

PROPOSAL 21

5 AAC 58.022. Waters; seasons; bag, possession, annual, and size limits; and special provisions for Cook Inlet - Resurrection Bay Saltwater Area.

Reduce Lower Cook Inlet rockfish sport limits as follows:

Proposed Change:

5 AAC 58.022 -Lower Cook Inlet Saltwater Rockfish Regulations and bag limits

4 per day, 8 in possession, only 1 per day, 2 in possession may be non pelagic.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Lower Cook Inlet Saltwater Rockfish Regulations

Alaska Charter Association is asking for a Consideration to change and slightly lower rockfish bag limits within the Lower Cook inlet saltwater sport fishery to address an increase on rockfish harvest as a conservative approach after ACA members discussion as well as analysis of area biologist data sampling and fishery management report.

Current Regulation:

5 per day, 10 in possession, only 1 per day, 2 in possession may be non pelagic

While fishery management data is still quite low for sampling data vs total harvest numbers, we are seeing growing trends of increased efforts towards rockfish harvest as halibut regulations continue to grow more restrictive. Although we may also be seeing a massive cohort of juvenile rockfish entering the fishery and this may speak to the large increase of juvenile harvest in the short term, the other side of reasoning may be due to over fishing within a relatively small area due to the recent recruitment numbers and short term fuel costs limiting operators want to travel per day. Regardless, the large increase in immature harvest of black rockfish had made us want to be preventative from hitting a cliff for future harvest opportunity by requesting a 4 rockfish limit from the currently adopted 5 rockfish bag limit.

This will save more fish for the future and allow further data sampling of both locally harvested as well as long range specific trips targeting rockfish to continue to build data on such a large area that we do not have the full scope of yet given we are only able to sample 200-500 rockfish per year out of 60,000+.

Theoretically, Not taking these steps may have little to no impact, but with the long term in mind and the indicators pointed out by our area biologist, we must first make sure our rockfish biomass can take the increased pressures, and all the while be able to also grow for the future, that is paramount.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Charter Association

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