

MISCELLANEOUS SHELLFISH (3 PROPOSALS)

PROPOSALS 230 and 231 – 5 AAC 38.XXX. Southeastern Alaska Squid Fishery Management Plan.

PROPOSED BY: Richard Yamada and Juneau Douglas Advisory Committee.

WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO? This would create a directed jig fishery for magister armhook squid in the waters of Southeast Alaska.

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS? All legal gear may be used to take octopi and squid. There is no closed season for octopi and squid. Squid may be taken for commercial harvest only under the authority of a Commissioner's Permit.

WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED? There would be a fishery management plan for a squid fishery that hasn't been developed and for a species that the department has very little information for. It is unknown to what extent fishers would participate in a directed fishery if this proposal were adopted.

BACKGROUND: Magister armhook squid (*Berryteuthis magister*) is a short-lived species that grows and matures quickly with complex populations, like other squid, composed of multiple cohorts spawned throughout the year. There are no directed commercial fisheries for any squid in Alaska but, there is a bycatch limit set in some commercial fisheries that target other species like the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands pollock trawl fisheries. In Southeast Alaska, market squid (*Doryteuthis opalescens*) and magister armhook squid have been historically observed and increased abundances appear to be correlated with warmer water such as El Nino events.

Commissioner's Permits have been issued for the experimental harvest of market and magister armhook squid in Southeast Alaska since at least the early 1990s. The purpose of these permits is to allow a limited harvest to determine species distribution and abundance, obtain biological data, test market conditions, and to evaluate operational and catch characteristics of gear. Most squid harvest in these experimental fisheries have been in District 1 in the southern portion of the region and have utilized mechanical jigging machines and rod and reel to harvest magister armhook squid. A maximum allowable harvest of 10 tons of magister armhook squid has been permitted in the Ketchikan area fishery annually with individual permits issued for 1 ton of squid. More recently in the Juneau area, a maximum allowable harvest of 5 tons of magister armhook squid with individual permits issued for 1 ton of squid have been issued. Regionwide harvest of magister armhook squid from Commissioner's Permit fisheries have totaled approximately 2.5 tons whole weight from permits issued from 2012 to 2023. The moderate harvests in this fishery are likely due to small domestic markets rather than low abundance as sport fishermen have been successfully targeting magister armhook squid by rod and reel for decades throughout the region although catch estimates are unknown.

Magister armhook squid appear to have been consistently abundant within the region for at least the past 2 decades based on observations and various fisheries targeting them. Market squid has been more sporadic within the region with abundances in the early 1980s leading to investigations to locate spawning concentrations, collect biological information, and attempt biomass estimation to support management of a commercial fishery. Although a large market already existed for market squid from a commercial seine fishery in the nearshore waters off California, inconsistent

abundance within Southeast Alaska and a low product value necessitating a high-volume fishery did not warrant further investigation.

DEPARTMENT COMMENTS: The department **OPPOSES** this proposal. The department does not have a stock assessment program for magister armhook squid and lacks the biological information needed to establish a management plan that would result in a sustainable fishery. There continues to be opportunity to commercially harvest magister armhook squid under terms of a Commissioner's Permit where harvest and effort has remained low. There have been no inquiries from fish buyers or processors regarding increased need of squid harvest to fulfill market demands. At this stage of the fishery, a regulatory management plan is not needed.

COST ANALYSIS: Approval of this proposal is not expected to result in an additional direct cost for a private person to participate in this fishery. Approval of this proposal could result in an additional cost for the department if the department were to assess the squid biomass.