

**PROPOSAL 128**

**5 AAC 47.021. Special provisions for seasons, bag, possession, annual, and size limits and methods and means for the salt waters of Southeast Alaska Area.**

Reduce the pelagic rockfish limits in the Sitka Area, as follows:

5 AAC 47.021(g) is amended by adding a new subparagraph to read:

(g) In the Sitka vicinity:

**(8) in waters west of Baranof and Chichagof Islands, south of 57° 30' N. lat. and north of the latitude of Cape Ommaney (56 ° 09.60' N.) the bag limit for pelagic rockfish is three fish and possession limit of six fish, no size limit.**

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** In 2016 and 2017 the department reduced the bag limit of pelagic rockfish to three fish through emergency order authority to reduce harvest. Pelagic rockfish harvest in the Sitka Area, as estimated by the statewide harvest and marine creel surveys, has gradually increased from 20,000 fish in 2009 to over 60,000 fish in 2014 and 2015 representing a 3-fold increase in sport harvest in recent years. Although there is limited stock information, analysis of the length-weight composition of the sport harvest shows a slight, but gradual decline in average weight since 2006 indicating a possible change in the population structure. This may be a result of increased harvest. A reduction in bag limit from five to three pelagic rockfish is predicted to reduce harvest to a level similar to that seen in 2011 through 2013. This proposal is designed to protect pelagic rockfish in the interest of conservative management until additional stock information is available.

**PROPOSED BY:** Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F17-127)

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