

SPORT FISHING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH & GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 1-RF-R-09-22

Issued at: Petersburg, Thursday, April 14, 2022.

Effective Date: 12:01 a.m. Thursday, April 14, 2022

Expiration Date: 11:59 p.m. Friday, March 31, 2023 unless superseded by subsequent emergency order.

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order provides all sport anglers harvest opportunity for slope rockfish and residents of Alaska harvest opportunity for demersal shelf rockfish except yelloweye.

REGULATION:

Emergency Order No. 1-RF-R-03-22 issued January 10, 2022 is rescinded and the provisions of 5 AAC 47.020(8)(B) are superseded by this emergency order. Under this emergency order, the following provisions are effective 12:01 a.m. Thursday, April 14, 2022 through 11:59 p.m. Friday, March 31, 2023:

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) rockfish may be taken from January 1 – December 31, as follows:
 - (B) slope rockfish, as defined in 5 AAC 39.975(38): bag limit of one fish; possession limit of two fish;
 - (C) demersal shelf rockfish, as defined in 5 AAC 39.975(34):
 - (i) resident: bag limit of one fish; possession limit of two fish; no annual limit; no size limit;
 - (ii) nonresident: no open season; may not be taken or possessed;
 - (iii) yelloweye rockfish: no open season; may not be taken or possessed;

Doug Vincent-Lang,
Commissioner

By delegation to:

Patrick Fowler
Acting Regional Mgt. Coordinator
Division of Sport Fish

JUSTIFICATION:

At the March 2022 Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting for Southeast Alaska a proposal was adopted providing all anglers harvest opportunity of one slope rockfish and residents of Alaska the opportunity to harvest one demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) excluding yelloweye. This emergency order provides that opportunity during the 2022 season. The resident harvest of DSR is historically low, this limited harvest opportunity is not expected to exceed the sport fishery allocation of DSR in the Southeast Outside Subdistrict as directed in 5 AAC 28.160(c)(1) and in compliance with the *Demersal shelf rockfish delegation of authority and provisions for management* (5 AAC 47.065). In 2020 and 2021, all directed sport and commercial fisheries for DSR were closed while opportunity for slope rockfish was provided in the sport fishery. These actions were taken to ensure the sustainability of DSR while still providing harvest opportunity for slope rockfish. This emergency order modifies these provisions for the 2022 season by providing limited harvest opportunity of DSR, excluding yelloweye, for residents of Alaska and maintaining harvest opportunity of slope rockfish for all anglers.

Despite conservative management over the last decade, yelloweye rockfish biomass in the Eastern Gulf of Alaska has declined approximately 60% since assessments began in 1994. Additionally, annual trends in biological data (length, weight, and age by sex) reveal truncation of age classes, indicating reduced reproductive potential and increasing uncertainty for future recruitment of juveniles. DSR are particularly vulnerable to overexploitation and are slow to recover once fished below sustainable levels given their longevity, slow growth, late maturation, and high site-fidelity, with yelloweye rockfish reaching an estimated maximum age of 122 years and maturing at 18–22 years.

These data and biological characteristics warrant conservative management action to allow for rebuilding of yelloweye stocks and ensure sustainable rockfish fisheries in the future. Stock health will continue to be assessed annually through yelloweye rockfish stock assessment surveys, biological sampling of yelloweye bycatch, and monitoring catch of all DSR species retained in commercial and sport fisheries.

Historically all nonpelagic rockfish have been managed as a species group. However, this action is being taken to provide limited opportunity for resident sport anglers to target canary, China, copper, quillback, rosethorn, and tiger rockfish excluding yelloweye of the DSR assemblage and opportunity for resident and nonresident anglers to harvest slope rockfish of which sport harvest has been historically low.

PREVIOUS EMERGENCY ORDERS AFFECTED:

Emergency Order 1-RF-R-03-22, issued January 12, 2022, is rescinded by this emergency order.

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 99811, (907) 465-4270.