

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)
