

# Current Status and Harvest Trends of Rockfish in Southeast Alaska



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# Rockfish Assemblages

Rockfish  
(genus *Sebastes*)



Rockfish  
(genus *Sebastes*)

**Pelagic**  
(dark, dusky, widow,  
yellowtail, black, and blue)



**Nonpelagic**  
(all *Sebastes* rockfish except those  
defined as pelagic)

**Slope**  
(all *Sebastes* not pelagic  
or DSR)



**DSR**  
(canary, China, copper,  
quillback, rosethorn,  
tiger, and yelloweye)



# Demersal Shelf Rockfish (DSR) Complex:



**Yelloweye**  
(*S. ruberrimus*)



**Quillback**  
(*S. maliger*)



**Tiger**  
(*S. nigrocinctus*)



**China**  
(*S. nebulosus*)



**Canary**  
(*S. pinniger*)



**Copper**  
(*S. caurinus*)



**Rosethorn**  
(*S. helvomaculatus*)

- Bottom-dwelling, associated with rugged, rocky habitat
- Slow growing, late to mature and long-lived
- Susceptible to overexploitation and slow to recover

# Pelagic Rockfish:



*(S. melanops)*

- Long-lived species, grow slowly and mature late
- Found in nearshore and have a small home range
- Occur above the continental shelf in rugged, rocky habitat
- Found in large schools in the water column or at the surface



# Statewide Rockfish Initiative (SRI)

## Purpose:

- Interdivisional statewide effort to develop short & long-term management & assessment strategies for black and yelloweye rockfish

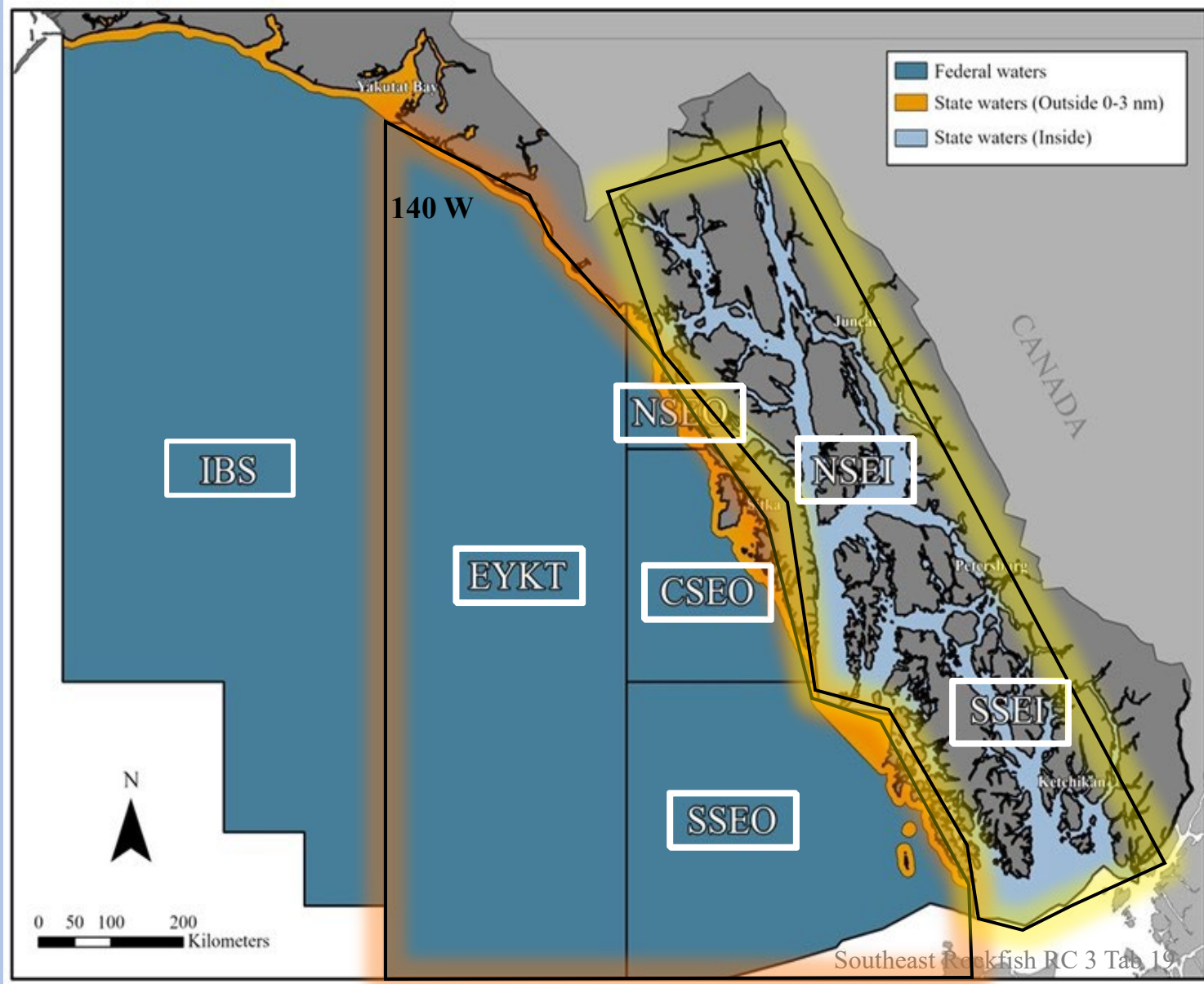
## Issue:

- No overarching management or assessment strategies
- Lack of abundance and harvest rate information
- Vulnerable to overharvest and require long recovery periods
- Growing level of concern – harvest trends, changes in size & age

## Management Priorities:

- Manage all fisheries under an appropriate harvest level or harvest rate
- Maintain optimum spawning populations

# Southeast Alaska Groundfish Management Areas



IBS - Icy Bay Subdistrict

EYKT - East Yakutat

NSEO - Northern Southeast Outside

CSEO - Central Southeast Outside

SSEO - Southern Southeast Outside

NSEI - Northern Southeast Inside

SSEI - Southern Southeast Inside

**Southeast  
Outside (SEO)  
Subdistrict**

**Southeast  
Inside (SEI)  
Subdistrict**



# Data Sources

- Sport
  - Charter Logbook
  - Statewide Harvest Survey
  - Port Sampling
- Commercial
  - Fish tickets
  - Logbooks
  - Dockside port sampling
  - At-Sea Surveys
- Subsistence
  - Subsistence surveys (through 2015)



# Rockfish Stock Assessments

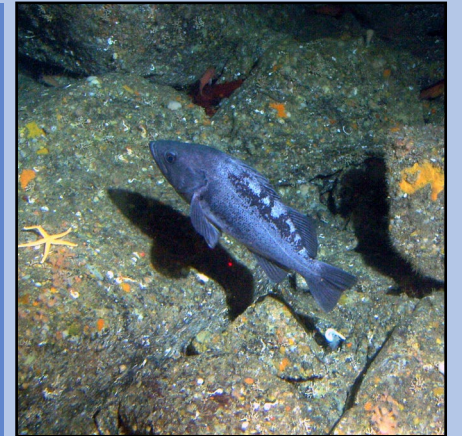


## Demersal shelf rockfish

- **Southeast Outside**
  - Managed jointly by ADF&G and North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (NPFMC)
  - Use stock assessment to set annual sustainable harvest policies
- **Southeast Inside**
  - No assessment, collect biological samples and fishery dependent data

## Black Rockfish

- ADF&G has sole management authority for black, blue, and dark rockfish in state and federal waters
- No assessment, collect biological samples and fishery dependent data





# SEO DSR Stock Assessment Methods

## Six tiers in federal stock assessment process

- *Tier 1* = most data
- *Tier 6* = least data



**Yelloweye rockfish** → *Tier 5* using natural mortality (M) along with survey data to estimate biomass and set harvest limits



**Non-yelloweye DSR rockfish** → *Tier 6* using 2010–2014 catch history from commercial, sport, and subsistence fisheries

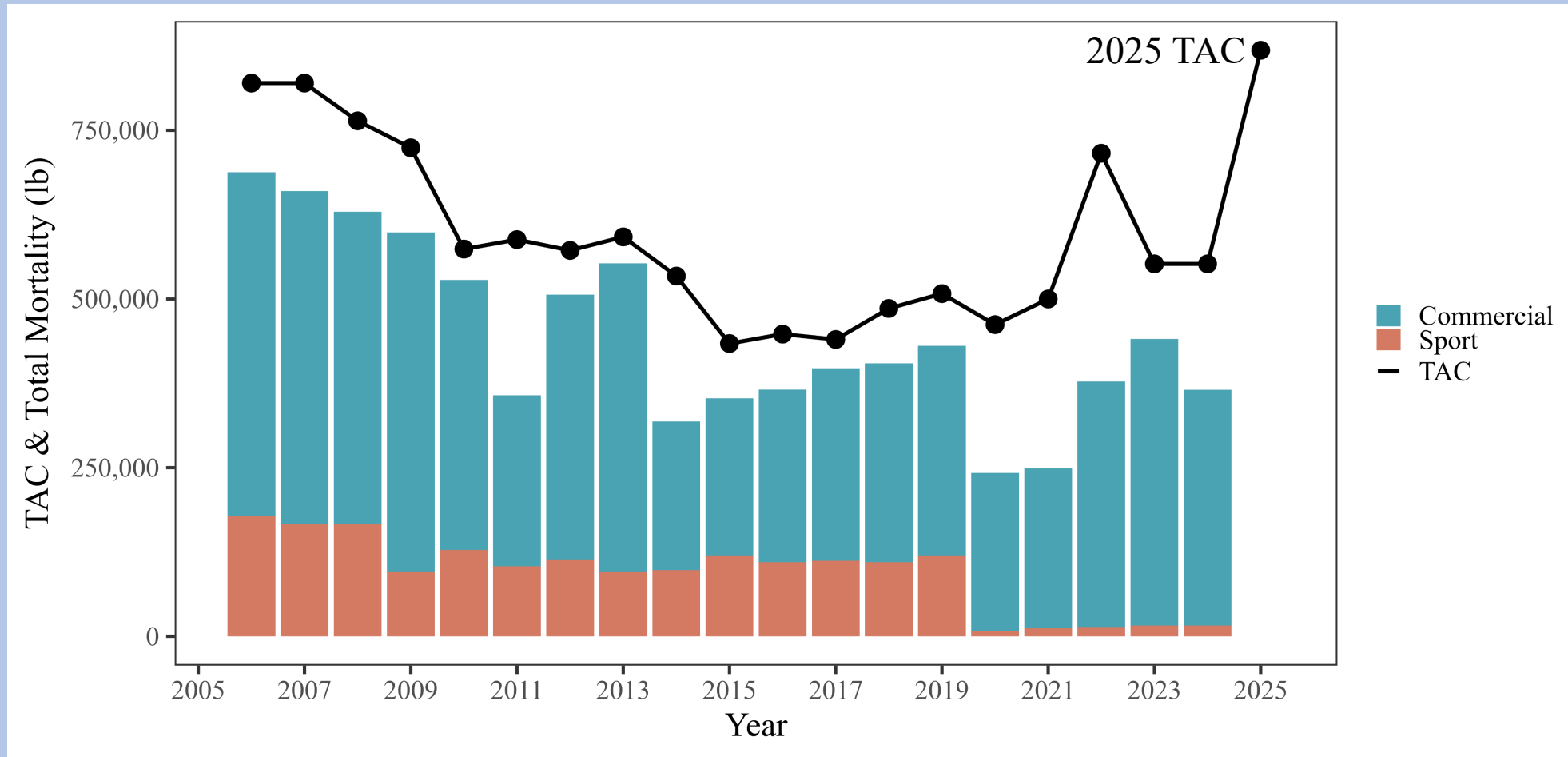
*See RC ## and ## for more information*

# SEO DSR Stock Assessment Results

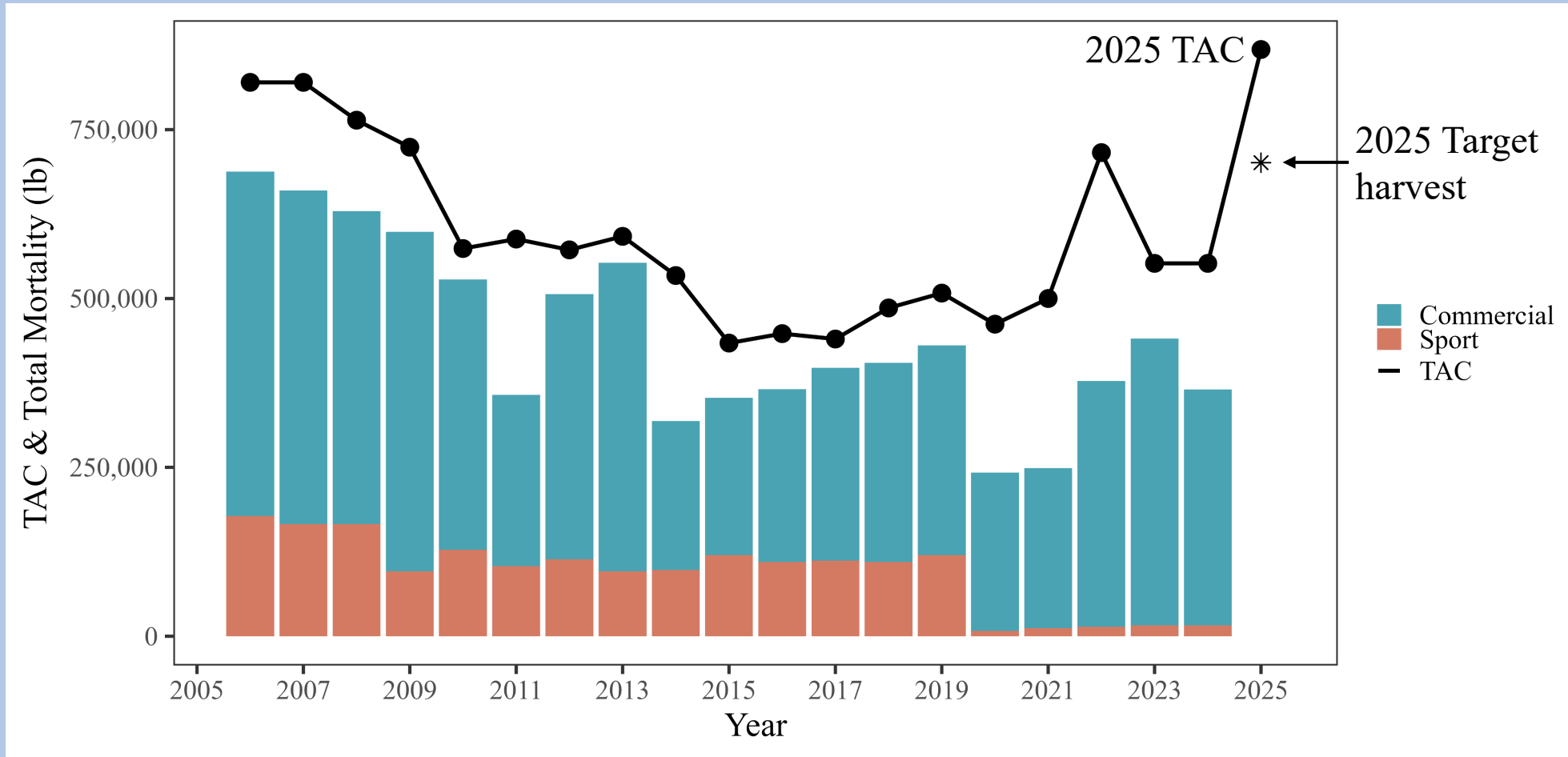
- Yelloweye rockfish biomass estimates trending slightly upward
- Total allowable catch (TAC) suggested by NPFMC (Council) = 868,621 lb (394 t)
  - Yelloweye harvest 824,528 lb (374 t)
  - Non-yelloweye harvest 44,093 lb (20 t)
- Conservative management is still warranted
- Department set target harvest level lower for 2025 = 716,502 lb (325 t)



# SEO DSR Commercial and Sport Mortality (lb) with Total Allowable Catch (TAC)



# SEO DSR Commercial and Sport Mortality (lb) with Total Allowable Catch (TAC)



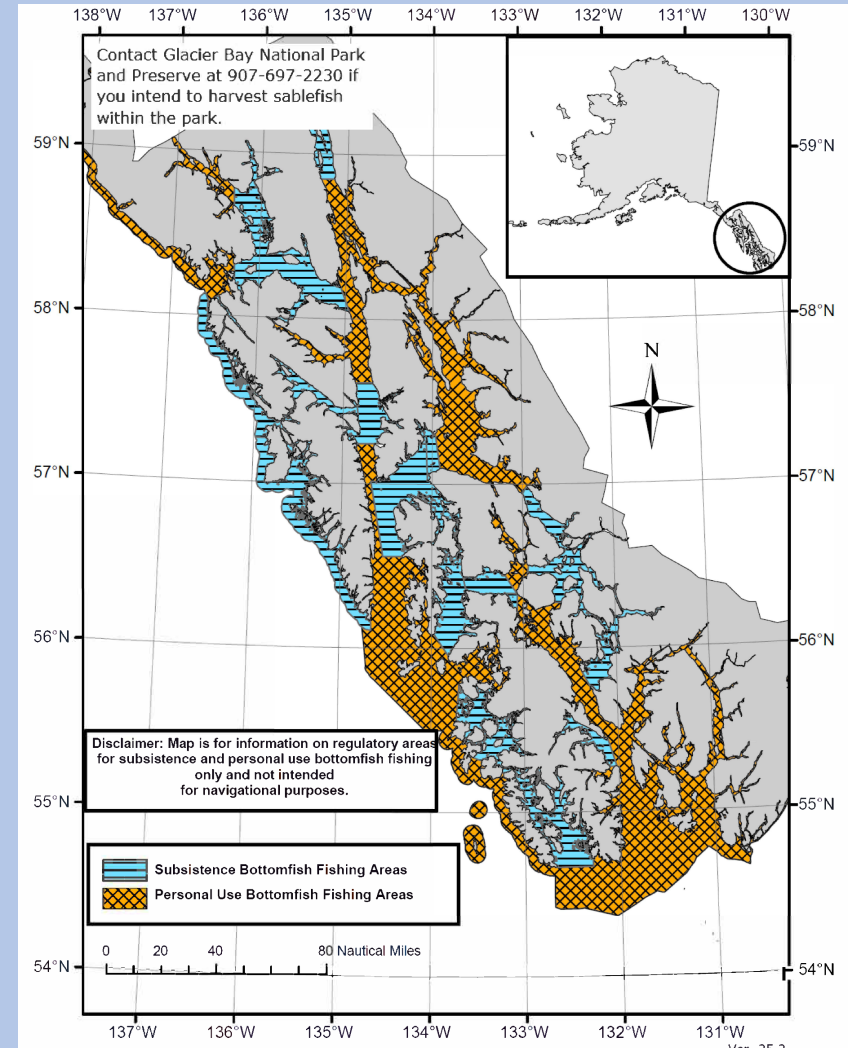
*Target harvest is split 84% commercial / 16% sport for management*



# Personal Use & Subsistence Fisheries

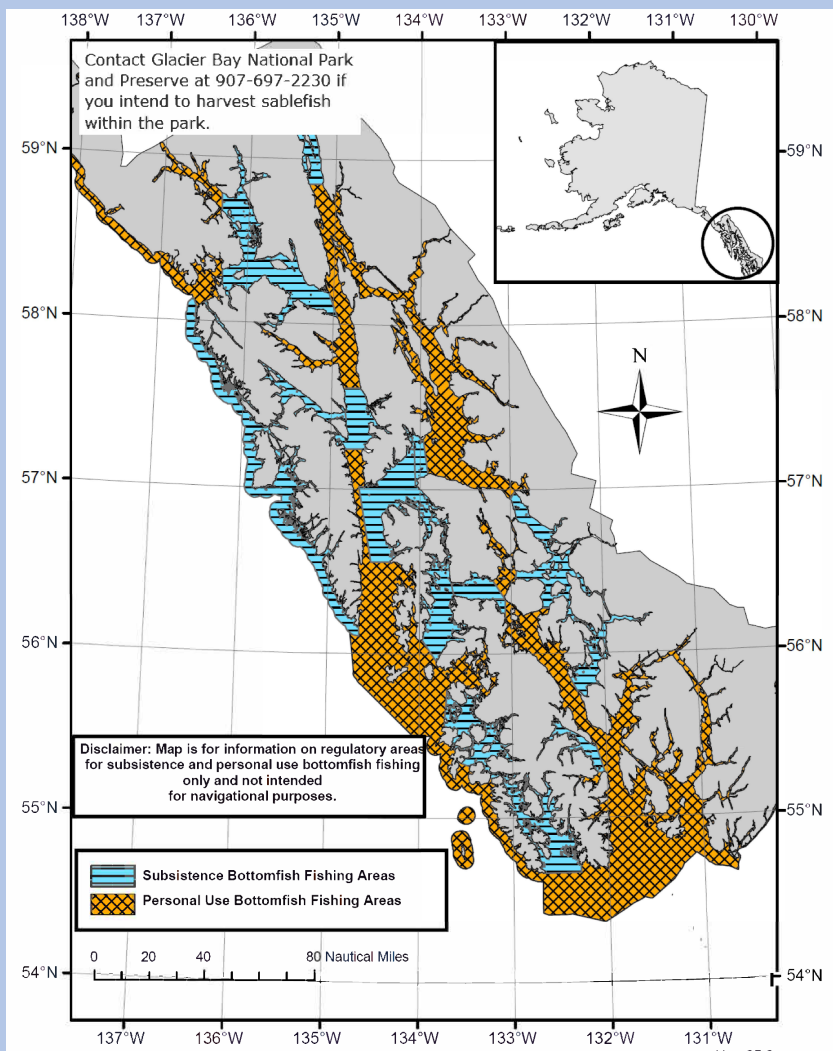
## Personal use

- Alaska residents only with a valid sport fishing license
- No daily bag and possession limits for rockfish except in Sitka and Ketchikan vicinities (3 rockfish, one of which can be yelloweye)
- Gear limited to longline and hand held line





# Personal Use & Subsistence Fisheries



## Subsistence

- Alaska residents only in subsistence areas only
- No daily bag, possession or annual limit for subsistence rockfish
- Gear includes longline, pot, mechanical jigging machines, hand and power troll gear, and other gear defined in regulation



# Commercial Fisheries Management

- Directed DSR fishery in outside and inside began in 1979 but closed 2020–2024

## Southeast Outside (SEO)

Stock assessment

At-sea surveys

TAC and allocations

Harvest trends (fish tickets and logbooks)

Biological data

## Southeast Inside (SEI)

Data limited

GHR 0–110,000 lb per area

GHL 55,000 lb per area

Harvest trends (fish tickets and logbooks)

Biological data

- Bycatch in commercial fisheries
  - Halibut longline, directed lingcod, directed Pacific cod, salmon troll, etc.
  - Full-retention requirements for all rockfish in groundfish and halibut fisheries with a DSR bycatch allowance

# Sport Fish Management



- Managed by assemblage (DSR, slope and pelagic).
  - 1994-2020 managed by nonpelagic and pelagic groupings; nonpelagic grouping decoupled into DSR and slope rockfish
- Annual emergency orders used to manage the sport fishery within allocation for DSR in outside waters and set limits for inside waters
- 2020 – *Emergency Orders*: DSR fishery was closed; slope rockfish open to all anglers
- 2022 – *Board Action*: DSR (non-yelloweye) opened to residents; yelloweye remained closed to all anglers
- Gear – Mandatory use of a deepwater release mechanism (statewide 2020)

## Current Sport Fishing Regulations

### Residents:

Yelloweye: closed

DSR (non-yelloweye): 1 per day, 2 in possession, no annual limit

Slope: 1 per day, 2 in possession, no annual limit

### Nonresidents:

Yelloweye: closed

DSR (non-yelloweye): closed

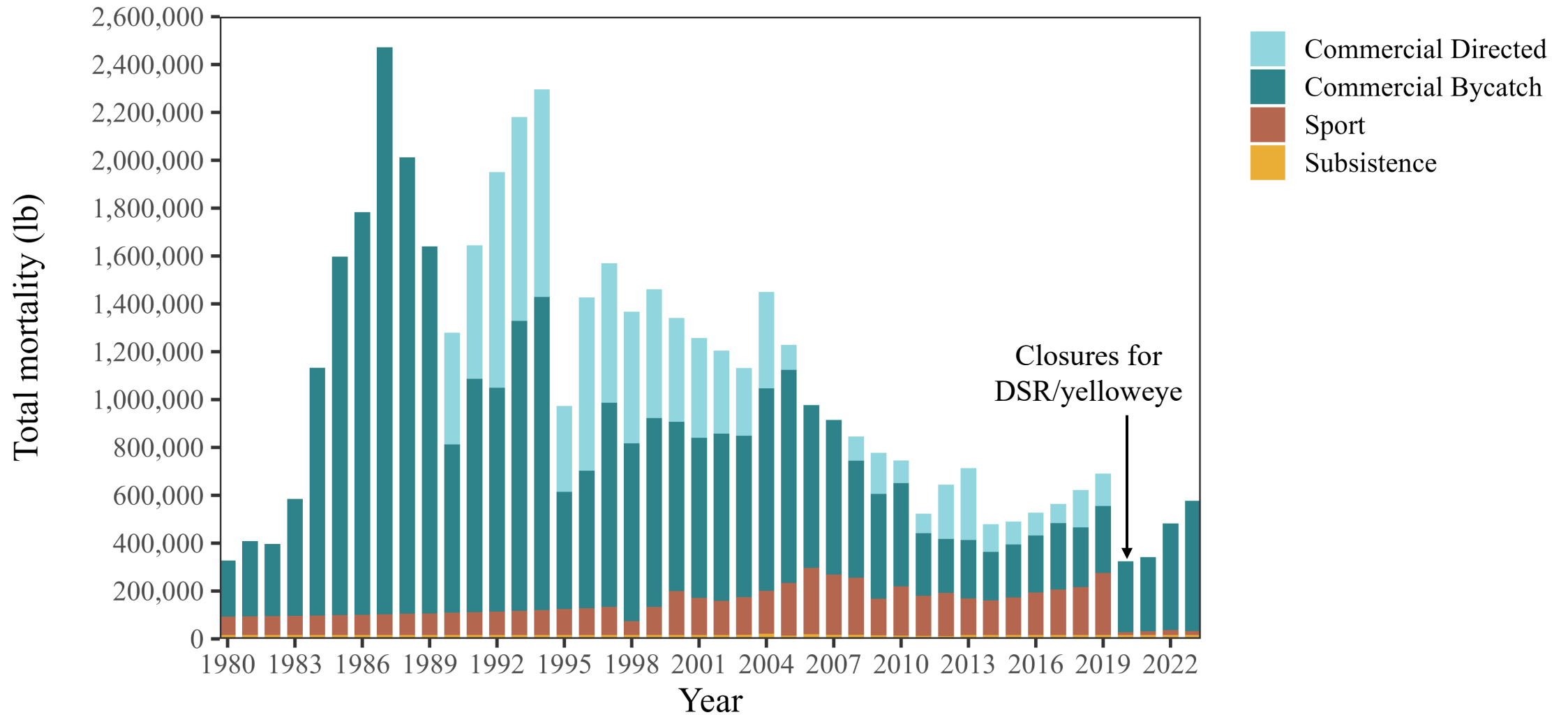
Slope: 1 per day, 2 in possession, no annual limit



# Yelloweye Rockfish Mortality in All Fisheries



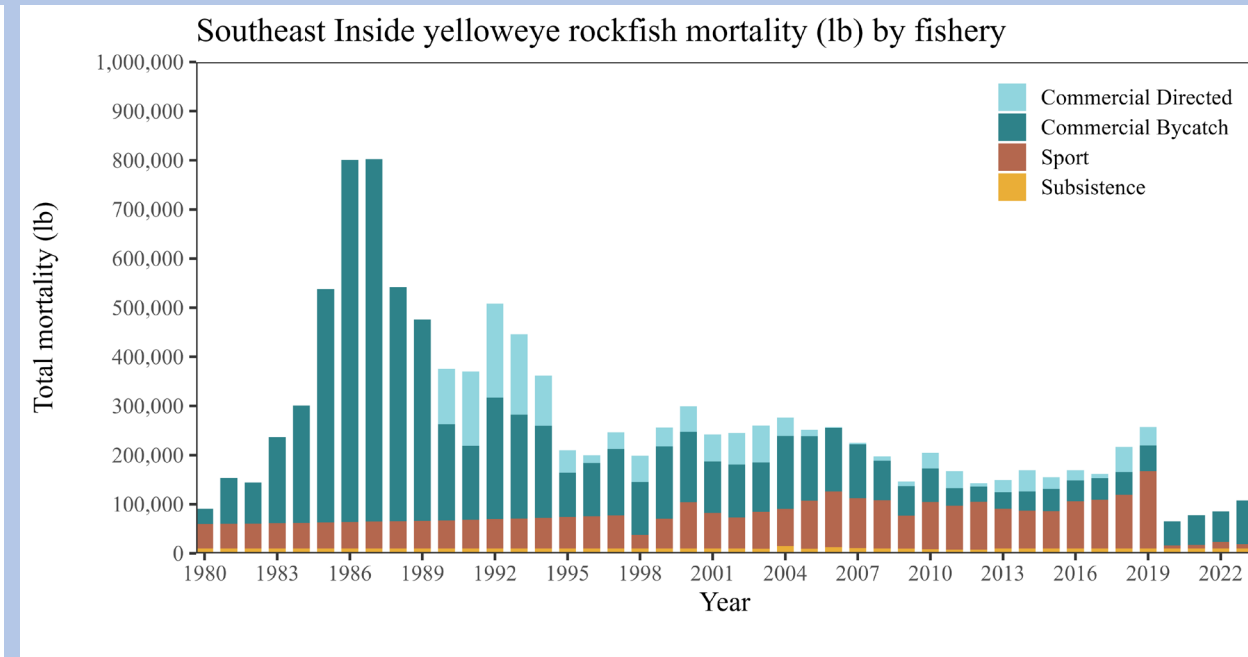
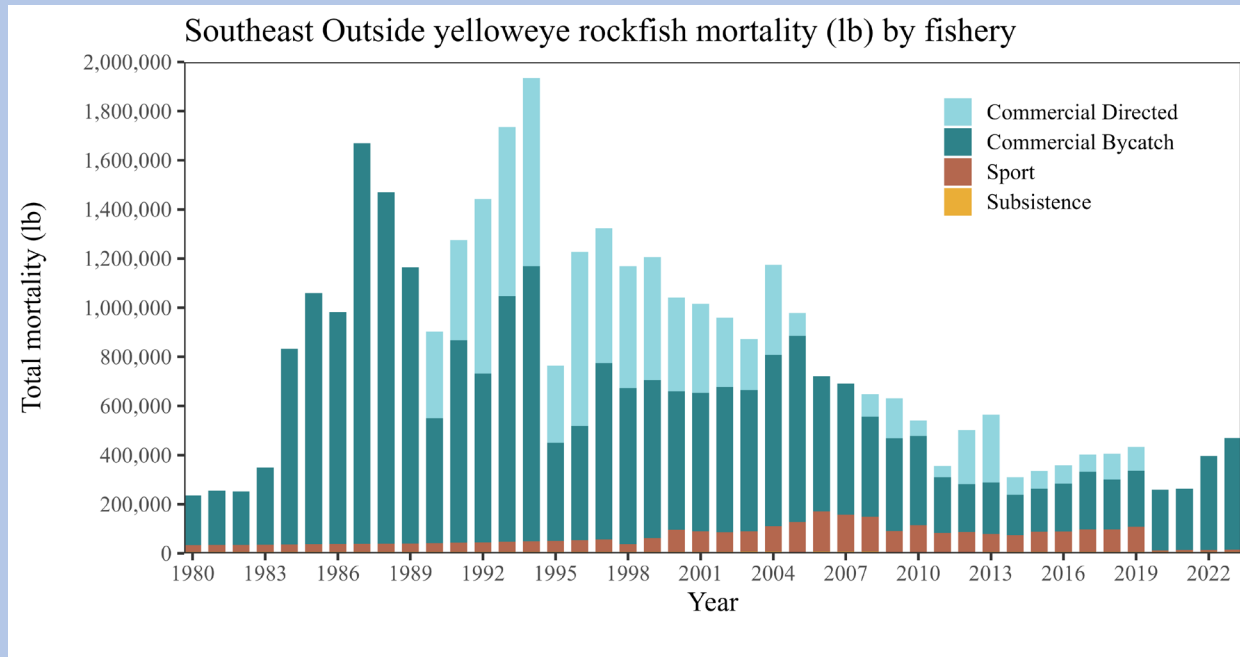
Southeast Alaska yelloweye rockfish mortality (lb) by fishery



*(harvest reconstruction estimates not yet finalized)*

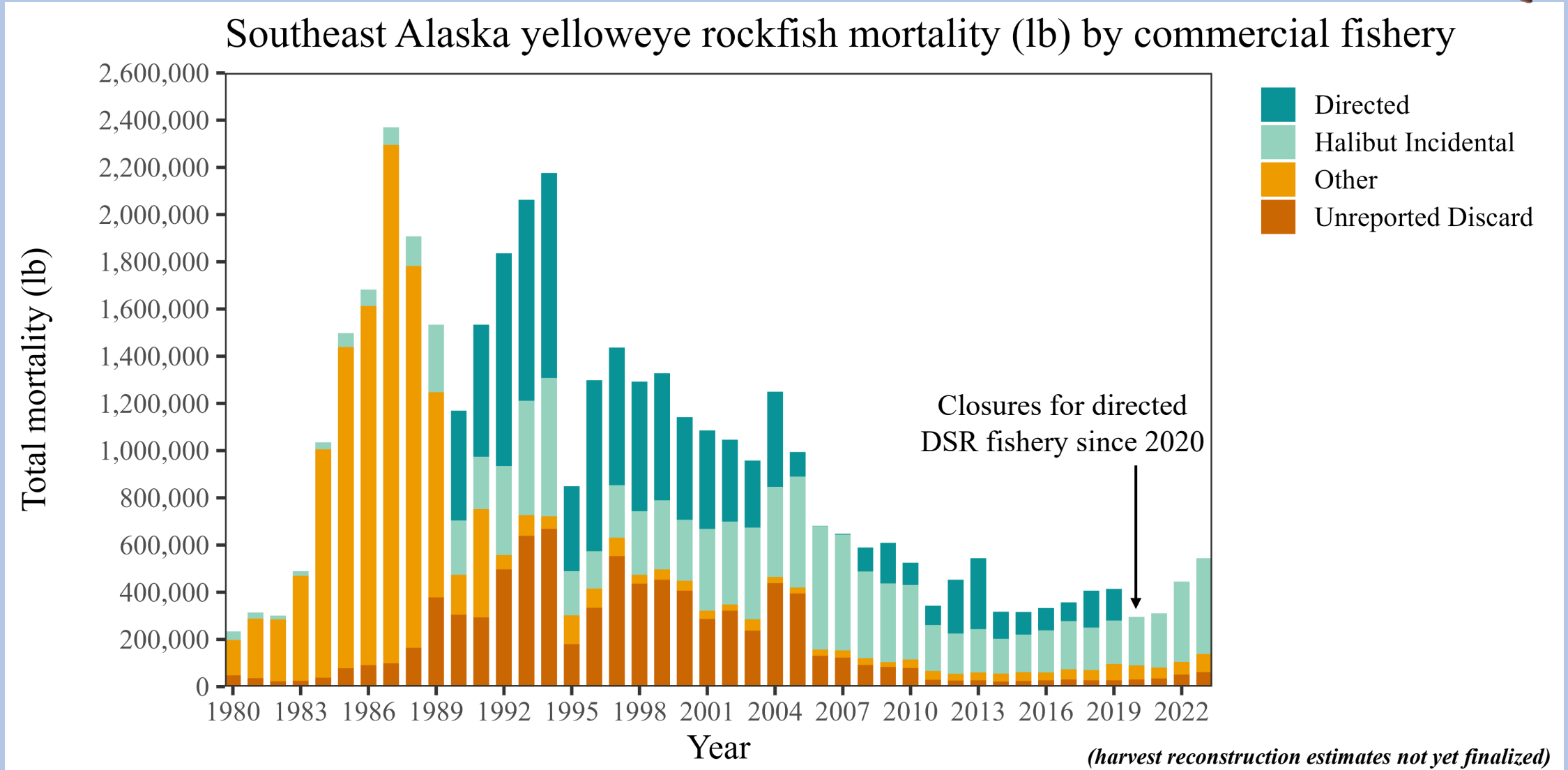
# Yelloweye Rockfish Mortality in All Fisheries

## Southeast Outside vs Southeast Inside Waters



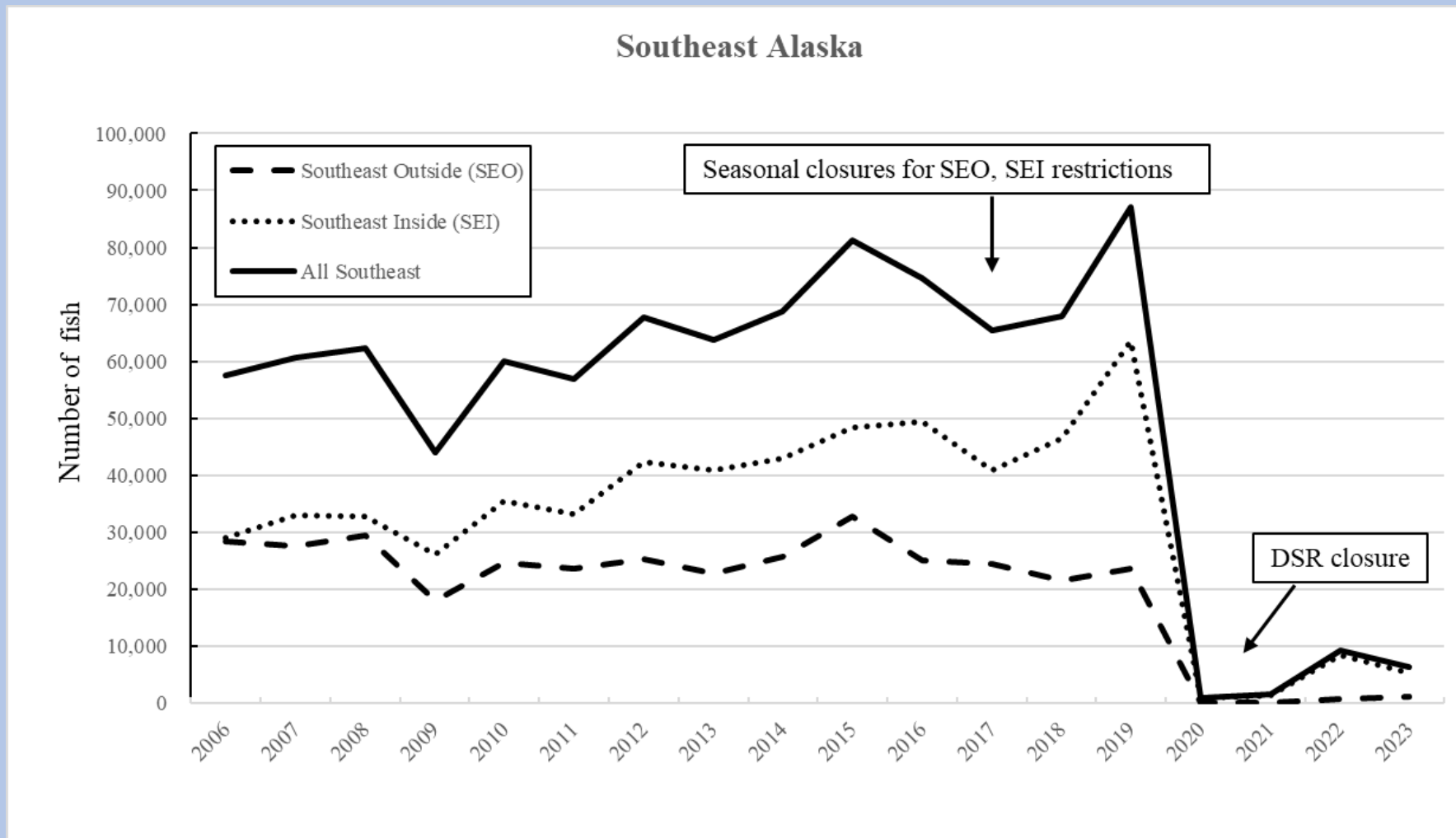
*(harvest reconstruction estimates not yet finalized)*

# Yelloweye Rockfish Mortality – Commercial Fisheries





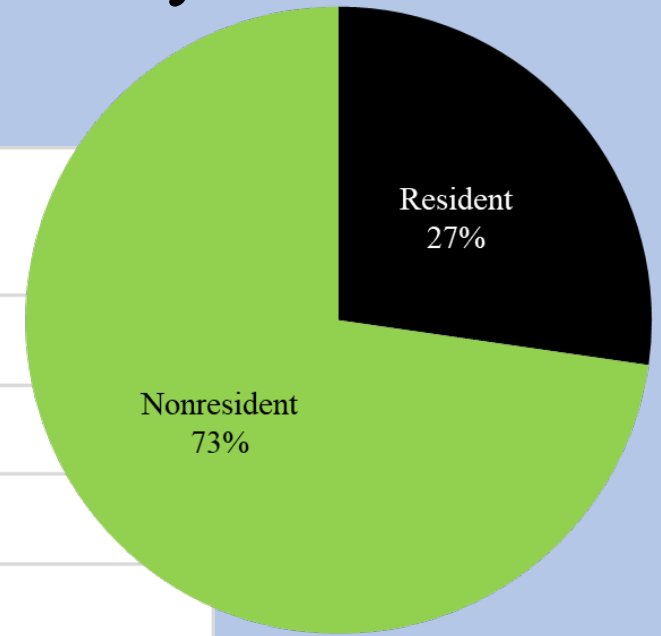
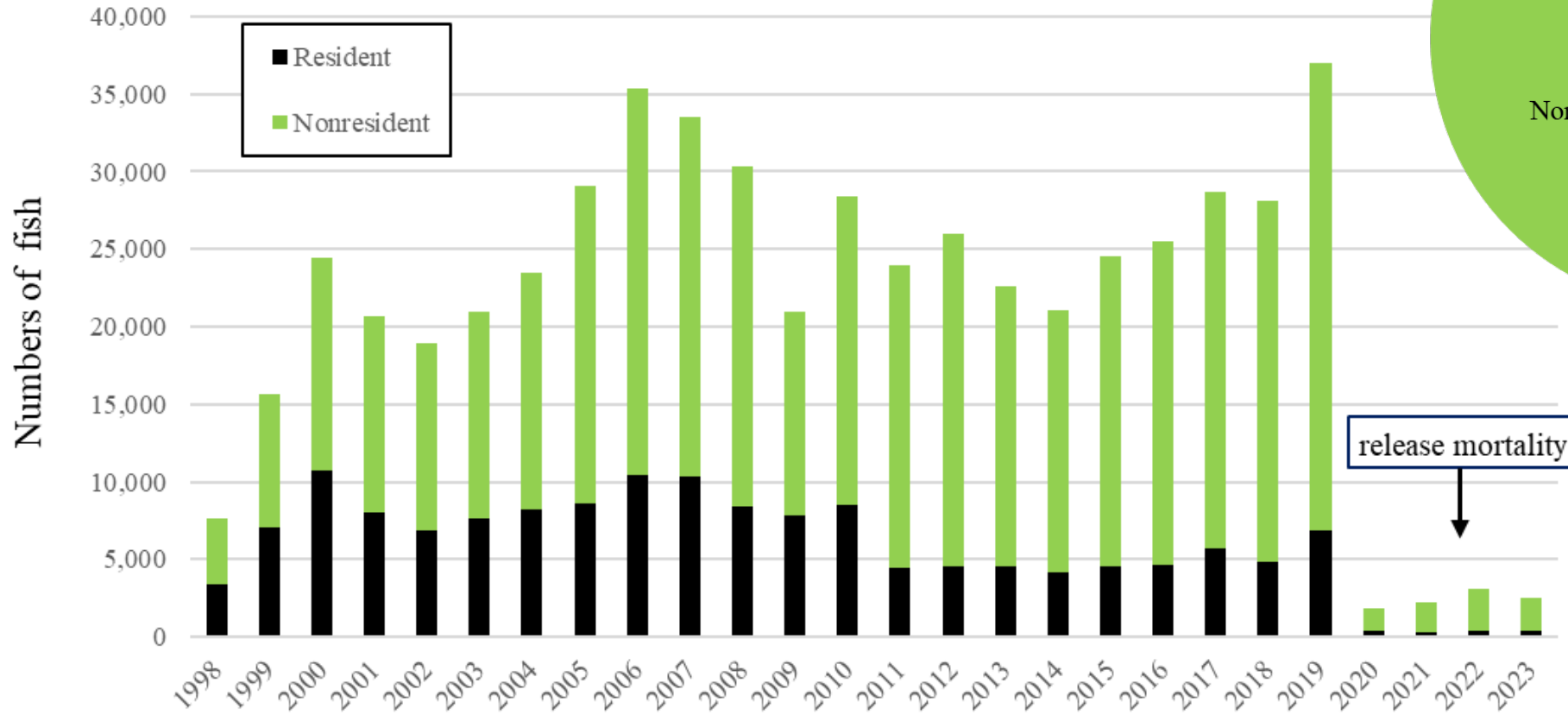
# Demersal Shelf Rockfish – Sport Mortality Southeast Outside and Southeast Inside





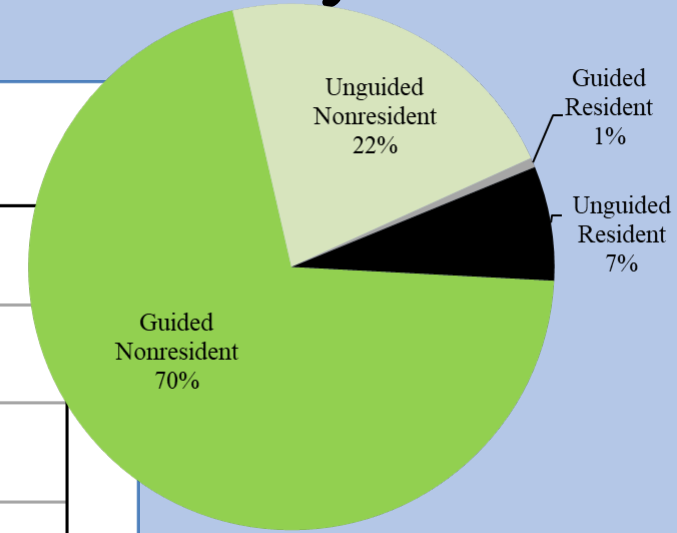
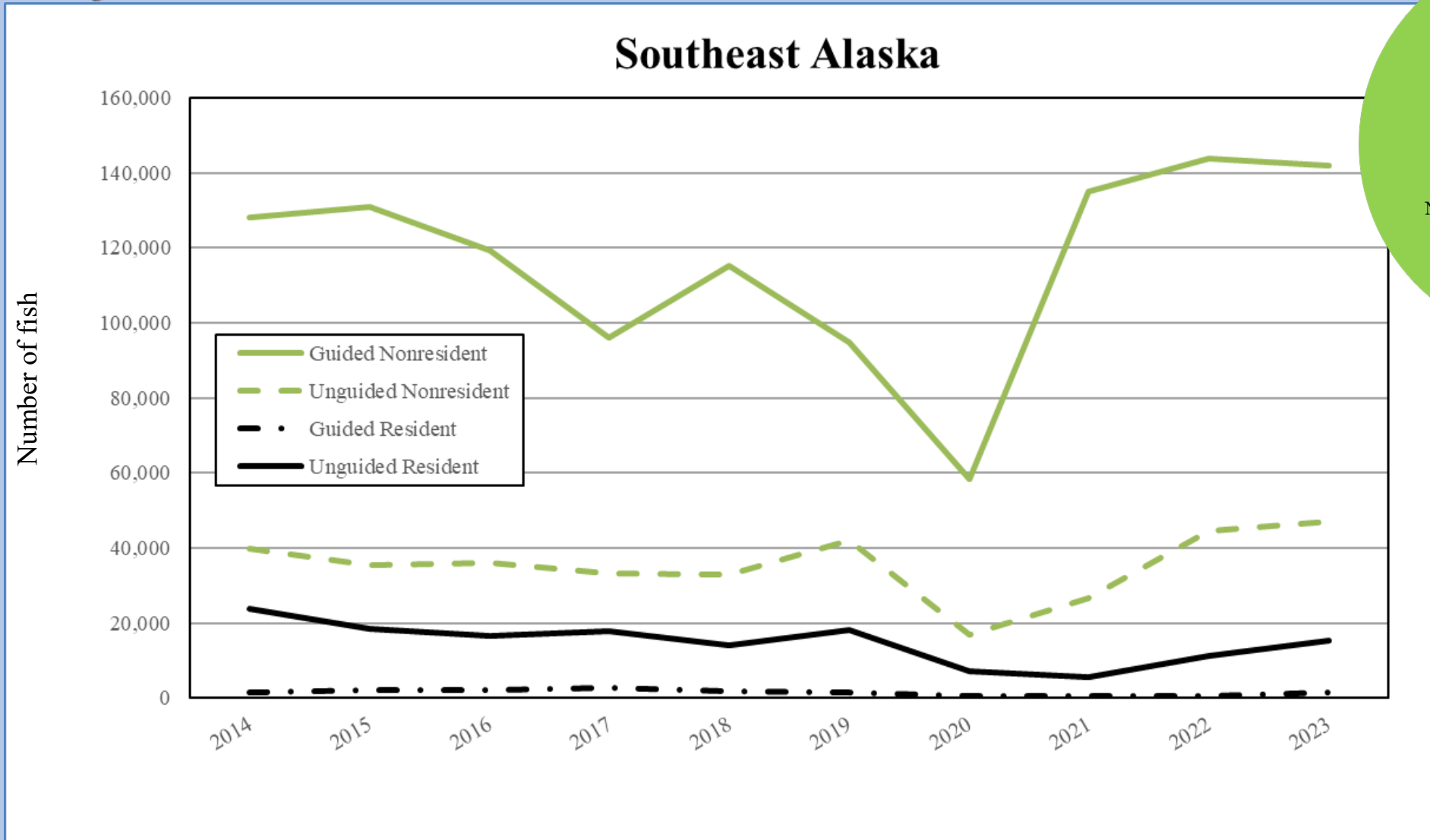
# Yelloweye Rockfish – Sport Total Mortality By Residency

## Southeast Alaska





# Sport Rockfish Harvest by User and Residency





# Current Status for DSR/Yelloweye Rockfish

## **Sport Fishery**

- Current harvest is low; limited to resident harvest of DSR, excluding yelloweye
- Prior to the closure, effort towards rockfish by guided nonresidents was increasing
- Three sport proposals seek to increase opportunity for yelloweye or other DSR species

## **Personal Use and Subsistence Fisheries**

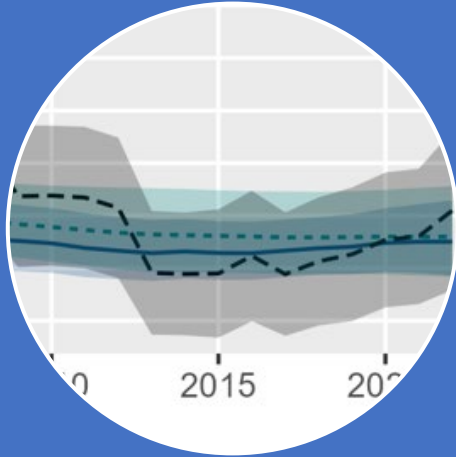
- Personal use and subsistence open for all DSR species

## **Commercial Fishery**

- Directed fishery closed for all DSR, may re-open February 2025
- Bycatch required to be retained and reported under full-retention regulations



# Summary and Future Work for DSR/Yelloweye Rockfish



Stock assessment results show a recent upward trend in SEO yelloweye rockfish biomass estimates



Continue conservative management for DSR species while providing opportunity



Develop SEI stock assessment in the future to better assess inside trends





# Sport Rockfish Proposals

## Demersal Shelf Rockfish

### Proposal 206

- Reopen yelloweye sport fishery for residents

### Proposal 207 & 208

- Allow retention of DSR non-yelloweye by nonresidents
- Bag limit of one, annual limit of one or two fish




# Proposal 206 – Reopen yelloweye sport fishery for residents

## **Southeast Outside subdistrict**

- DSR sport allocation
- Stock assessment shows recent increasing trend in yelloweye biomass.
- If adopted, resident yelloweye harvest combined with resident non-yelloweye DSR is expected to be well below the sport allocation (11 mt; 2025 sport allocation = 51 mt).

## **Southeast Inside waters**

- No allocation and limited stock status information.
- DSR populations are assumed to follow similar trends in abundance as populations in SEO.

 **The magnitude of resident yelloweye harvest is expected to be within sustainable harvest levels for all Southeast waters and within sport allocation for SEO.**

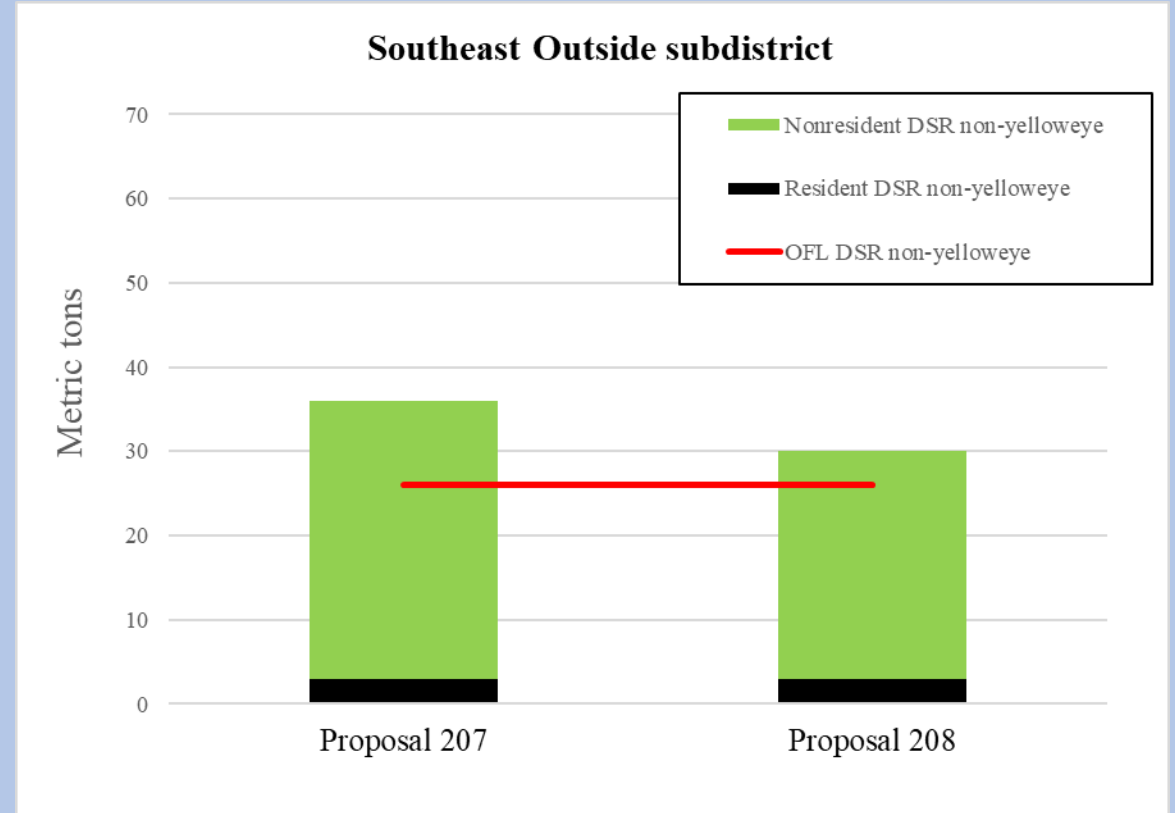


# Proposals 207 and 208 –

Allow retention of DSR non-yelloweye by nonresidents  
Bag limit of one, annual limit of one or two fish

## Southeast Outside subdistrict

- Over Fishing Limit (OFL) for non-yelloweye DSR= 26 mt
- Both proposals 207 and 208 are expected to exceed the OFL for DSR non-yelloweye.
- Concerns with shifting harvest patterns towards DSR non-yelloweye due to limited stock status information






# Proposals 207 and 208 –

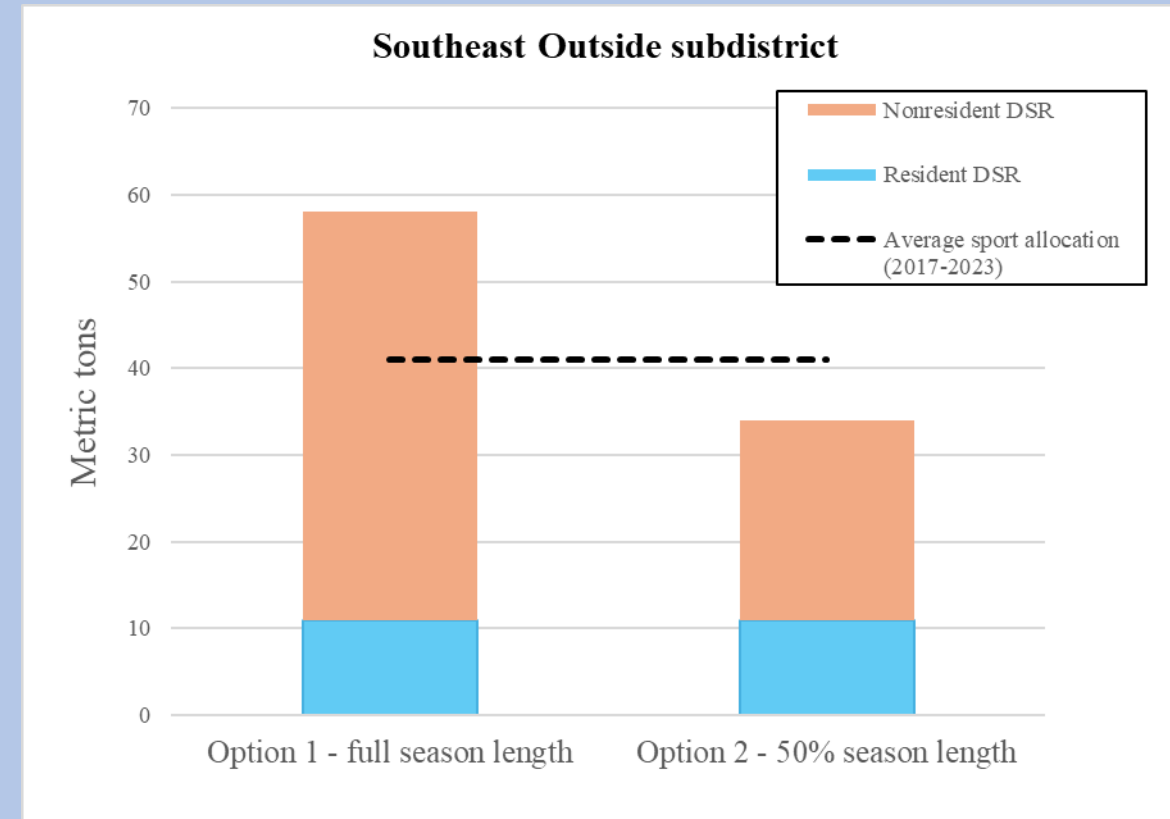
If adopted, the departments recommends **including yelloweye.**

- If the nonresident sport fishery were managed with a bag and annual limit of one DSR including yelloweye for a full season length, the sport allocation is expected to be exceeded.

 **EO authority would be used to keep the sport fishery within allocation**

## **Option 2: 50% season length for nonresidents**

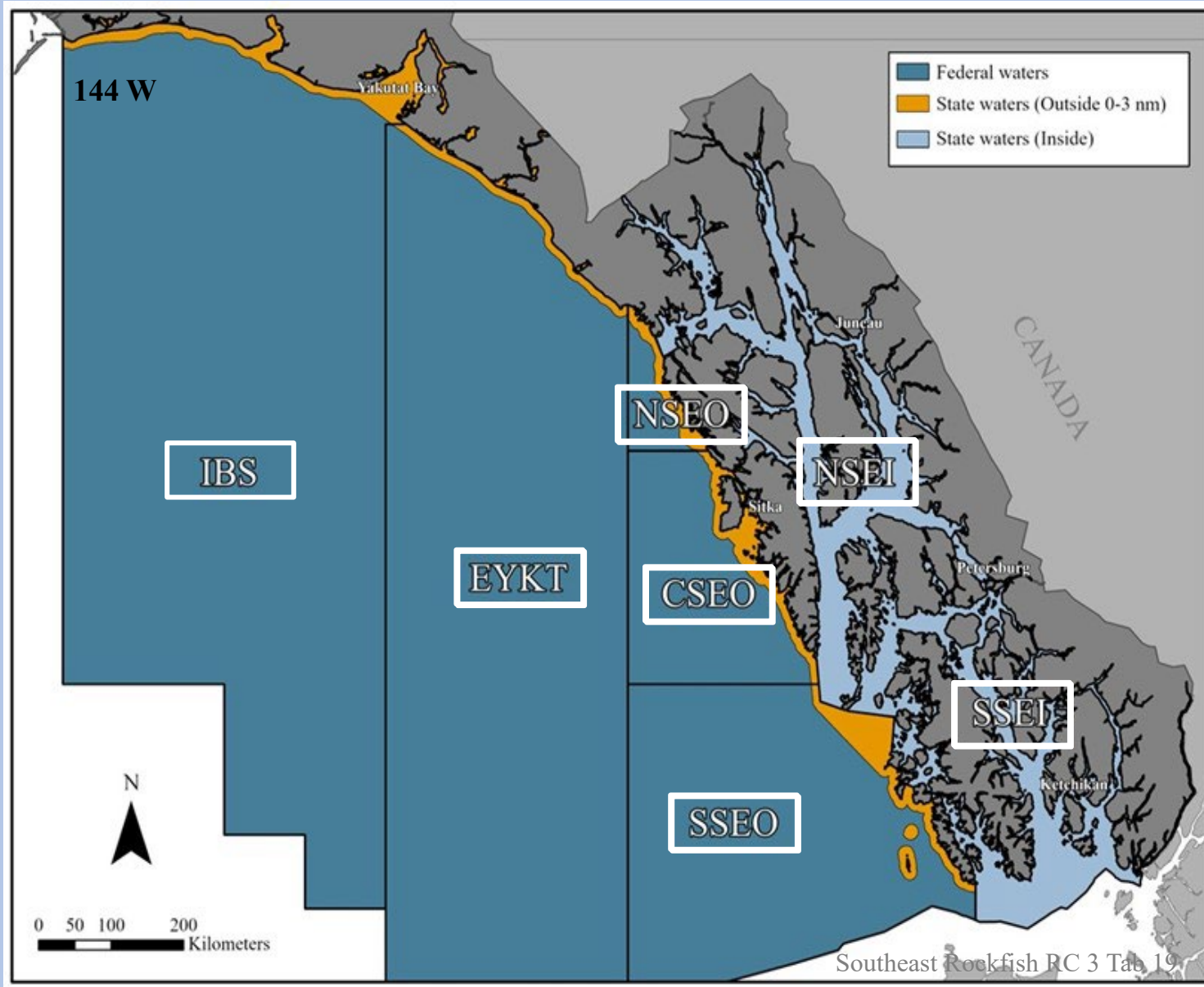
- Maintains historic harvest patterns
- Projected to be below the sport allocation
- Projected to be below the OFL
- Slow harvest growth in Southeast Inside waters
- Reduces regulatory complexity





# Black rockfish

# Southeast Alaska Groundfish Management Areas



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# Personal Use & Subsistence Fisheries

## **Personal use**

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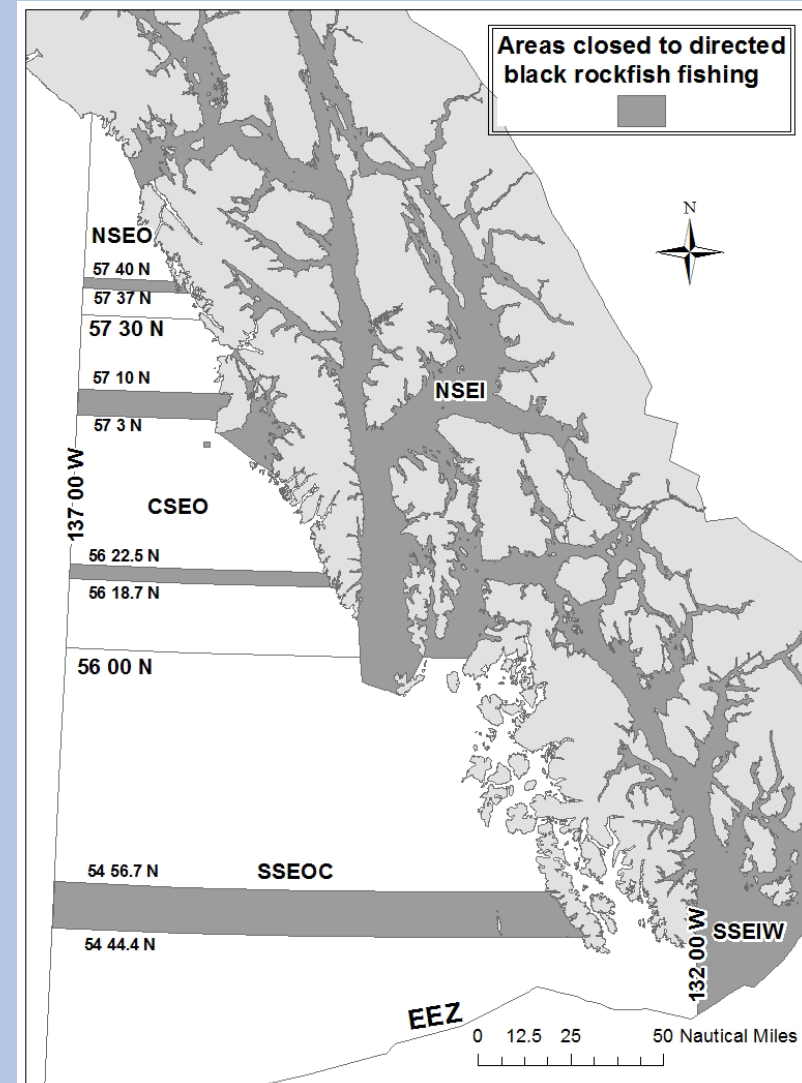
## **Subsistence**

- Alaska residents only
- No daily bag, possession or annual limit for subsistence rockfish
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# Commercial Fisheries Management

- Directed fishery in outside waters only
  - Outside waters fishery open year-round, minimal effort and harvest in last 20 years
  - GHL is 325,000 round lb total
  - No directed fishery in inside waters
- Bycatch fisheries harvest minimal black rockfish
  - Directed lingcod and salmon troll
  - Full-retention requirements for all rockfish in groundfish and halibut fisheries
  - 15% rockfish bycatch allowance







# Sport Fish Regulations – Pelagic Rockfish

## Regionwide limits

- All anglers - bag limit of 5, possession limit of 10 fish

## CSEO (Sitka area)

- Nonresident - bag limit of 3 fish, 6 in possession
- Resident - bag limit of 5, 10 in possession

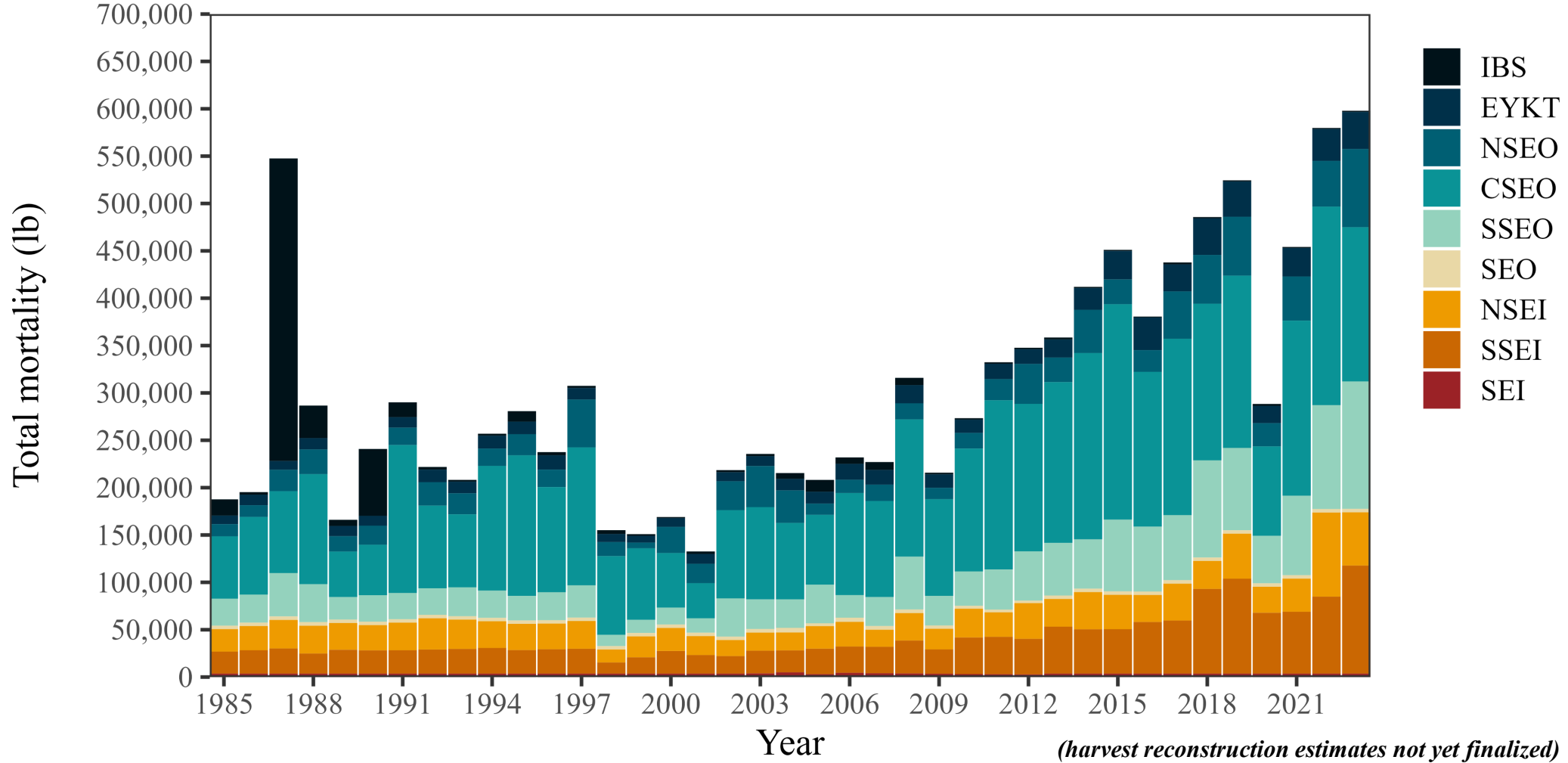
## 2023 – 2024 Annual EOs for Sitka area

- Reduced nonresident bag and possession limit to 2 and 4, respectively
- Reduced resident bag and possession limit to 4 and 8, respectively
- Department does not have EO authority to implement management measures by residency



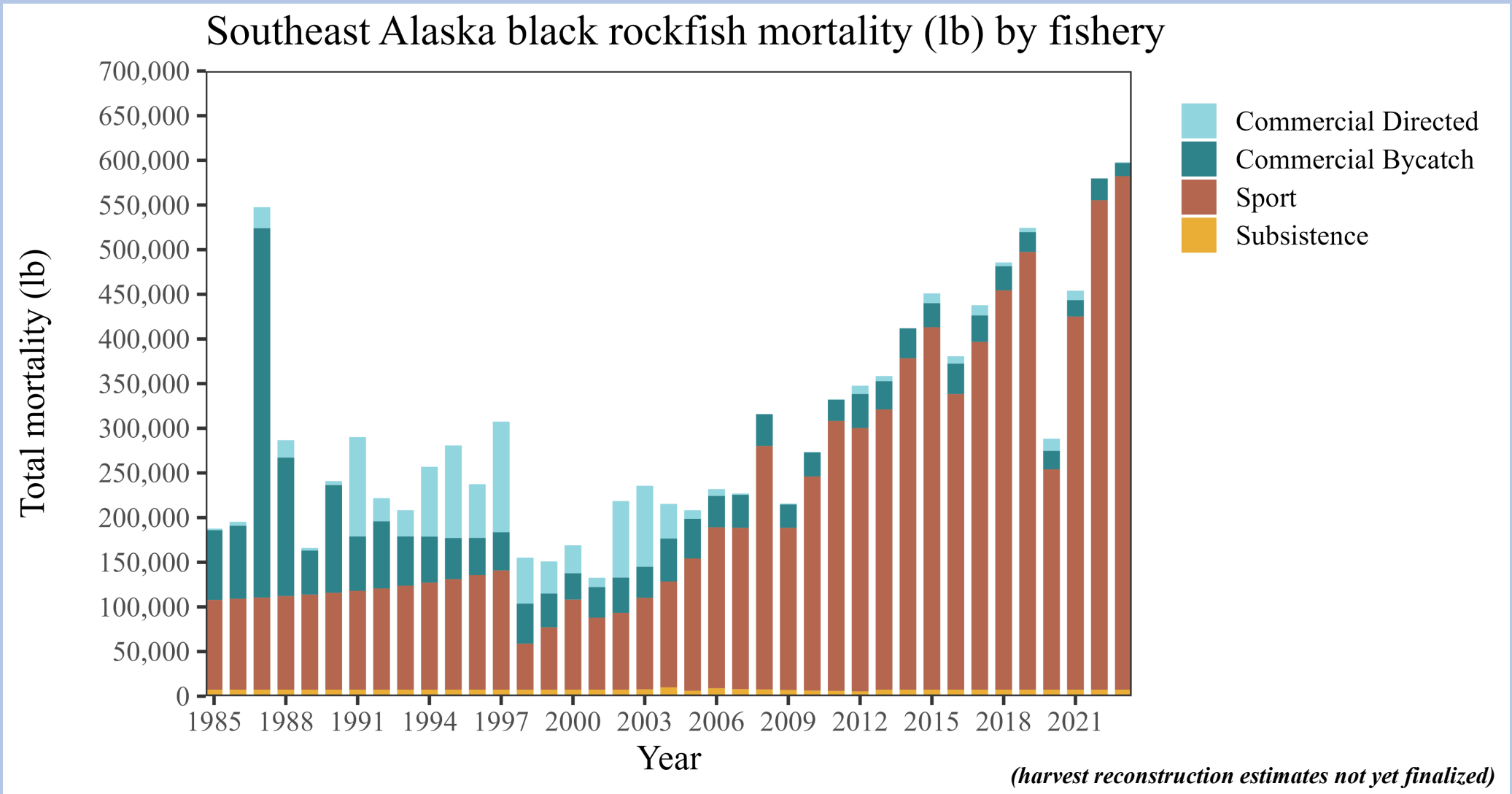
# Black Rockfish Mortality in All Fisheries

Southeast Alaska black rockfish mortality (lb) by area





# Black Rockfish Mortality in All Fisheries

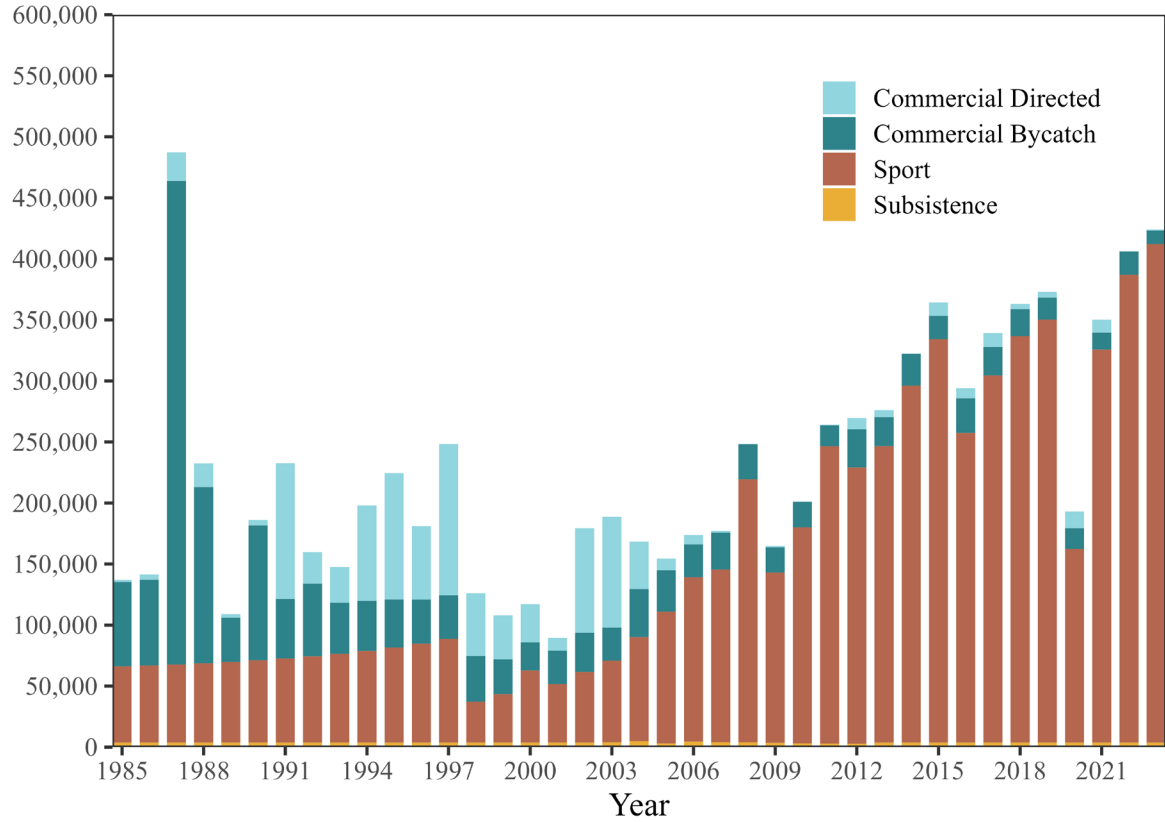




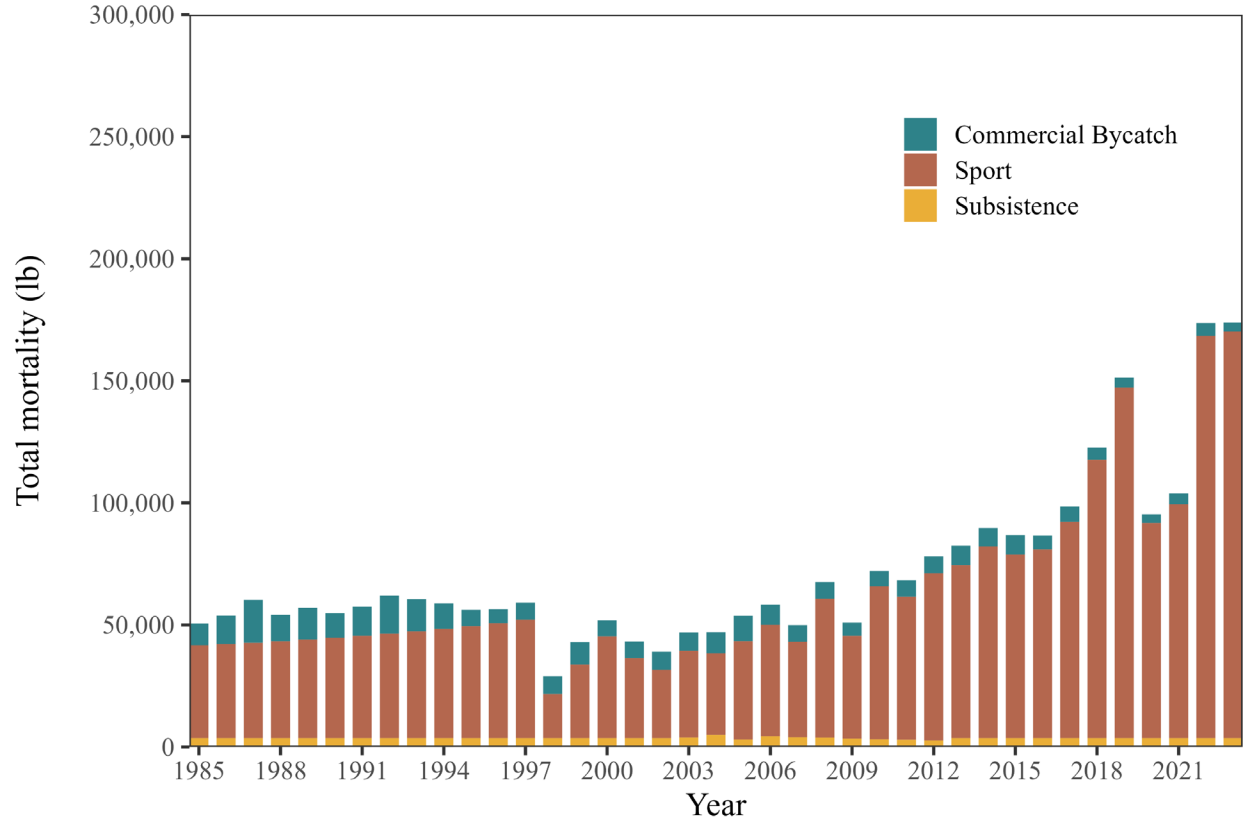
# Black Rockfish Mortality in All Fisheries

## Southeast Outside vs Southeast Inside Waters

Southeast Outside black rockfish mortality (lb) by fishery



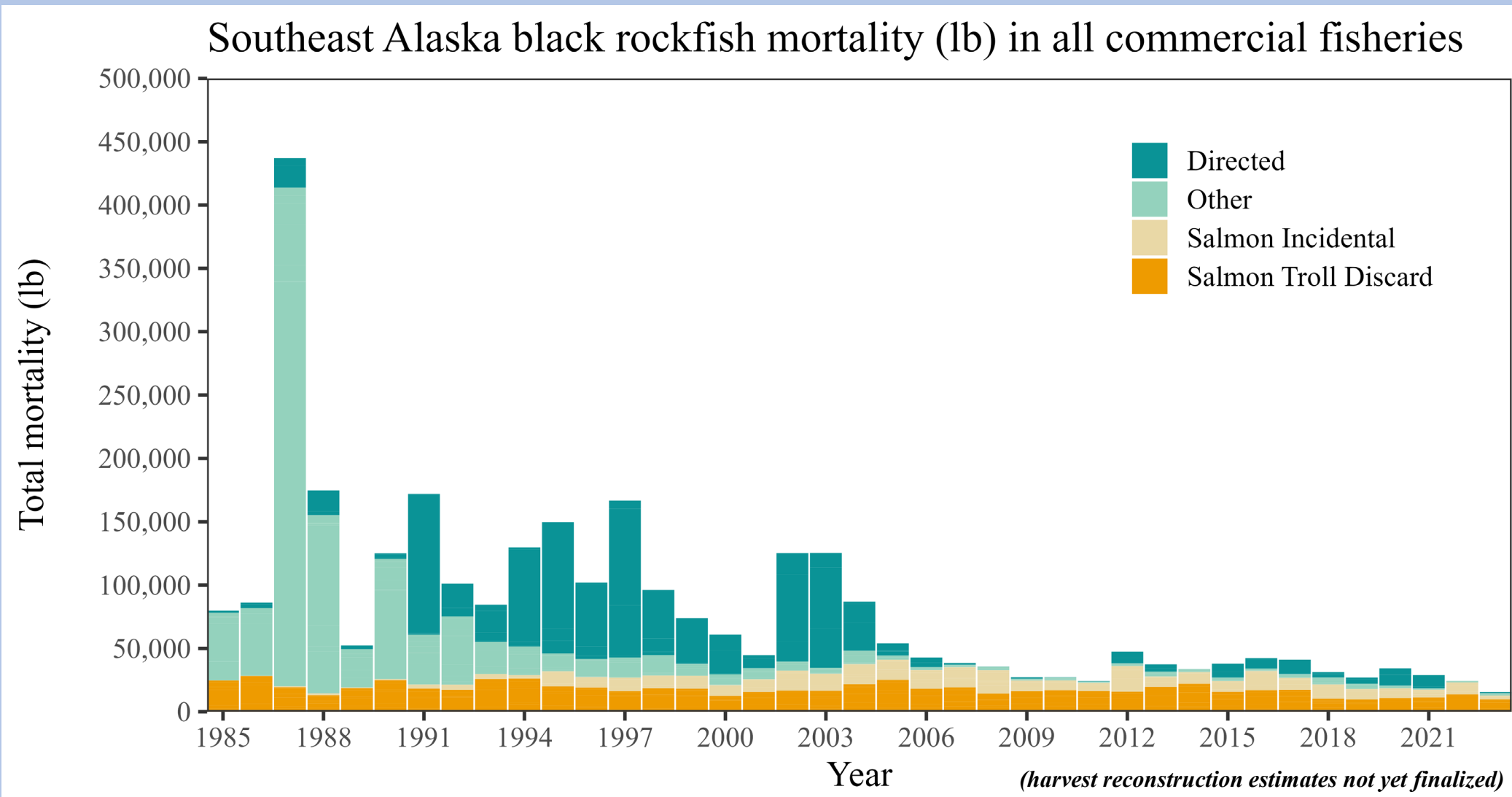
Southeast Inside black rockfish mortality (lb) by fishery



*(harvest reconstruction estimates not yet finalized)*

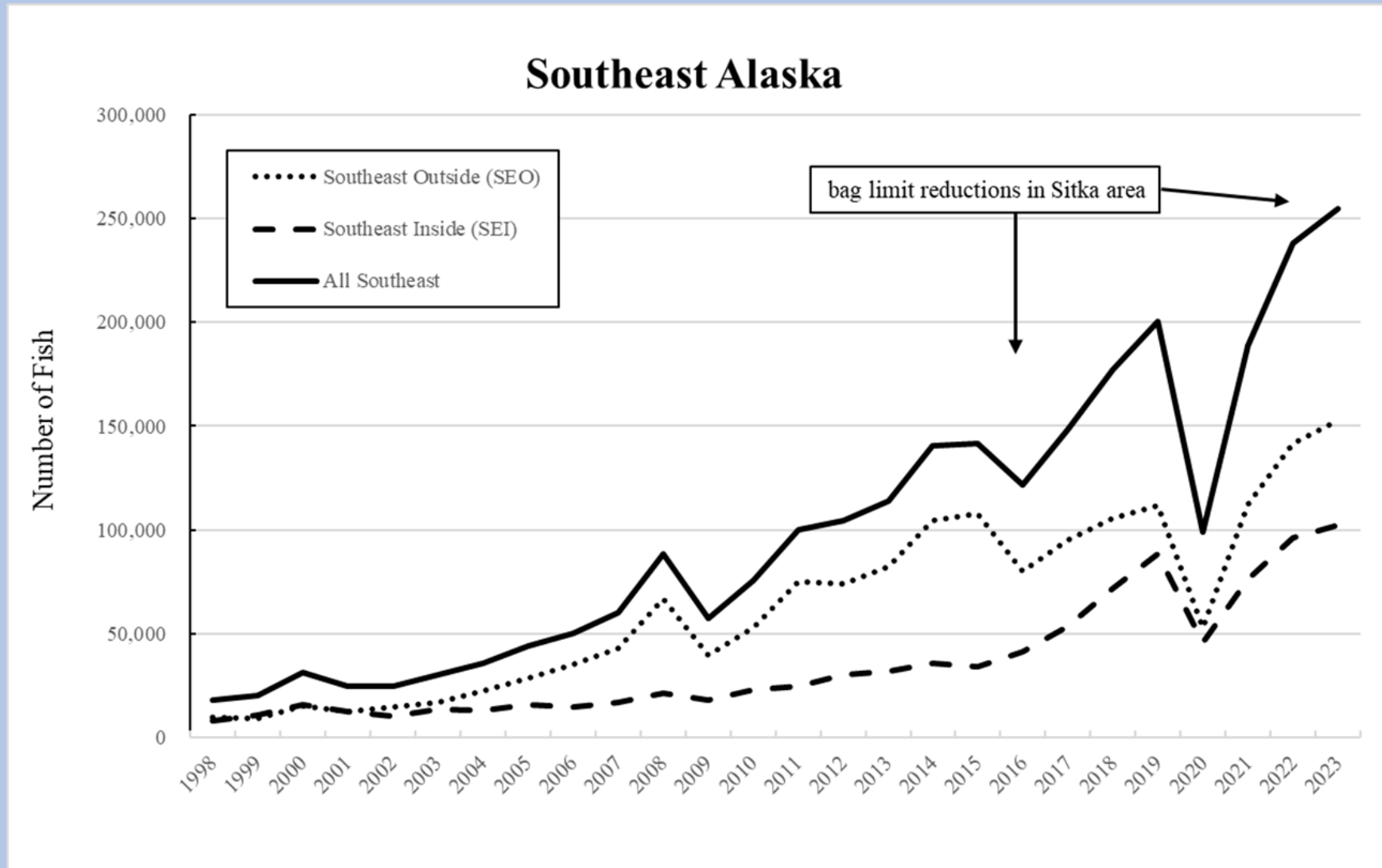


# Black Rockfish Mortality – Commercial Fisheries





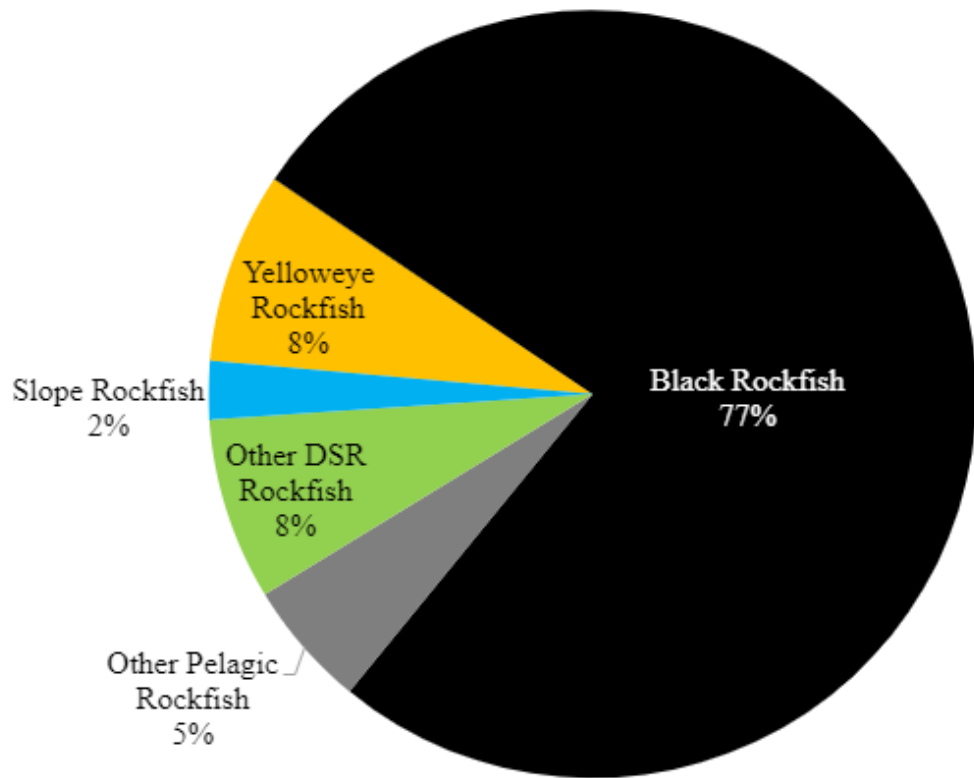
# Pelagic Rockfish – Sport Mortality Southeast Outside and Southeast Inside



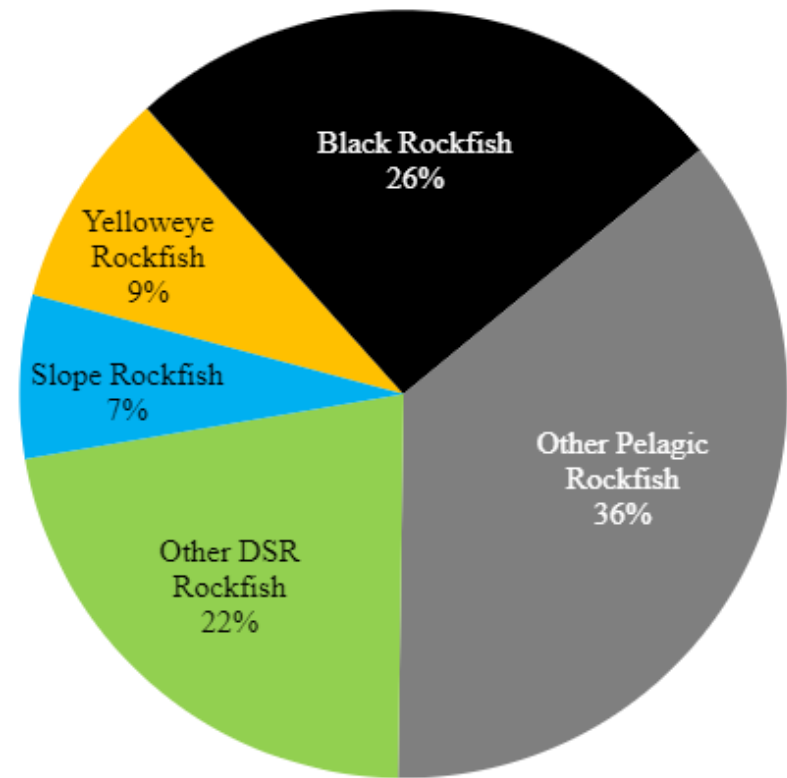


# Sport Rockfish Total Mortality – Species Composition

## Southeast Outside subdistrict

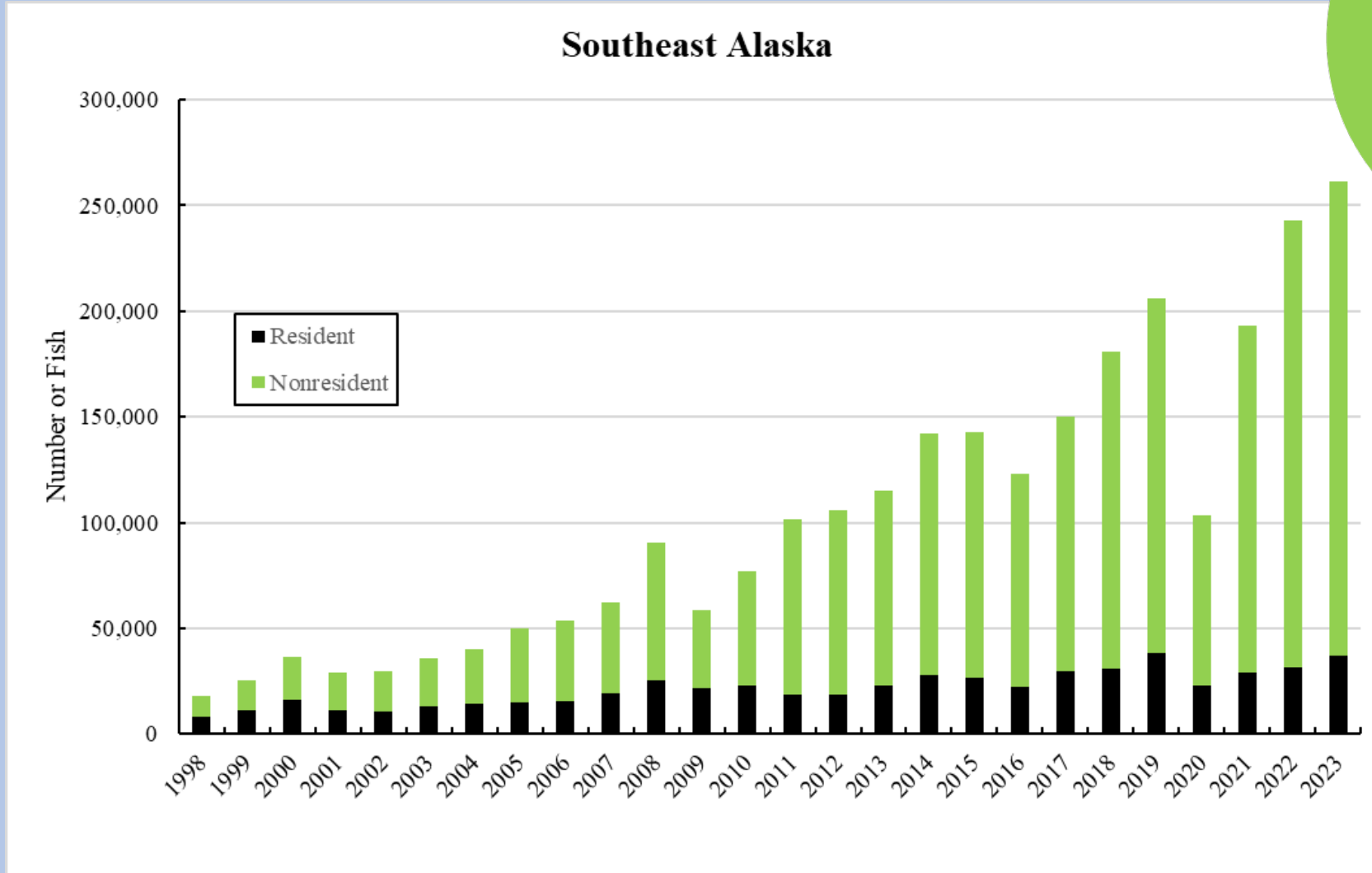
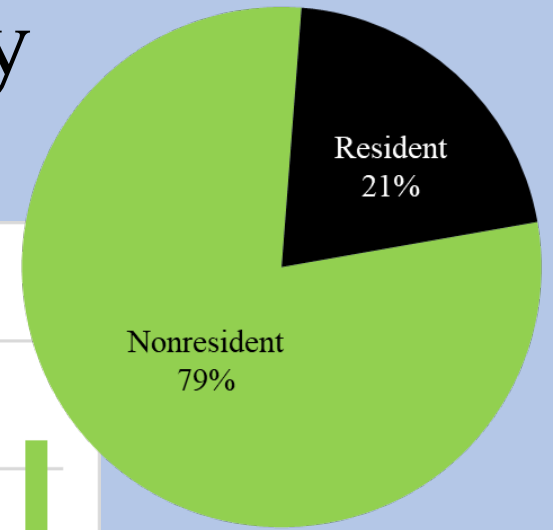


## Southeast Inside





# Pelagic Rockfish – Sport Mortality By Residency

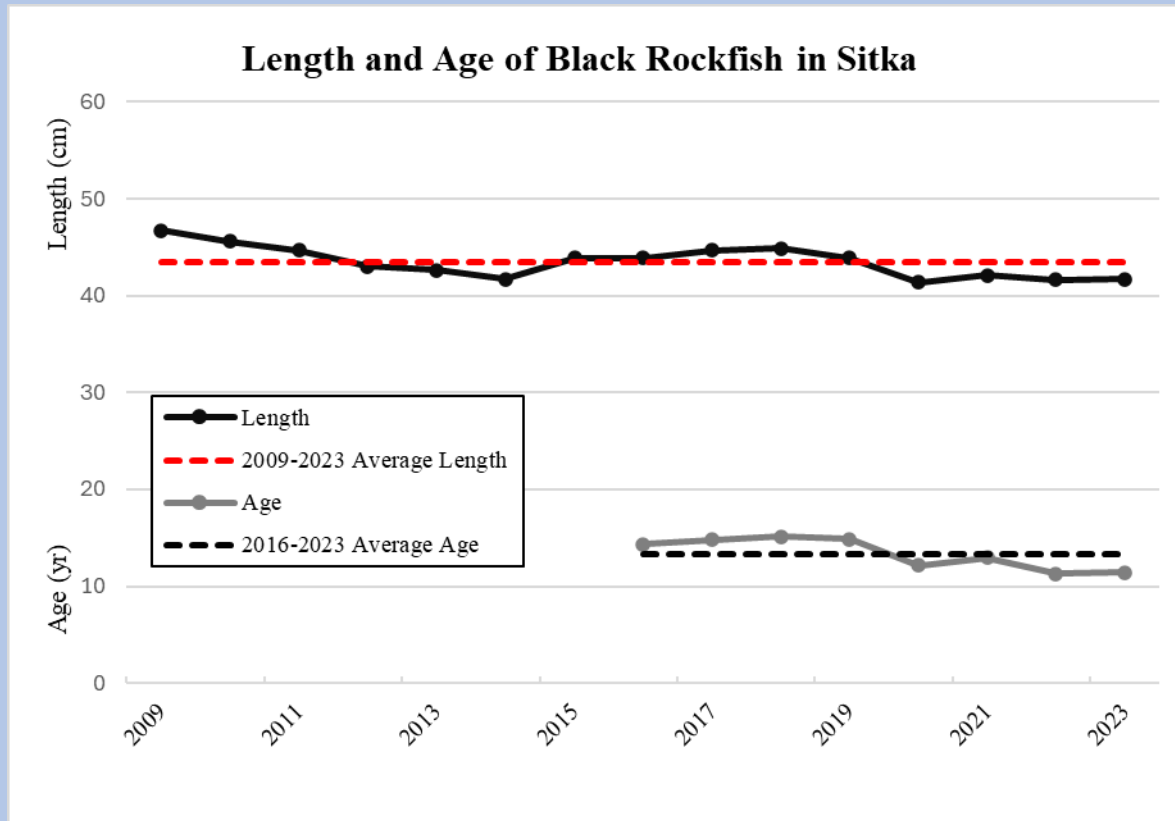




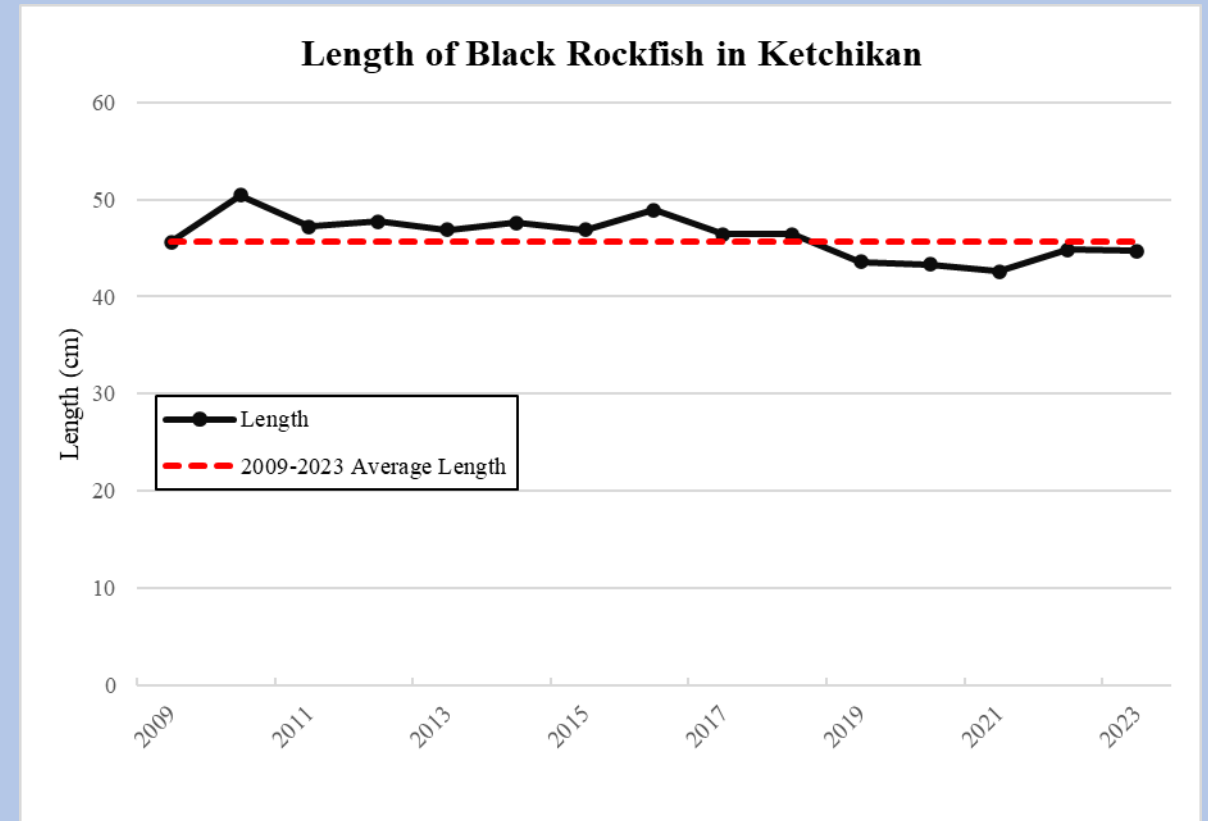


# Black Rockfish – Sport Harvest Length & Age Composition

## Southeast Outside - Sitka



## Southeast Inside - Ketchikan





# Current Status for Black Rockfish

## Sport Fishery

- Annual harvest is above historical harvest levels
- Angler effort towards rockfish has increased, primarily by guided nonresident anglers
- Length and ages show gradual decline in the Sitka port sampling data
- 2023 & 2024 Emergency Orders reducing limits in Sitka area.
- Sport Proposals
  - **Proposal 209:** Establish provisions for a resident priority within EO authority for pelagic rockfish
  - **Proposal 210:** Department submitted to reduce bag and possession limit for pelagic rockfish in SE Alaska

## Personal Use and Subsistence Fisheries

- No restrictions; minimal harvests

## Commercial Fishery

- Minimal directed fishery effort and harvest; low bycatch in most commercial fisheries



# Summary and Future Work for Black rockfish



Develop stock assessment for black rockfish in Southeast waters



Continue to collect biological data to improve life history parameters for black rockfish



Proposed reductions in sport fishery given concerns for decrease in size and age data and increasing harvests

# Questions?

