

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 1-RF-R-09-17

Issued at: Sitka, Monday, March 20,
2017.

Effective 12:01 a.m. Wednesday,
Date: March 22, 2017

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Saturday,
March 31, 2018 unless superseded by
subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order establishes Southeast Alaska sport fishing bag and possession limits for nonpelagic rockfish, requires retention of all nonpelagic rockfish caught until the bag limit is reached, establishes a nonresident annual limit for yelloweye rockfish with harvest reporting requirements, and establishes a time and area closure in Southeast Outside Waters as well as mandatory deep water release during the closure period. Additionally, Southeast Alaska charter vessel operators and crew members will be prohibited from retaining nonpelagic rockfish while clients are on board the vessel.

REGULATION:

The provision 5 AAC 47.020(8)(B) is superseded by this emergency order and 5 AAC 47.030(m) is added. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective beginning 12:01 a.m. Wednesday, March 22, 2017 through 11:59 p.m. Saturday, March 31, 2018:

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) all nonpelagic rockfish caught must be retained until the bag limit is reached;
- (ii) nonpelagic rockfish bag and possession limit is one fish; no size limit;
- (iii) nonresident annual limit of one yelloweye rockfish; immediately after harvesting a yelloweye rockfish nonresident anglers must record, in ink, the yelloweye rockfish harvested either on the back of their sport fishing license or on a nontransferable harvest record;
- (iv) a sport fishing guide and sport fishing guide crew member working on a chartered vessel in the salt waters of Southeast Alaska may not retain nonpelagic rockfish while clients are on board the vessel.
- (v) in the Southeast Outside Waters: which includes all salt waters of Alaska north of the International Boundary Line at Dixon Entrance then east to 132° W. long. to Prince of Wales Island at 54° 43.68' N lat., 132° W. long., then following the coast of Prince of Wales Island to the entrance of Hole in the Wall at 56° 15.57' N. lat., 133° 38.60' W. long., continuing south and west on a line to Cape Decision at 56° 00.02' N. lat., 134° 08.16' W. long., continuing north and west on a line to Cape Ommaney at 56° 09.59' N. lat., 134° 40.31' W. long. then following the outer coast of Baranof Island to Range Point at 57° 22.44' N. lat., 135° 39.40' W. long., continuing north on a line to Struya Point at 57° 22.85' N. lat., 135° 39.72' W. long., then following the outer coast of Chichagof Island to Point Adolphus at 58° 17.17' N. lat., 135° 46.97' W. long., continuing north on a line to Point Carlous at 58° 22.89' N. lat., 136° 02.21' W.

long., continuing along the coastline to Cape Suckling at 144° W. long., including all remaining salt waters of the Icy Bay Subdistrict and the Southeast Outside Subdistrict as described in 5 AAC 28.105. the retention of nonpelagic rockfish is prohibited August 1 – 21,

5 AAC 47.030. Methods, means, and general provisions – Finfish.

(m) In the Southeast Outside Waters as described in 5 AAC 47.020(8)(B)(v) from August 1 – August 21 a person sport fishing from a vessel when releasing a nonpelagic rockfish shall immediately use a deep water release mechanism to return the fish to the depth it was hooked or to a depth of at least 100 feet. All vessels sport fishing in Southeast Outside Waters must have at least one functional deep water release mechanism on board and readily available for use when sport fishing activities are taking place. Upon request, a deep water release mechanism must be presented to a local representative of the department or a peace officer of the state. In this subsection, “deep water release mechanism” means a device designed to return a rockfish back near the bottom where it was hooked, or to a specified depth, and to assist the fish in recompression and to improve the fish’s chance of survival.

Sam Cotten,
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Robert Chadwick
Regional Management Coordinator
Division of Sport Fish

JUSTIFICATION:

The Alaska Board of Fisheries allocated 16% of the allowable catch of demersal shelf rockfish to the sport fishery in Southeast Outside Waters and established management provisions (5 AAC 47.065) to be used by the department to manage the sport fishery within the allocation. The measures implemented by this emergency order are intended to provide harvest opportunity while limiting the total mortality of nonpelagic rockfish to within the sport allocation and thereby ensure the sustainability of demersal shelf rockfish populations in the Southeast Alaska Area. In 2017, a three week closure in Southeast Outside Waters is necessary to keep the sport fishery within its allocation. During this closure period all anglers will be required to release rockfish at depth. The mandatory release at depth will ensure that most released nonpelagic rockfish will survive. Based on research studies, the department estimates that proper use of release devices reduces mortality of nonpelagic rockfish by over 95%. This projected savings was used to estimate the number of weeks for the closure period in 2017.

Although there is not an allocation for nonpelagic rockfish in Southeast Inside Waters, sport harvest has risen in the last several years and now exceeds the sport harvest in Southeast Outside Waters. In light of a lack of stock information and in the interest of conservative management a reduction in bag and possession limits is necessary to reduce harvest to historical levels.

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.