

PROPOSAL 199

5 AAC 28.111. Demersal shelf rockfish fishing seasons for Eastern Gulf of Alaska Area. and 5 AAC 28.113. Lingcod fishing seasons for Eastern Gulf of Alaska Area.

Add a weather delay provision that would postpone the opening date of the directed demersal shelf rockfish and directed lingcod fisheries if weather forecast meets gale warning or higher criteria in management areas in the Eastern Gulf of Alaska Area, as follows:

5 AAC 28.111 (c) is added to read:

(c) For all Eastern Gulf of Alaska demersal shelf rockfish fishing periods, the season opening shall be delayed if the National Weather Service forecast for the management area(s) eligible to be opened contains gale force winds of 35 knots or higher in the forecast 24 hours preceding the season opening or 24 hours after the season opening, in which case, the season opening shall be delayed 24 hours and announcement of this delay will be issued at least 24 hours before the start of the fishery. If after the initial delay gale force winds of 35 knots or higher continue, the season opening shall be delayed an additional 24 hours and may continue on a rolling 24-hour basis as necessary. For the purposes of this paragraph, the corresponding National Weather Service forecast areas for the sections of the Eastern Gulf of Alaska are as follows:

(1) East Yakutat (EYKT) Section: Cape Fairweather to Icy Cape;

(2) Northern Southeast Outside (NSEO) Section: Cape Edgecumbe to Cape Spencer and Cape Spencer to Cape Fairweather;

(3) Central Southeast Outside (CSEO) Section: Cape Decision to Cape Edgecumbe and Cape Edgecumbe to Cape Spencer;

(4) Southern Southeast Outside (SSEO) Section: Dixon Entrance to Cape Decision;

(5) Northern Southeast Inside (NSEI) Subdistrict: Cross Sound, Glacier Bay, Icy Strait, Northern Lynn Canal, Southern Lynn Canal, Northern Chatham Strait, Southern Chatham Strait, Stephens Passage, and Frederick Sound;

(6) Southern Southeast Inside (SSEI) Subdistrict: Dixon Entrance to Cape Decision, Clarence Strait, and Sumner Strait.

5 AAC 28.113 (b) (1) is added to read:

(1) For all Eastern Gulf of Alaska directed lingcod fishing periods, the season opening shall be delayed if the National Weather Service forecast for the management area(s) eligible to be opened contains gale force winds of 35 knots or higher in the forecast for May 15 or May 16, in which case the season opening shall be delayed 24 hours and announcement of this delay will be issued at least 24 hours before the start of the fishery. If after the initial delay gale force winds of 35 knots or higher continue, the season opening shall be delayed an additional 24 hours and may continue on a rolling 24-hour basis as necessary. For the purposes of this paragraph, the corresponding National Weather Service forecast areas for the sections of the Eastern Gulf of Alaska are as follows:

(A) Icy Bay Subdistrict (IBS): Icy Cape to Cape Suckling;

(B) East Yakutat (EYKT) Section: Cape Fairweather to Icy Cape;

(C) Northern Southeast Outside (NSEO) Section: Cape Edgecumbe to Cape Spencer and Cape Spencer to Cape Fairweather;

(D) Central Southeast Outside (CSEO) Section: Cape Decision to Cape Edgecumbe and Cape Edgecumbe to Cape Spencer;

(E) Southern Southeast Outer Coast (SSEOC) Sector: Dixon Entrance to Cape Decision.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? If the season opening for the directed demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) or directed lingcod fishery occurs during a period of poor weather (i.e., a gale warning), larger, more sea-worthy vessels are at an advantage to travel to the fishing grounds and begin fishing first. Opening the fishery during poor weather conditions puts vessels and permit holders at risk because of the pressure to fish as soon as the fishery opens. Adding a weather delay provision provides for a safe and fair start to the directed DSR and lingcod fisheries that have had diverse participation in terms of vessel size and port of departure. Additionally, a weather delay may aid management by reducing the likelihood of effort being concentrated in a single area due to weather conditions. Similar weather delay provisions are in place for many other fisheries across the state.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F24-140)
