

PROPOSAL 23 - 5 AAC 28.210. Fishing seasons for Prince William Sound Area. Close Prince William Sound management area to commercial lingcod harvest when inside and outside district guideline harvest levels are achieved, including lingcod caught as bycatch and directed harvest, as follows:

In both inside and outside districts, when the guideline harvest level (GHL) is reached - all commercial retention of lingcod should stop— both directed and as bycatch. The outside district GHL should remain at current levels.

Furthermore, the GHL for lingcod in the inside district should be reduced to 4,000 pounds until such time as this is constraining the commercial harvest or until an adequate stock assessment is completed that allows for higher sustainable harvest levels.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Seward Charterboat Association is deeply concerned about the abundance levels of lingcod in the waters of Prince William Sound (PWS). It is our belief that it is time to take measures for conserving the lingcod resource. The low ex-vessel price of lingcod and the fact that they have no swim bladder and therefore a high survival rate, insures that this proposal will have a minimal financial impact on the commercial sector and a high likelihood of increasing conservation.

Our understanding is the Prince William Sound Lingcod GHL is currently set at 90 percent of the commercial harvest over a time series. In addition since 2009, the bycatch of lingcod has been allowed to continue, even when the GHL is exceeded.

From our perspective, the normal way to manage a directed fishery is to take a stock assessment and determine the total allowable catch based on sustainable fishing levels determined by the biology of a specific type of fish. The way it is being done now, we have no basis for determining if overfishing has or is occurring. While a GHL is not a hard cap, if fishing is allowed over the GHL it is essentially a rule with no mechanism to prevent overfishing.

Clearly the ADF&G data shows a sharp decline in harvest of lingcod by the commercial sector both in directed fishery and bycatch. The harvest steeply declined in both inside and outside districts since 2009. This corresponds to our observation that abundance levels in both inside and outside waters for sport fishing have declined during the same period.

While we are reluctant to get involved with proposals regarding commercial fishing practices, feel compelled to ask the Board of Fisheries to take action not only to reduce the sport harvest, but also take actions to protect the resource from commercial over harvest until such time that either a stock assessment is done or there is some confidence that abundance levels are back to the pre-2009 levels.

Our suggested changes in regulation are being suggested solely for the purpose of sustainability and this proposal should be taken with the prior proposal {currently EF-C14-93} in which we are suggesting that the sport harvest should be lowered by 50%, also for the conservation of lingcod stocks. There is no intent to make this an allocative measure or to inflict significant financial harm on the commercial sector.

PROPOSED BY: Seward Charterboat Association (EF-C14-094)

PROPOSAL 24 - 5 AAC 28.210. Fishing seasons for Prince William Sound Area. Clarify that lingcod may only be retained from July 1 through December 31, as follows:

5 AAC 28.210(c) is amended to read:

(c) Lingcod may be taken only **from July 1 through December 31, unless closed earlier by emergency order.**

(1) in a directed fishery [ONLY FROM JULY 1 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, UNLESS CLOSED EARLIER BY EMERGENCY ORDER]; and

(2) as bycatch up to 20 percent by weight of the directed finfish species on board a vessel, unless the commissioner closes the season and opens another season in which the bycatch is prohibited or further limited; bycatch taken under this paragraph is counted as part of any bycatch limit established under 5 AAC 28.070(b).

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Lingcod may only be taken between July 1 and December 31. While this is stated in 5 AAC 28.210(c)(1) regarding the directed fishery, 5 AAC 28.210(c)(2) has language concerning the retention of lingcod as bycatch which does not clearly state that lingcod caught as bycatch may only be retained after July 1. Clarification of this language will make the regulation easier to understand and will aid in enforcement.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F14-067)

PROPOSAL 25 - 5 AAC 28.210. Fishing seasons for Prince William Sound Area; and 5 AAC 28.230. Lawful gear for Prince William Sound Area. Change Prince William Sound Inside District sablefish season opening and closing date for pot gear, as follows:

(b) Sablefish may be taken in the Inside District from **March 15** through **September 30** **using pot gear, and April 15 through August 31 for other fixed gear types.**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Start date for state-waters sablefish season is currently April 15, although start date in federal waters is mid-March. An earlier start date for the pot gear only would promote the use of this gear type and therefore minimize the conflicts with orcas that have plagued the fishery since its inception.

PROPOSED BY: Rod Jensen (HQ-F14-018)

PROPOSAL 26 - 5 AAC 28.263. Prince William Sound Pollock Pelagic Trawl Management Plan. Establish a lower trip limit in Prince William Sound walleye pollock pelagic trawl fishery and disallow tendering during the fishery, as follows:

Make Prince William Sound pollock trawl trip limits of 200,000 pounds with no tendering allowed. Boats would have to deliver their own fish to the processor.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Prince William Sound pollock trawl catch limits. Smaller catch limits would slow the fishery down allowing the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to more effectively manage the fishery and its bycatch.

PROPOSED BY: Bill Fejes for Polar Seafoods (EF-C14-113)

PROPOSAL 27 - 5 AAC 28.230. Lawful gear for Prince William Sound Area; and 5 AAC 28.XXX. Prince William Sound Pollock Purse Seine and Jig Gear Management Plan. Establish directed commercial purse seine and jig pollock fisheries in Prince William Sound, as follows:

The Alaska Board of Fisheries should include the Prince William Sound (PWS) pollock management into the other state water pollock fisheries currently being considered by the pollock working group and include purse seine and jig as alternative gear types and to provide opportunity to 58 foot and smaller trawl vessels to harvest quota before the larger Kodiak trawlers harvest the entire quota.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The PWS pollock fishery in its current form occurs too quickly for smaller vessels and local processors to effectively participate. Additionally, the PWS Pollock Management Plan should be consistent with the other state water pollock management plans currently being considered by the pollock working group.

PROPOSED BY: Northwest & Alaska Seiners' Association (EF-C14-131)

PROPOSAL 28 - 5 AAC 28.265. Prince William Sound Rockfish Management Plan.
Change the amount of rockfish that may be retained as bycatch during Pacific cod and walleye pollock fisheries, as follows:

5 AAC 28.265(b) is amended to read:

(b) In the Prince William Sound Area, when fishing in a directed fishery, other than for rockfish, a CFEC permit holder must retain all rockfish, except that

...

(3) during a [STATE-WATERS] season for Pacific cod, [WITH GROUND FISH POTS, MECHANICAL JIGGING MACHINES AND HAND TROLL GEAR, OR LONGLINE GEAR] all rockfish in excess of five percent, round weight, of all Pacific cod on board the vessel must be weighed and reported as bycatch overage on an ADF&G fish ticket; any proceeds from the sale of excess rockfish shall be surrendered to the state;

(4) during the directed pollock pelagic trawl fishery, all rockfish in excess of 0.5 percent, round weight, of all pollock on board the vessel must be weighed and reported as bycatch overage on an ADF&G fish ticket; any proceeds from the sale of excess rockfish shall be surrendered to the state.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? This regulation defines the percent of rockfish legally retainable as bycatch for all Prince William Sound (PWS) groundfish fisheries; for fisheries not named in this regulation, 10 percent is the legally retainable amount (5 AAC 28.265(b)(1)). The PWS parallel Pacific cod fishery is not named in this regulation and therefore the maximum retainable amount of rockfish is 10 percent. The parallel Pacific cod fishery has retained an average of 2.5 percent rockfish as bycatch between 2006 and 2013, with a maximum of 5.8 percent retained in 2010, the only year to exceed 5 percent. The state-waters Pacific cod fishery, which targets the same species, is already restricted to 5 percent rockfish bycatch, and has retained an average of 4.3 percent rockfish as bycatch over the same time period. Restricting both Pacific cod fisheries to 5 percent rockfish bycatch will provide consistency in the regulations, and removing the gear types from regulatory language will simplify interpretation.

The PWS directed pollock pelagic trawl fishery is also not named in this regulation, but is limited by regulation 5 AAC 28.263(d) to no more than 5 percent total bycatch. The department has managed within that 5 percent for a rockfish bycatch cap of 0.5 percent in this fishery since 2003. Having this clearly defined in regulation will benefit fishery managers, participants, and enforcement.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F14-069)

PROPOSAL 29 - 5 AAC 28.265. Prince William Sound Rockfish Management Plan.

Require retention of all rockfish in the sablefish fishery on gear sets below 150 fathoms, remove rockfish bycatch limits and requirements, such that proceeds from rockfish bycatch are not surrendered to the state, as follows:

During the sablefish fishery, gear sets below 150 fathoms will retain all rockfish (no bycatch limit or surrendering of the proceeds will apply).

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? High populations of the rockfish below 150 fathoms. The primary species of rockfish noted are: shortraker, roughey, and thornyhead. Spot shrimp and side stripe shrimp populations are depressed in rockfish concentration areas. Consequently shrimp populations are unable to repopulate to their historic levels.

PROPOSED BY: Jon Van Hyning (HQ-F14-008)

PROPOSAL 30 - 5 AAC 28.267. Prince William Sound Pacific Cod Management Plan.

Eliminate closure of Pacific cod pot season at 90 percent of guideline harvest level and combine pot and jig allocations, provide a step up/step down allocation depending on achievement of guideline harvest level, as follows:

Remove the 90% allocation (which triggers season closure for pot gear). Combine the pot and jig gear allocation sectors and if they achieve their allocation in any given year, that allocation would increase by 5%, up to a maximum of 30%. Inversely, if they do not achieve their allocation, it would decrease by 5%, to a minimum of 15%.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Under current regulations there is no effective quota for pot gear because the existing “trigger point” which closes hook-and-line fishing at 85% is consistently overshot. With a 90% “closure trigger” for pot gear, nothing remains for this gear type, thereby discouraging its usage.

PROPOSED BY: Rod Jensen (HQ-F14-017)

PROPOSAL 31 - 5 AAC 28.206. Prince William Sound Area registration; and 5 AAC 28.267. Prince William Sound Pacific Cod Management Plan. Change Pacific cod allocation to provide 10 percent for jig gear until June 10, after which it will then be available to pot gear, and designate the state-waters jig fishery as nonexclusive, as follows:

Allocate 10% of the guideline harvest level (GHL) to the jig fleet prior to June 10 and make the fishery nonexclusive. After June 10, the remaining quota would be available for a rollover to the pot and longline fleet and the jig fishery would revert to federal B season parallel status.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Opportunity for a state water cod jig fishery is limited in Prince William Sound (PWS) due to the rapid harvest of Pacific cod by the pot and longline fleets. The exclusive registration requirement for the state water jig fishery in PWS provides a disincentive for jig fishermen to register for the state fishery because the remaining quota for the jig fleet is minimal after the pot and longline gear seasons have closed. This is only an issue when the federal parallel season closes.

PROPOSED BY: Gregory R. Gabriel, Jr. (EF-C14-136)

PROPOSAL 32 - 5 AAC 28.250. Closed waters in Prince William Sound Area. Correct coordinates within the described closed waters section for groundfish at Zaikof Point, as follows: 5 AAC 28.250(a) is amended to read:

(a) Groundfish may not be taken with pots in the waters enclosed by lines from Point Whitshed to Point Bentinck, from Cape Hinchinbrook Light to Seal Rocks Light to Zaikof Point **at 60° 18.48' N. lat., 146° 55.10' W. long.** [(60° 19' N. LAT., 146° 55' W. LONG.)], and from a point at 60° 11' N. lat., 147° 20' W. long. on the northwest side of Montague Island, north to a point at 60° 30' N. lat., 147° 20' W. long., then east to a point at 60° 30' N. lat., 147° 00' W. long., then northeast to Knowles Head (60° 41' N. lat., 146° 37.50' W. long.), except that groundfish may be taken with pots

(1) within Orca Bay, east of 146° 37.50' W. long., excluding the waters of Port Gravina north of a line from Gravina Point to Red Head at 60° 40.25' N. lat., 146° 30.22' W. long.;

(2) in waters not more than 75 fathoms deep within waters enclosed by a line from Johnstone Point Light to Montague Point at 60° 23' N. lat., 147° 06' W. long., to Middle Point at 60° 20.50' N. lat., 147° W. long. to Schooner Rock Light (Zaikof Point) to Cape Hinchinbrook Light.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Precisely defining the coordinates of geographical points is important and has become more common in the regulations. Coordinates that define Zaikof Point in this regulation do not match those in 5 AAC 28.263 which were updated at the December 2011 Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting. Accuracy and consistency within regulations will benefit fishery managers, participants, and enforcement.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F14-068)
