

Council motion

D-2(c)(1) – Transit Corridor through Walrus Habitat Protection Areas

Purpose and Need

The purpose of this action is to evaluate transit corridors through walrus protection area closures for federally-permitted vessels. Currently, federally-permitted vessels that operate as tenders during the Togiak herring and salmon fisheries cannot transit through the Round Island Walrus Protection Area. This effectively prohibits vessels with FFPs from tendering the Togiak herring and salmon fisheries. Federally-permitted vessels that tender for the herring fishery at Cape Peirce and Security Cove travel through state waters to avoid the EEZ closures, moving vessels closer to walrus haulouts in these areas. Salmon tender vessels may be similarly affected. Additionally, vessels fishing yellowfin sole in the Northern Bristol Bay Trawl Area, that deliver to processors or trampers in the roadsteads located in Hagemeister Strait or Togiak Bay, must travel south of the Round Island Walrus Protection Area, which may increase interactions with walrus at Hagemeister Island haulout and walrus moving from Round Island to their feeding grounds in Bristol Bay.

Transit corridors are necessary to alleviate these unintended consequences from the walrus protection area closures that potentially increase the fishery interactions with walrus.

Alternative 1 – Status quo

Alternative 2 – Transit corridor in the EEZ open from April 1 – August 15, north of Round Island.

Alternative 3 – Transit corridor in the EEZ open from April 1 – August 15, south of Cape Newenham and Cape Peirce.