

PROPOSAL 48

5 AAC 28.466. Kodiak Area Rockfish Management Plan; and 5 AAC 64.XXX. New section. Establish a management plan for the Kodiak Area rockfish sport fishery and a guideline harvest range for the Kodiak Area commercial rockfish fishery, as follows:

5 AAC 64.XXX is added:

Kodiak Area Rockfish Management Plan. (a) The purpose of the management plan under this section is to meet the Board of Fisheries' goal of stabilizing the sport harvest of black rockfish in the waters of the Kodiak Area particularly in the areas of Chiniak and Marmot bays. Black rockfish will be managed for harvest levels within the established guideline harvest range until a time when survey abundance estimates suggest an increase in harvest is appropriate. In recognition that commercial and sport users harvest the same populations of black rockfish, a management plan is also in place for commercial fisheries to maintain harvest within the guideline harvest range specified in 5 AAC 28.466(h).

(b) In the Kodiak Area rockfish sport fishery,

(1) the guideline harvest range is 0 - 21,500 black rockfish;

(2) the sport harvest will be estimated annually by the department using saltwater guide logbooks, statewide harvest survey data, and dockside sampling data;

(3) the bag and possession limit for rockfish is five fish, only two of which may be nonpelagic and only one of which may be a yelloweye except;

(A) in the waters of Chiniak Bay and Marmot Bay, west of a line from Cape Chiniak to Pillar Cape and east of a line from Head Point on Afognak Island (57° 59.67' N. lat., 152° 46.75' W. long.) to Dolphin Point (57° 59.15' N. lat., 152° 43.40' W. long.) on Whale Island and from Bird Point (57° 55.30' N. lat., 152° 47.50' W. long.) on Whale Island to Inner Point (57° 54.05' N. lat., 152° 47.75' W. long.) on Kodiak Island;

(i) the bag limit for rockfish is three fish per day and six in possession, of which only two fish per day and four in possession may be nonpelagic rockfish, and only one fish per day and two in possession may be yelloweye rockfish; no size limit;

(ii) charter vessel operators and crewmembers may not retain rockfish while clients are on board the vessel.

(c) If the harvest increases and it is anticipated that the upper bound of the guideline harvest range will be exceeded or has been exceeded, the commissioner may implement restrictions that may be necessary to restrict the increase of harvest in the sport fishery. When the commissioner finds that restrictions are necessary, the commissioner will adopt one or more of the following restrictions:

(1) implement an annual limit for nonresidents for rockfish;

(2) reduce nonresident bag and possession limit for rockfish;

(3) reduce the rockfish bag limit by statistical area according to the department's groundfish statistical chart;

(4) implement a rockfish season; and/or

(5) reduce the resident bag and possession limit for rockfish.

5 AAC 28.466(h) is added:

(h) the annual Kodiak Area black rockfish guideline harvest range is 0 - 120,000 pounds.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? This proposal seeks to maintain current harvest levels in sport and commercial black rockfish fisheries in the Kodiak Area and curtail further growth in the sport fishery by establishing guideline harvest ranges (GHRs). Emphasis will be on managing harvest of black rockfish because they are the primary species targeted by both user groups. The department's current estimates of Kodiak Area black rockfish abundance indicate that capping total removals at current harvest levels is consistent with previous efforts by the board to implement a conservative approach to management of rockfish fisheries. Sport and Commercial Fisheries divisions have met annually to assess trends in black rockfish abundance and harvest for the Kodiak Area; however, a specifically designed set of management options is needed given limitations and uncertainty associated with currently available data. The proposed management plan for the sport fishery would establish a GHR and define management measures that may be utilized by the department to constrain harvest below the upper bound of the GHR.

Recent sport harvest estimates for rockfish have shown a steadily increasing trend based on guided saltwater logbook and the Statewide Harvest Survey (SWHS) data. Black rockfish are the primary species taken by sport harvesters. In 2011, the board reduced the Kodiak Area rockfish bag limit from 10 fish to 5 fish per day to attempt to curtail growth in the fishery in recognition that rockfish generally are a long lived, slow growing species that is vulnerable to overharvest. After an initial harvest reduction in the following season, SWHS estimates of rockfish harvest continued to increase from approximately 15,500 fish in 2011 to a peak of approximately 26,500 fish in 2016. In response to the continued increasing harvest trend, the board further reduced the bag limit for rockfish to 3 rockfish per day in Chiniak and Marmot bays prior to the 2017 season. Harvest decreased to approximately 23,400 fish in 2017; however, additional management tools are needed to reduce harvests to sustainable levels.

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