

PROPOSAL 125

5 AAC 47.065. Demersal shelf rockfish delegation of authority and provisions for management.

Repeal mandatory retention requirements for nonpelagic rockfish, as follows:

The regulation should be changed to eliminate the wording: "All non-pelagic rockfish caught must be retained until the bag limit is reached." No other changes to the regulation would be required.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Currently guided fishers are required to retain all non-pelagic rockfish until the limit is reached, after which, if additional non-pelagics are caught they must be released at depth.

a. Often very small non-pelagic rockfish are caught, retained and are wasted because they are too small to salvage any practical amount of meat after being fileted. They are considered simply not worth the effort.

b. In addition to smaller rockfish, it is common for larger non-pelagic rockfish to be caught while targeting other species. The fact the angler is targeting other species often indicates that rockfish are an unintended and unwanted catch. Rockfish are not allowed to be retained by crew. Under current regulations non-pelagic rockfish must be retained until a limit is achieved, whether they are wanted or not, often resulting in undesired retention and unnecessary mortalities.

The harvest and waste of non-pelagic rockfish can be prevented if the regulations allowed discretion in the release at depth of such fish prior to achieving a limit. Release at depth is estimated to result in 80% survivability, but a rockfish retained results in 100% mortality. The resulting waste causes frustration to clients and guides alike, and calls into question the practicality of the regulation as written.

PROPOSED BY: Don Westlund and Larry McQuarrie

(HQ-F17-089)
