

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 1-RF-R-03-21

Issued at: Sitka, Wednesday, January 6, 2021.

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Friday, January 8, 2021

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Monday, January 31, 2022 unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order prohibits retention of the nonpelagic rockfish species: *S. pinniger* (Canary); *S. nebulosus* (China); *S. caurinus* (Copper); *S. maliger* (Quillback); *S. helvomaculatus* (Rosethorn); *S. nigrocinctus* (Tiger); *S. ruberrimus* (Yelloweye); while providing a limited harvest opportunity for the remaining *Sebastes* species of nonpelagic rockfish.

REGULATION:

Emergency Order No. 1-RF-R-08-20 issued April 1, 2020 is rescinded and the provisions of 5 AAC 47.020(8)(B) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective 12:01 a.m. Friday, January 8, 2021 through 11:59 p.m. Monday, January 31, 2022:

5 AAC 47.020. General provisions for seasons and bag, possession, annual, and size limits for the salt waters of the Southeast Alaska Area.

(8)(B) nonpelagic rockfish:

(i) the retention of the following *Sebastes* species of nonpelagic rockfish is prohibited: *S. pinniger* (Canary); *S. nebulosus* (China); *S. caurinus* (Copper); *S. maliger* (Quillback); *S. helvomaculatus* (Rosethorn); *S. nigrocinctus* (Tiger); *S. ruberrimus* (Yelloweye);

(ii) for the species of the genus *Sebastes* not specified in 8(A) or 8(B)(i) of this section; bag and possession limit of one fish, no annual limit, no size limit;

Doug Vincent-Lang,
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Robert Chadwick
Regional Management Coordinator
Division of Sport Fish

JUSTIFICATION:

In April 2020, Emergency Order No. 1-RF-R-08-20 was issued to prohibit the retention of all demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) during 2020. This action was taken to ensure the sustainability

of *S. pinniger* (Canary); *S. nebulosus* (China); *S. caurinus* (Copper); *S. maliger* (Quillback); *S. helvomaculatus* (Rosethorn); *S. nigrocinctus* (Tiger); *S. ruberrimus* (Yelloweye) while still providing harvest opportunity for select nonpelagic rockfish. This emergency order continues these provisions through the 2021 season.

Despite conservative management over the last decade, yelloweye rockfish biomass in the Eastern Gulf of Alaska has declined approximately 60% since assessments began in 1994. Additionally, annual trends in biological data (length, weight, and age by sex) reveal truncation of age classes, indicating reduced reproductive potential and increasing uncertainty for future recruitment of juveniles. DSR are particularly vulnerable to overexploitation and are slow to recover once fished below sustainable levels given their longevity, slow growth, late maturation, and high site-fidelity, with yelloweye rockfish reaching an estimated maximum age of 122 years and maturing at 18–22 years.

These data and biological characteristics warrant this management action to allow for rebuilding of DSR stocks and ensure sustainable rockfish fisheries in the future. Stock health will continue to be assessed annually through yelloweye rockfish stock assessment surveys, biological sampling of yelloweye bycatch, and monitoring bycatch of all DSR species retained in commercial and sport fisheries.

Historically all nonpelagic rockfish have been managed as a species group. However, this action is being taken to provide limited opportunity for sport anglers to target other species of nonpelagic rockfish which do not share the same conservation concern as canary, China, copper, quillback, rosethorn, tiger, and yelloweye rockfish. The sport harvest of the remaining *Sebastes* species of nonpelagic rockfish has historically been very low.

PREVIOUS EMERGENCY ORDERS AFFECTED:

Emergency Order 1-RF-R-08-20, issued April 1, 2020, is rescinded by this emergency order.

DISTRIBUTION:

The distribution list for this emergency order is on file at the Region 1 Office of Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish, P. O. Box 110024, Douglas, AK 99824, (907) 465-4270.