



Advisory Announcement

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2021 DEMERSAL SHELF ROCKFISH FISHERIES

The directed demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) commercial fisheries in the Southeast Outside Subdistrict (SEO), Northern Southeast Inside Subdistrict (NSEI), and Southern Southeast Inside Subdistrict (SSEI) will be closed for the 2021 season (January 1 through December 31) and will remain closed to directed DSR fishing until further notice. The SEO area includes the East Yakutat (EYKT), Northern Southeast Outside (NSEO), Central Southeast Outside (CSEO), and Southern Southeast Outside (SSEO) sections.

The personal use bottomfish fishery will be closed to the retention of DSR in all personal use waters for the 2021 season (Figure 1) and will remain closed until further notice (5 AAC 77.655). Personal use fishermen are encouraged to utilize rockfish deepwater release devices to decrease release mortality of DSR while bottomfish fishing for other species. More information on rockfish conservation and deepwater release devices can be found on the ADF&G website at: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishingSportFishingInfo.rockfishconservation>

The subsistence bottomfish fishery remains open for retention of DSR, in areas defined in 5 AAC 01.716, except that bottomfish may not be taken for subsistence purposes in the waters off Cape Edgecumbe enclosed by a box defined as 56°55.5' N lat, 56°57' N lat, 135°54' W long, and 135°57' W long (5 AAC 01.725 (b)).

The DSR assemblage is comprised of 7 rockfish species including: yelloweye, quillback, copper, rosethorn, canary, China, and tiger rockfish. Yelloweye rockfish comprise over 95% of the DSR commercial harvest and are the primary target compared to the six other DSR species. 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 older 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 stock health concerns warrant further management action to allow for rebuilding of DSR stocks and ensure sustainable rockfish fisheries in the future. Stock status 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 groundfish and halibut fisheries, as mandated under full-retention requirements (5 AAC 28.171).

Annette Islands Reserve

Fishermen are reminded the Annette Islands Reserve is a federally recognized Indian reservation in Alaska. The waters within 3,000 feet of Annette Island, Ham Island, Hemlock Island, Spire Island, Walker Island, Lewis Island, and adjacent rocks and islets are designated within the fishing reserve. Fisheries within the reserve are managed by the Metlakatla Indian Community for authorized fisheries participants. Metlakatla residents are also reminded that waters beyond 3,000 feet of Annette Island, Ham Island, Hemlock Island, Spire Island, Walker Island, Lewis Island, and adjacent rocks and islets are managed by the State of Alaska. Proper licensing, permitting, and reporting are required.

Under Alaska's Health Orders 5, 6, and 8, commercial fishing is an Essential Business and is part of Alaska's Essential Services and Critical Infrastructure. Commercial fishermen should ensure that all travel and other activities in support of

commercial fishing operations follow protocols in Alaska COVID-19 Health Mandates. COVID-19 Health Mandates may be found here: <https://gov.alaska.gov/home/covid19-healthmandates/>.

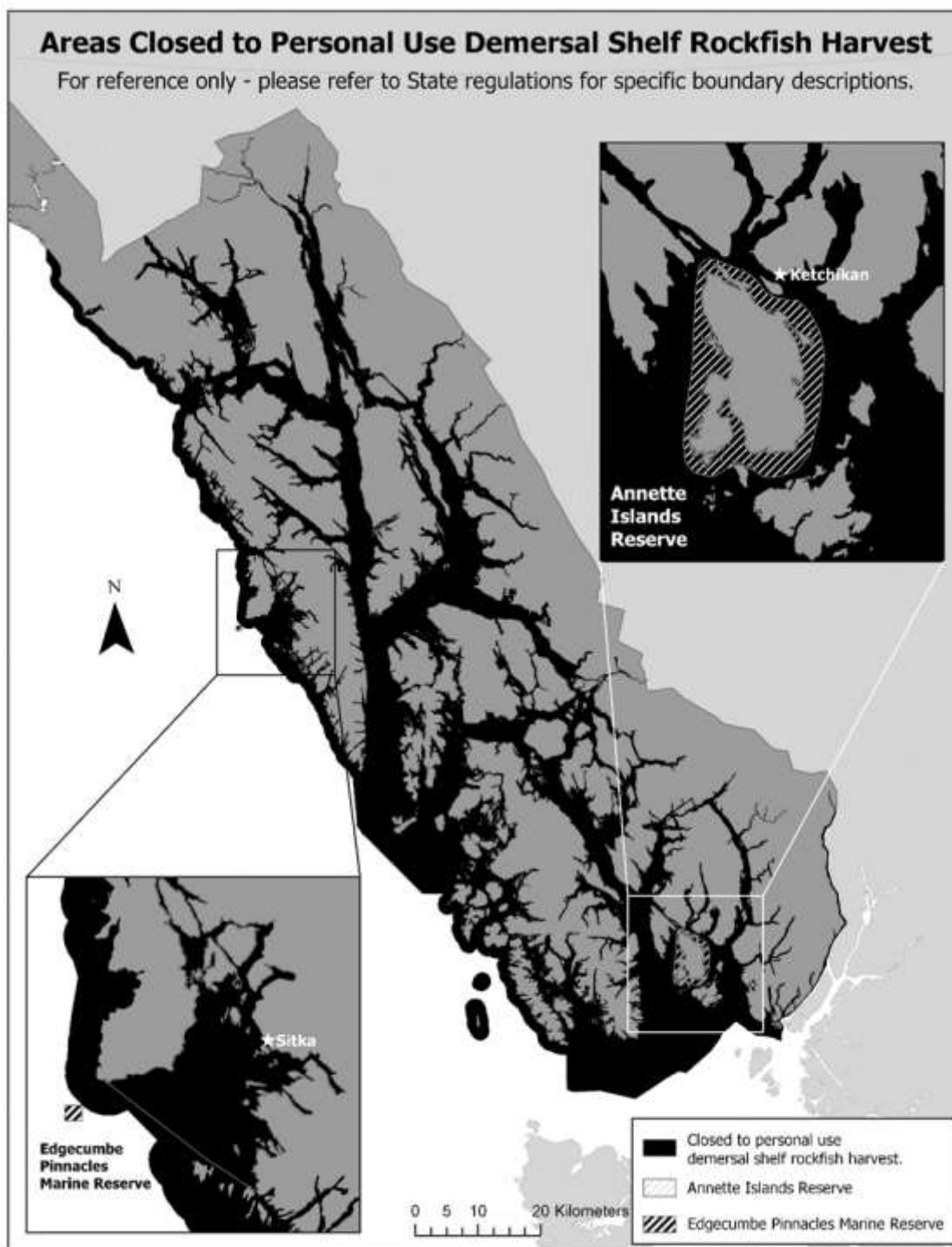


Figure 1.—Map of areas closed to personal use demersal shelf rockfish harvest. This map is for general reference only. For descriptions of management area boundaries, refer to 5 AAC 77.674.

Advisory Announcement web site: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>.

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