

## **PROPOSAL 193**

### **5 AAC 28.171. Rockfish possession and landing requirements of Eastern Gulf of Alaska Area.**

In state waters of the Eastern Gulf of Alaska Area, allow CFEC permit holders fishing for groundfish or halibut with mechanical jig and hand troll gear to use a deepwater release mechanism to return rockfish to the ocean, as follows:

#### 5 AAC 28.171. Rockfish possession and landing requirements for Eastern Gulf of Alaska Area

(a) In the Eastern Gulf of Alaska Area, a CFEC permit holder fishing for groundfish or halibut must retain, weigh, and report all rockfish and thornyhead rockfish caught. Except as provided in (b) of this section, all demersal shelf rockfish in excess of 10 percent, round weight, of all target species on board the vessel must be weighed and reported as bycatch overage on an ADF&G fish ticket. All rockfish and thornyhead rockfish in excess of allowable bycatch limits shall be reported as bycatch overage on an ADF&G fish ticket. All proceeds from the sale of excess rockfish and thornyhead rockfish bycatch shall be surrendered to the state. Based on harvest data, the commissioner may, by emergency order, close a fishing season or a bycatch season and immediately reopen a fishing season or a bycatch season during which a different rockfish or thornyhead rockfish bycatch level is allowed.

(1) Except that, in 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 and 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. I personally have only fished jig fisheries in Prince William Sound and Lower Cook Inlet waters and will submit equivalent proposals in those areas and Statewide Finfish, but am submitting this proposal to the Southeast meeting with the hope that it may foster some discussion and be considered. I am aware that jigging in SE Alaska is more likely to be done on a somewhat larger scale and that it is possible that fishermen consider deepwater release to be less feasible then it is in the regions and fisheries that I am more familiar with. It is worth noting that I am not suggesting mandatory release, only that it be a legal option available to fishermen.

**Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain.**

**PROPOSED BY:** Joseph Person

(EF-F24-069)

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