females would die due to incidental catch and discard mortality. This higher spawning biomass would be expected to produce good year-classes when environmental conditions are favorable.

Under this rebuilding plan, changes to the harvest strategy must: (1) comply with the existing criteria in the FMP and the national standard guidelines at 50 CFR 600.310(e), (2) be sufficient to rebuild the stock to the  $B_{MSY}$  level within a rebuilding time period that satisfies the requirements of section 304(e)(4)(A) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and (3) be consistent with applicable Federal law.

~~No additional habitat or bycatch measures are part of this rebuilding plan because neither habitat nor bycatch measures are expected to have a measurable impact in rebuilding.~~ Habitat is thoroughly protected from fishing impacts by the existing Pribilof Islands Habitat Conservation Zone, which encompasses the majority of blue king crab habitat. **The Pribilof Islands Habitat Conservation Zone was established to protect a majority of the crab habitat in the Pribilof Islands area based on the distribution and habitat of the blue king crab in the NMFS annual trawl surveys and on observer data.**

Bycatch of blue king crab in both crab and groundfish fisheries is a negligible proportion of the total population abundance. **On an annual basis, ADF&G also closes specific State statistical areas where Pribilof Island blue king crabs are known to occur during the Bristol Bay red king crab, snow crab, and Tanner crab fisheries to minimize blue king crab bycatch in those fisheries. NMFS has closed the Pribilof Islands Habitat Conservation Zone to trawl gear and to directed fishing for Pacific cod with pot gear. These measures greatly eliminate bycatch of Pribilof Island blue king crab and prevent overfishing.**

NMFS has mechanisms in place for monitoring the effectiveness of the rebuilding plan. The NMFS eastern Bering Sea bottom-trawl survey provides an annual assessment of the status of the Pribilof Islands blue king crab stock. The surveys will allow the BSAI Crab Plan Team to include an assessment of the Pribilof Islands blue king crab stock status relative to the **overfishing** ~~overfished~~ level and its progress towards the rebuilt level in the annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation Report for the BSAI king and Tanner crab fisheries.

Sellgen: 3/4/2013

GHarrington 7/1/2014, 7/11/14, 7/28/14

MSullivan 7/19/14

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