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Advisory Announcement

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Prince William Sound Area Rockfish Bycatch Reduction Emergency Order # 2-GF-E-11-24

The Prince William Sound (PWS) Rockfish Management Plan (5 AAC 28.265) establishes a guideline harvest level (GHL) of 150,000 pounds and requires full retention of all rockfish caught when participating in a directed groundfish or halibut fishery in the Prince William Sound (PWS) Management Area.

This emergency order (EO) closes and immediately re-opens the fishing season for directed groundfish and halibut fisheries in the Prince William Sound Area (Registration Area E) effective 12 noon August 27, 2024 and establishes limits on the amount of groundfish which may be legally retained and sold by a Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) interim-use permit holder as bycatch, based on the round weight of the target species, during a directed fishery.

To stay within the rockfish GHL the department is **reducing allowable rockfish bycatch limits in PWS fisheries by 50%, effective 12 noon August 27, 2024**. Rockfish bycatch limits will be reduced to **5% in the Pacific halibut fishery, 10% in the state managed sablefish fishery, 2.5% in Pacific cod fisheries, and 5% in directed salmon fisheries**.

This reduction in bycatch limits is designed to reduce rockfish harvest by encouraging fishing in areas with low rockfish bycatch. In 2022 and 2023, harvest of rockfish in PWS groundfish fisheries exceeded the GHL. To stay within the GHL in 2024, a bycatch reduction is necessary. Any amount of rockfish that exceeds this adjusted bycatch limit is accounted for as overage and proceeds are surrendered to the state. **All rockfish caught as bycatch must still be retained**, and all rockfish must be speciated, weighed, and reported. The department will continue to monitor the total rockfish harvest to stay within reasonable limits and will consider other management measures depending on the results of these reductions.

For additional information, please contact PWS Area Management Biologists Martin Schuster or Andy Pollak at (907) 235-8191.

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