

**Amendment 14  
to the Fishery Management Plan for the  
Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs.**

(1) In Section 6.0 entitled "Specification of Maximum Sustainable Yield, Optimum Yield, Minimum Stock Size Thresholds, Overfishing Levels, Annual Harvest, and Annual Processing", under subsection 6.1 "Rebuilding Overfished Fisheries," add subsection 6.1.2 "Bering Sea snow crab (*Chionoecetes opilio*)"

6.1 Rebuilding Overfished Fisheries

6.1.1 Bering Sea Tanner crab (*Chionoecetes bairdi*)

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6.1.2 Bering Sea snow crab (*Chionoecetes opilio*)

NMFS declared snow crab overfished on September 24, 1999 because the spawning biomass estimated from the NMFS trawl survey was below the minimum stock size threshold of 460.8 million pounds specified in this FMP. The Council developed a rebuilding plan for the snow crab stock within one year from this date, as required by the Magnuson-Stevens Act in section 304(e). The rebuilding plan is sufficient to rebuild the stock to the Bmsy level and the rebuilding time period satisfies the requirements of section 304(e)(4)(A) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, and the plan complies with the national standard guidelines at 50 CFR 600.310(e).

The rebuilding plan approved by the Council in June 2000 provides a framework for the following three components to improve the status of this stock: a harvest strategy, bycatch control measures, and habitat protection measures. This is a framework rebuilding plan because the FMP defers to the State of Alaska the authority to develop harvest strategies and gear modification measures, with oversight by NMFS and the Council (Section 8.3 FMP). The rebuilding plan incorporates the harvest strategy developed by ADF&G and adopted by the Alaska Board of Fisheries. The rebuilding plan also incorporates the gear modification measures adopted by the Alaska Board of Fisheries to reduce bycatch of female and sub-legal male snow crab in the directed crab fishery. Identified snow crab essential fish habitat will be protected from adverse impacts by non-fishing activities. The Council or the State of Alaska may modify the components of the rebuilding plan according to new scientific information.

The rebuilding plan is estimated to allow the snow crab stock to rebuild, with a 50% probability, to the Bmsy level in less than 10 years. The stock will be considered "rebuilt" when the stock reaches Bmsy in two consecutive years. The rebuilding 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 discarding. This higher spawning biomass would be expected to produce large year-classes when environmental conditions are favorable. The reduction of bycatch will reduce mortality on juvenile and female crabs, thus allowing a higher percentage of each year-class to contribute to spawning and future landings.

Under this rebuilding plan, changes to the components of the plan 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 Bmsy 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.

Mechanisms are in place for NMFS and the Council to monitor the effectiveness of the rebuilding plan to ensure that actions taken by the State of Alaska and the Council under the rebuilding plan rebuild the stock to the Bmsy level within 10 years. The annual NMFS eastern Bering Sea bottom-trawl survey provides an assessment of the status of the snow crab stock. The survey will allow the BSAI Crab Plan Team to include an assessment of the snow crab stock status relative to the overfished level and its progress towards the rebuilt level in the annual Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation (SAFE) Report for the king and Tanner crab fisheries of the BSAI. The Crab Plan Team will also conduct annual assessments of snow crab bycatch in the trawl fisheries and continue research on snow crab habitat. Programs exist within ADF&G and NMFS to contain levels of catch and bycatch at those prescribed in the rebuilding plan.