

PROPOSAL 227

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

Reduce the nonpelagic rockfish bag and possession limits and prohibit retention of yellow rockfish, as follows:

Non-pelagic rockfish: bag limit of 1 fish; possession limit of 2 fish; of which none may be yelloweye.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The harvest of all non-pelagic rockfish species was closed by emergency order in the Southeast Alaska sport fishery during 2020. The closure was based on survey data indicating a decline in yelloweye abundance. There is no survey data indicating a decline in other non-pelagic species such as copper, quillback, canary, vermillion, silvergray, bocacio, etc. which are commonly caught sport fishing and are all excellent table fare. Anglers commonly catch all species of non-pelagic rockfish and the inability to harvest species other than yelloweye is a lost opportunity to the sport fishery. The mandatory use of deep water release mechanisms will significantly reduce release mortality of incidentally caught yelloweye and other rockfish that are not harvested. ADFG passed an emergency order for 2020 allowing the harvest of Slope Rockfish (Bocacio, Silvergray, Vermillion, Roughey, Shortraker, Redstripe, etc.) The emergency order also outlines exactly which Demersal Shelf Rockfish you cannot harvest during 2020 (Yelloweye, China, Copper, Quillback, Tiger and Canary.)

Total Sport Harvest of non-pelagic rockfish removal in kilograms (harvest and release mortality estimates) for Southeast Outside waters has averaged approximately 48,000 kilograms in the last 10 years (2009-2018).

Northern Southeast Outside waters has averaged approximately 6,000kgs. which is 12% of the harvest.

Central Southeast Outside (CSEO-Sitka) has averaged approximately 30,600kg. which is 64% of the harvest.

Southern Southeast Outside (SSEO-W. POW) has averaged approximately 11,600kg. which is 24% of the harvest.

Yelloweye rockfish has been the preferred species of non-pelagic harvest and has also been the majority of harvest followed by quillback and copper.

This proposal will allow anglers to harvest any of the non-pelagic rockfish per day other than Yelloweye. The only non-pelagic species with a conservation concern is Yelloweye. Most anglers on the West side of POW agree that the most abundant non-pelagic rockfish species caught are Quillback. Most anglers also agree that Copper, Canary and China rockfish are all excellent table fare and readily abundant. Without this proposal, anglers will be denied the harvest of Tiger, Quillback, Copper, China and Canary rockfish.

PROPOSED BY: Craig Fish and Game Advisory Committee

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