

PROPOSAL 1

5 AAC 55.022. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits and methods and means for the Prince William Sound area.

Reduce the bag and possession limits for lingcod in the Prince William Sound Area, as follows:

Reduce the daily bag and possession limit for lingcod in Prince William Sound (PWS).

(a)(8) lingcod: may be taken only from July 1 – December 31; bag limit of **one** [TWO] fish; possession limit of **two** [FOUR] fish; must be 35 inches or greater in length including the head, or 28 inches or greater in length with the head removed.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Increased harvest trends in the PWS sport/charter lingcod fishery in recent years, as well as the complexity in regulation enforcement between the North Gulf Coast and PWS.

As charter boat operators, we have witnessed the decline in lingcod numbers over the past several years, most precipitously in the very recent past. This is a very slow maturing species that is susceptible to overfishing, as the current regulations reflect. Unfortunately, there is no formal stock assessment of lingcod in PWS to provide concrete data on population health. However, data provided in Fishery Management Report No. 14-44 on Recreational Fisheries in the PWS Management Area, 2011- 2013 by Mike Thalhauser published November 2014, provides evidence to support our observations and concerns about declining lingcod numbers since 2010. Although the management of lingcod by ADFG is described as using “conservative” regulations by limiting daily limits to two fish, possession limits to four fish, and restricting the length of the fish and the season, these regulations are failing to prevent overfishing and population decline. More conservative regulations are needed to protect the resource, especially with the increased targeting of lingcod by charter operators as restrictions on halibut fishing are expanded. If nothing is changed, our concern is that lingcod numbers will continue to decline to the point that the population may not recover.

Bringing the bag and possession limits in alignment between the North Gulf Coast and PWS would reduce the complexity in regulation enforcement as many vessels from Seward fish in PWS, but land their fish in Seward.

Other options considered were re-defining the season opening date, reducing possession limits to one lingcod, and increasing the size of the fish retained. Each of these options was disregarded as they did not fit with the spirit of the portion of the proposal which seeks to align the bag and possession limits of the North Gulf Coast with Prince William Sound.

PROPOSED BY: Denise M. Hawks (HQ-F17-019)

PROPOSAL 2

5 AAC 55.022. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Prince William Sound Area.

Reduce the bag and possession limits for lingcod in a portion of the Prince William Sound Area, as follows:

(8) Season July 1 – December 31

One [TWO] per day, **Two** [FOUR] in possession, minimum 35 inches long with the head attached, or 28 inches or greater in length with the head removed, **except, the area south and east of 46 degrees 0 minutes latitude, 147 degrees 0 minutes longitude 2 per day, 2 in possession, minimum 35 inches long with the head attached, or 28 inches or greater in length with head removed.**

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Steady decline in sport caught ling cod. A more restrictive regulation now may make the fishery sustainable preventing even more restrictive regulations in the future.

Although the total amount of days sport fishermen fished in Prince William / Gulf Coast has remained fairly constant from 2010 – 2015, observations and harvest indicate the stock is declining. Additionally, the more restrictive halibut regulations for charter boat clients has increased pressure on ling cod.

Harvests since 2010:

2010 – 14,013; 2011 - 11,8976; 2012 – 10,728; 2013 – 9,785; 2014 – 9447
2015 – 9,034

PROPOSED BY: Whittier Fish and Game Advisory Committee (HQ-F17-092)

PROPOSAL 3

5 AAC 55.022. General provisions for seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Prince William Sound Area.

Modify and align bag and possession limits for rockfish in the Prince William Sound Area, as follows:

5 AAC 55.022(9) is amended to read:

(9) rockfish:

(A) may be taken from **January 1 – December 31** [MAY 1 – SEPTEMBER 15]; bag limit of four fish; possession limit of eight fish, of which only **one** [TWO] per day and in possession may be nonpelagic rockfish **as defined in 5 AAC 75.995**; the first [TWO] nonpelagic rockfish caught must be retained and become part of the bag limit of the person originally hooking the fish; no size limit;

(B) **Repealed** / **2018**; [MAY BE TAKEN FROM SEPTEMBER 16 – APRIL 30; BAG AND POSSESSION LIMIT OF EIGHT FISH, OF WHICH ONLY TWO PER DAY AND IN POSSESSION MAY BE NONPELAGIC ROCKFISH; THE FIRST TWO NONPELAGIC

ROCKFISH CAUGHT MUST BE RETAINED AND BECOME PART OF THE BAG LIMIT OF THE PERSON ORIGINALLY HOOKING THE FISH; NO SIZE LIMIT.]

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In Prince William Sound there are two separate bag and possession limits for rockfish depending on the time of the year. From May 1 through September 15 the bag limit is four fish, with a possession limit of eight fish, of which only two in possession may be nonpelagic. The remainder of the year (September 16 through April 30) the bag and possession limit is eight fish, of which only two per day and in possession may be nonpelagic rockfish. Available information indicates few people take advantage of the higher winter bag limit. The seasonal difference in bag limits creates unnecessary complexity in the regulations. The two fish bag limit for nonpelagic rockfish was implemented in 2006 to reduce waste of nonpelagic rockfish caught incidentally. A one fish bag limit is needed for sustainable management of long-lived nonpelagic species, and mandatory retention of the first nonpelagic

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F17-123)

PROPOSAL 4

5 AAC 28.265. Prince William Sound Rockfish Management Plan.

Establish a pelagic rockfish jig fishery with a separate guideline harvest level in the Outside District of the Prince William Sound Area, as follows:

Establish a targeted pelagic rockfish jig fishery with its own guideline harvest level (GHL) in the Eastern and Western outside districts of Area E. The fishery could be established in a fashion similar to the existing pelagic jig fisheries in neighboring Area H or Kodiak.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Request that the total rockfish GHL of Area E be adjusted to allow for a directed fishery for pelagic rockfish in the area. The current total GHL of rockfish in Area E cannot exceed 150,000 pounds of rockfish in all fisheries. There are currently no directed rockfish fisheries in Prince William Sound; all rockfish are caught as bycatch in other fisheries. The current rockfish bycatch consists of very little pelagic rockfish and it would be beneficial to establish a separate GHL for only pelagic rockfish.

PROPOSED BY: Cordova District Fishermen United Board of Directors (HQ-F17-039)

PROPOSAL 5

5 AAC 28.210. Fishing seasons for Prince William Sound Area.

Specify that bycatch allowance of lingcod in the Prince William Sound Area is measured as round weight, as follows:

Amend subsection (c)(2) to read:

(c) Lingcod may be taken only from July 1 through December 31, unless closed earlier by emergency order,

(1) in a directed fishery; and

(2) as bycatch up to 20 percent by **round** weight of the directed finfish species on board a vessel, unless the commissioner closes the season and opens another season in which the bycatch is prohibited or further limited[; BYCATCH TAKEN UNDER THIS PARAGRAPH IS COUNTED AS PART OF ANY BYCATCH LIMIT ESTABLISHED UNDER 5 AAC 28.070(b)].

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Prior to 2014, bycatch in Prince William Sound Area (PWS) groundfish fisheries was managed to an overall bycatch cap of 20 percent for all bycatch species combined. This bycatch limit was a department management objective and not in regulation. Beginning in 2014, and in accordance with 5 AAC 28.070 (b), allowable bycatch levels in PWS for each species or species group, where a bycatch allowance is not already specified in regulation, have been established by emergency order as percentages by round weight of bycatch to round weight of target species. There is no longer an overall bycatch cap and each bycatch allowance by species or species group is assessed separately based on harvest of target species. The language proposed to be removed from the regulation is not accurate based on current management of bycatch and is confusing for the public. Additionally, bycatch allowances are based on round weight, which is specified in the proposal language.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F17-101)

PROPOSAL 6

5 AAC 28.267. Prince William Sound Pacific Cod Management Plan.

Allow vessels fishing for halibut in the Prince William Sound Area to retain all Pacific cod bycatch when directed Pacific cod fisheries are closed due to reaching the federal halibut bycatch allowance, as follows:

When the P cod fishery is closed due to excessive halibut bycatch; vessels targeting halibut (and in possession of a miscellaneous finfish permit) shall be allowed to retain all P cod.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Vessels engaged in halibut fishing are forced to discard P cod, even though P cod TACs have not been reached. P cod fishing has been closed due to excessive halibut bycatch so vessels fishing P cod are forced to shuck halibut and vessels fishing halibut are forced to shuck P cod. This is an extremely wasteful practice forced upon fishermen by the regulatory bodies.

PROPOSED BY: Robert A. Smith (HQ-F17-062)

PROPOSAL 7

5 AAC 28.230. Lawful gear for Prince William Sound Area.

Clarify lawful gear requirements for Prince William Sound Area groundfish fisheries, as follows:

Add two new subsections (j) and (k) to read:

(j) Except as provided in (k) of this section, in a groundfish fishery for which more than one type of gear is legal gear, a person may have only one type of gear on board the vessel.

(k) In a groundfish fishery, mechanical jigging machines and hand troll gear may be used at the same time and either or both constitute jig gear. If mechanical jigging machines and hand troll gear are being used under this subsection, only that gear may be on board the vessel.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Prince William Sound Area (PWS) groundfish fisheries are typically managed with different requirements depending on the gear type used, including for example harvest allocations for Pacific cod during the state-waters season. CFEC permit cards are issued for a specific gear type and it is required that harvest on fish tickets must be reported by gear type. Area registrations and logbooks are issued for a specific gear type. Estimates of catch per unit effort are calculated based on parameters that apply to a single gear type. In current PWS regulations, it is not specified that only one gear type may be on board a vessel. The one exception is jig gear which is comprised of two gear types, mechanical jigging machines and hand troll gear, which may be on board the vessel and used at the same time. There is language in the *PWS Pacific Cod Management Plan 28.267(e)(3)(C)* that specifies participants in a state-waters season for Pacific cod may not be simultaneously registered to fish with more than one gear type, except for mechanical jigging machines and hand troll gear. However, it is not specified that more than one gear type may not be onboard the vessel. This proposal would clarify that for all PWS groundfish fisheries only one gear type may be onboard the vessel, with the exception of jig gear. There are similar regulations as these proposed, for the Cook Inlet Area under Lawful gear for Cook Inlet Area, 5 AAC 28.330.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F17-098)

PROPOSAL 8

5 AAC 28.206. Prince William Sound Area registration.

Add specific registration requirements for Prince William Sound Area groundfish fisheries, as follows:

Add a new subsection (d) to read:

(d) In the Prince William Sound Area, prior to operating a vessel in a directed fishery for lingcod or Pacific cod during a parallel season, or Pacific cod during a state-waters season as described in 5 AAC 28.267, the vessel operator or authorized agent must obtain a fishery-specific registration for that vessel.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Some requirements of area registration are described under statewide regulation 5 AAC 28.020, including that a registration must be obtained before a vessel operates gear within a registration area and specifies the conditions that invalidate a registration. In the Prince William Sound Registration Area (PWS), there are fishery-specific registration requirements listed for walleye pollock and sablefish under 5 AAC 28.206, as these two fisheries have registration deadlines. However, aside from describing exclusivity for gear types in the Pacific cod state-waters season, there are no clear requirements for registration in the Pacific cod and lingcod fisheries described under 5 AAC 28.206. This has caused some confusion for PWS fishermen registered in a nonexclusive parallel Pacific cod season to consider themselves also registered for the nonexclusive directed lingcod fishery. Although the *PWS Pacific Cod Management*

Plan, 5 AAC 28.267, states that registration is required for the state-waters season, specifying registration requirements for each PWS groundfish fishery and identifying these registration requirements in regulations pertaining to PWS registration would provide clarity.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F17-100)

PROPOSAL 9

5 AAC 28.272. Sablefish harvest, possession, and landing requirements for Prince William Sound Area.

Clarify procedures for obtaining, completing, and submitting log sheets for the Prince William Sound Area sablefish fishery, as follows:

5 AAC 28.272 (f) is amended to read:

(f) **An operator of a vessel participating in the Prince William Sound Area sablefish fishery shall obtain sablefish log [LOG] sheets [FOR THE LONGLINE SABLEFISH FISHERY WILL BE ISSUED AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION] provided by the department. The vessel operator must have the log sheets on board the vessel at all times and must submit to the department no later than seven days following delivery completed log sheets that correspond with each ADF&G sablefish fish ticket. [LOG SHEETS MUST BE COMPLETED, SIGNED, AND RECEIVED BY THE DEPARTMENT'S CORDOVA OFFICE, AT THE ADDRESS OR FACSIMILE NUMBER SPECIFIED ON THE LOG SHEET, WITHIN 10 DAYS AFTER EACH LANDING OF SABLEFISH.]**

(1) A log sheet under this section must:

(A) include the date, the specific location of harvest by latitude and longitude, the number of hooks fished or the number of pots fished, the average depth, and the time gear is deployed and hauled, for each set;

(B) include for the target species, and for each bycatch species, the number of fish retained and discarded for each set;

(C) be updated not later than 11:59 p.m. local time on the day after the day of operation; and

(D) be made available to a local representative of the department upon request.

(2) A person may not make a false entry in a log sheet described in this section.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Although the current regulation requires submission of completed log sheets, it does not outline the specific expectations of the vessel operator regarding completion of log sheets or the information required to be reported. Additionally, the proposed deadline for submission of log sheets will align with the deadline for submission of fish tickets. Log sheets are to be completed for each fishing trip and therefore correspond with a fish ticket(s). In December 2016, new regulations were adopted by the board regarding the submission of log sheets from the Cook Inlet Area sablefish fishery (5 AAC 28.360 (b)) and the submission deadline was aligned with the fish ticket deadline. Amending Prince William Sound Area (PWS) sablefish regulations would provide consistency between areas in Central Region. Fish tickets are due within

seven days after delivery of fish and fishermen delivering to a processor will often submit log sheet(s) to industry staff when completing the fish ticket and the buyer will submit the log sheet with the corresponding fish ticket(s) to the department. This practice works well for timely receipt of log sheets, which is necessary for corroboration of harvest and effort data, and monitoring the fishery inseason. It is specified in regulation that fish tickets are due to the department within seven days of landing (5 AAC 39.130 (c)). However, it is still the fisherman's responsibility to submit the log sheet and, for those fishermen that do not submit their log sheets to a buyer, the deadline for submission of log sheets to the department needs to be specified in regulation. Additionally, management of PWS groundfish fisheries is now occurring from the Homer office and specifying the office location is unnecessary and could be inaccurate; contact information is provided to fishermen at the time of registration.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F17-099)
