

PROPOSAL 7

5 AAC 28.230. Lawful gear for Prince William Sound Area.

Establish gear specifications for directed lingcod fisheries in Prince William Sound, as follows:

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(l) in the directed fishery for lingcod, lingcod may be taken only by mechanical jigging machine or hand troll gear.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? I would like to see the directed fishery for lingcod in Prince William Sound be brought in line with similar fisheries in the rest of the state and restricted to Mechanical Jig or Hand Troll gear only. Currently Prince William Sound is one of the only directed Lingcod fisheries that allows for harvest using longline gear. In practice this just means that people longlining for other species (basically halibut) can also register for the lingcod fishery and deliver lingcod on their lingcod card without being subject to bycatch limits. This incentivizes fishing for halibut in areas and depths to maximize harvest of lingcod. The problem with this is that we have a significant issue with rockfish bycatch in the longline fishery in PWS whose preferred habitat coincides strongly with lingcod. I believe that bringing the directed lingcod fishery in line with regulations elsewhere in the state and restricting it to a jig fishery could help to reduce rockfish bycatch issues in PWS. Jig fisheries targeted on lingcod can avoid rockfish fairly well. By use of larger tackle used to target lingcod and the fact that in my experience one is highly incentivised to keep gear off the bottom rockfish impacts are very limited. Furthermore, in conjunction with this proposal, I have submitted another proposal requesting the usage of approved deepwater release mechanisms in directed jig fisheries in PWS. Unlike longlining, jig fisheries lend themselves very well to the release of rockfish via deepwater release mechanisms as part of the normal fishing process and the jig fishery has the potential to be almost perfectly clean in regards to rockfish bycatch.

It is likely that even in this case the majority of the lingcod GHL will be taken as longline bycatch, but I believe the removal of directed longline fishing for lingcod will produce some benefit in reducing rockfish bycatch. In both areas on either side of PWS (Lower Cook Inlet/SE Alaska) directed lingcod fisheries are restricted to jig gear types only.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. I have discussed the issue of rockfish bycatch in PWS with several different ADFG staff. While they appropriately remained neutral on the allocative aspects of this proposal; there definitely seems to be a general consensus that rockfish bycatch in PWS is a problem that needs adressed; and management actions taken recently reflect that.

PROPOSED BY: Joseph Person

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