

PROPOSAL 6

5 AAC 00.000. Regulation language goes here.5 AAC 28.265. Prince William Sound Rockfish Managment Plan.

Allow for release of rockfish in mechanical jig and hand troll fisheries, as follows:

5 AAC 28.265. Prince William Sound Rockfish Management Plan

(b) In the Prince William Sound Area, when fishing in a directed fishery, other than for rockfish, a CFEC permit holder must retain all rockfish, except that

...

(5) In the directed Mechanical Jig and Hand Troll fisheries, rockfish may be released using an approved deepwater release mechanism.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Currently the retention of all rockfish is mandated in all commercial groundfish fisheries. This is due to the high prevalence of barotrauma and subsequent low survival rates in released rockfish. In recent years, the department has done a lot of work with deepwater release mechanisms to improve survivability of released rockfish in the sport fisheries, and those devices are now required for all participants in the saltwater sport fishery. In most commercial fisheries, these deepwater release mechanisms are not feasible, however I believe that in directed jig fisheries they could be incorporated fairly easily. Jig fisheries are not that different then the sport fishery in prosecution, each fish is handled individually, and it would be fairly straightforward to have release mechanisms in place on your jigging machines, which you could easily use to release rockfish on your next drop of your gear. Having the option to release rockfish in this manner would have all the same benefits that it does in the sport fishery. The ability to release long-lived but low-value non-pelagic rockfish, rockfish species that the department wanted to protect, or in the case of Prince William Sound all rockfish while jigging for other species; would have clear conservation and management benefits. I would like to see this put into regulation statewide, but I am aware that might not be possible during this Board cycle.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. I have discussed this proposal conceptually with multiple ADFG staff members and all indicated that it seemed potentially workable.

PROPOSED BY: Joseph Person

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