

## Finding of No Significant Impact

### Environmental Assessment for Amendment 20 to the Fishery Management Plan for Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs

The proposed action amends the Crab Rationalization Program, establishing allocations of harvesting and processing shares for two separate *C. bairdi* fisheries. The Fishery Management Plan for Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands King and Tanner Crabs (FMP) establishes criteria for the management of certain aspects of the Bering Sea/ Aleutian Islands (BSAI) crab fisheries by the State of Alaska (State). Under this authority, the State has determined that Bering Sea *C. bairdi* should be managed as two separate stocks, which the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) has determined is necessary for the conservation of the resource.

The Environmental Assessment (EA) focuses on the specific impacts of the proposed action and provides details concerning the proposed action and its impacts. The proposed action, allocating quota share (QS), individual fishing quota (IFQ), processor quota share (PQS), and individual processor quota (IPQ) for two separate *C. bairdi* stocks, modifies a specific provision of the Crab Rationalization Program. The EA tiers off of the Crab Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to focus the analysis on the issues ripe for decision and eliminate repetitive discussions.

*Context:* The setting of the proposed action is the *C. bairdi* crab fisheries in the Bering Sea. Environmental effects of the action are limited to this area. The socio-economic effects of the alternatives within this area are limited to the individuals who participate in the *C. bairdi* crab fishery and the communities that support the fishing fleet and crab processors.

*Intensity:* Listings of considerations to determine intensity of the impacts are in 50 CFR §1508.27 (b) and in the NOAA Administrative Order 216-6, Section 6. Each consideration is addressed below and analysis of each consideration is contained in the EA prepared for this action.

1. *Can the proposed action be reasonably expected to jeopardize the sustainability of any target species that may be affected by the action?*

The impacts of the proposed action on the target species, *C. bairdi*, are discussed in section 2.4.3 of the EA. The proposed action will not jeopardize the sustainability of the target species that may be affected by this action. Alternatives 2 and 3 for both the harvester and processor sectors would allow ADF&G to continue to manage the *C. bairdi* as two fisheries, which ADF&G has determined is necessary for the conservation of the resource, as discussed in section 2.3.3 of the EA.

2. *Can the proposed action be reasonably expected to allow substantial damage to the ocean and coastal habitats and/or EFH as defined under the Magnuson-Stevens Act and identified in FMPs?*

Impacts of the *C. bairdi* fisheries on habitat, including the EFH assessment, are discussed in section 4.4 of the Crab EIS. The Crab EIS concludes that the *C. bairdi* fisheries have an insignificant effect on EFH. The proposed action will not change the way the fisheries impact EFH and, therefore, the proposed action will have an insignificant effect on EFH.

3. *Can the proposed action be reasonably expected to have a substantial adverse impact on public health or safety?*

Impacts of the *C. bairdi* fisheries on safety are discussed in section 4.6.9 of the Crab EIS. The Crab EIS concludes that the *C. bairdi* fisheries have an insignificant effect on safety. The proposed action will not change the way the fisheries impact safety under the Crab Rationalization Program and, therefore, the proposed action will have an insignificant effect on safety.

4. *Can the proposed action be reasonably expected to have an adverse impact on endangered or threatened species, marine mammals, or critical habitat of these species?*

Impacts of the *C. bairdi* fisheries on endangered or threatened species, marine mammals, or critical habitat of these species, are discussed in section 4.3 of the Crab EIS. The Crab EIS concludes that the *C. bairdi* fisheries have an insignificant effect on endangered or threatened species, marine mammals, or critical habitat of these species. The proposed action will not change the way the fisheries impact endangered or threatened species, marine mammals, or critical habitat of these species under the Crab Rationalization Program and, therefore, the proposed action will have an insignificant effect on these species.

5. *Can the proposed action be reasonably expected to result in cumulative adverse effects that could have a substantial effect on the target species or non-target species?*

Cumulative effects are discussed in section 2.4.5 of the EA. This proposed action will not result in cumulative adverse effects that could have a substantial effect on target or non-target species.

6. *Can the proposed action be reasonably expected to jeopardize the sustainability of any non-target species?*

The proposed action is not expected to jeopardize the sustainability of any non-target species and will not have any significant impacts on non-target species. Impacts of the *C. bairdi* fisheries on the sustainability of any non-target species are discussed in section 4.3 of the Crab EIS. The Crab EIS concludes that the *C. bairdi* fisheries have an insignificant effect on the sustainability of any non-target species. The proposed action will not change the way the fisheries impact the sustainability of any non-target species under the Crab Rationalization Program and, therefore, the proposed action will have an insignificant effect on these species.

7. *Can the proposed action be expected to have a substantial impact on biodiversity and ecosystem function within the affected area (e.g., benthic productivity, predator-prey relationships, etc.)?*

The proposed action will have an insignificant impact on biodiversity and ecosystem function. Impacts of the *C. bairdi* fisheries on biodiversity and ecosystem function are discussed in section 4.5 of the Crab EIS. The Crab EIS concludes that the *C. bairdi* fisheries have an insignificant effect on biodiversity and ecosystem function. The proposed action will not change the way the fisheries impact biodiversity and ecosystem function under the Crab Rationalization Program and therefore, the proposed action will have an insignificant effect on these species.

8. *Are significant social or economic impacts interrelated with significant natural or physical environmental effects?*

No social or economic impacts are interrelated with significant natural or physical environmental effects, as discussed in section 2.4.4 of the EA.

9. *To what degree are the effects on the quality of human environment expected to be highly controversial?*

This action's effects on the quality of the human environment are insignificant and not controversial. Development of the action was a consensus process with the State of Alaska.

10. *Can the proposed action be expected to have a substantial impact on cultural resources and ecologically critical areas?*

This action takes place in the Bering Sea. The lands adjacent to these areas contain cultural resources and ecologically critical areas. Effects of this action on the unique characteristics of these areas are insignificant.

11. *Can the proposed action be expected to result in future actions?*

No future actions are expected to result from the allocation of *C. bairdi* QS and PQS for two separate fisheries.

12. *Can the proposed action be expected to effect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places?*

This consideration is not applicable to this action.

13. *Will the proposed action be expected to violate Federal, state, or local law for environmental protection?*


No Federal, state, or local law will be violated with this action.

14. *Can the proposed action be expected to introduce or spread non-indigenous species?*

This consideration is not applicable to this action.

#### **DETERMINATION**

Based on the information contained in the EA for Amendment 20 to the FMP and the Crab EIS, I have determined that the proposed action will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, and therefore a FONSI is appropriate. Accordingly, the preparation of an EIS for this proposed action is not required under the NEPA or its implementing regulations.

  
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NOAA Assistant Administrator for  
Fisheries

5-24-06  
Date