



Advisory Announcement

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2023 DEMERSAL SHELF ROCKFISH FISHERIES

The directed demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) commercial fisheries in the Southeast Outside (SEO) Subdistrict, Northern Southeast Inside (NSEI) Subdistrict, and Southern Southeast Inside (SSEI) Subdistrict will be closed for the 2023 season (January 1 through December 31) and will remain closed to directed DSR fishing until further notice. The SEO area includes the East Yakutat (EYKT), Northern Southeast Outside (NSEO), Central Southeast Outside (CSEO), and Southern Southeast Outside (SSEO) sections.

The personal use bottomfish fishery is open to the retention of six of the seven demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) species, including quillback, China, rosethorn, copper, canary, and tiger rockfish. The personal use bottomfish fishery is closed to the retention of yelloweye rockfish (Figure 1; 5 AAC 77.655). Personal use fishers are required to follow regulations in 5 AAC 77.674 which restrict the daily possession limit for rockfish to three fish, of which none may be a yelloweye rockfish in the Sitka Sound Special Use Area, and the bag and possession limit for rockfish to three fish, of which none may be a yelloweye rockfish in the Ketchikan vicinity area. Personal use fishermen are encouraged to utilize rockfish deepwater release devices to decrease release mortality of DSR while bottomfish fishing for other species. More information on rockfish conservation and deepwater release devices can be found on the ADF&G website at: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishingSportFishingInfo.rockfishconservation>

The subsistence bottomfish fishery remains open for retention of all DSR species, in areas defined in 5 AAC 01.716, except that bottomfish may not be taken for subsistence purposes in the waters off Cape Edgecumbe enclosed by a box defined as 56°55.5' N lat, 56°57' N lat, 135°54' W long, and 135°57' W long (5 AAC 01.725 (b)).

Despite conservative management over the last decade, yelloweye rockfish biomass in the Eastern Gulf of Alaska has declined since assessments began in 1994. Annual trends in biological data (length, weight, and age by sex) reveal truncation of older age classes, indicating reduced reproductive potential and increasing uncertainty for future recruitment. Yelloweye rockfish are particularly vulnerable to overexploitation and are slow to recover given their longevity, slow growth, late maturation, and high site-fidelity, with yelloweye rockfish reaching an estimated maximum age of 122 years and maturing at 18–22 years.

These stock health concerns warrant further management action to allow for rebuilding of yelloweye rockfish stocks and ensure sustainable rockfish fisheries in the future. Stock status will continue to be assessed annually through yelloweye rockfish stock assessment surveys, biological sampling of yelloweye bycatch, and monitoring yelloweye bycatch retained in commercial groundfish and halibut fisheries, as mandated under full-retention requirements (5 AAC 28.171).

Annette Island Reserve

Fishermen are reminded the Annette Island Reserve is a federally recognized Indian reservation in Alaska. The waters within 3,000 feet of Annette Island, Ham Island, Hemlock Island, Spire Island, Walker Island, Lewis Island, and adjacent rocks and islets are designated within the fishing reserve. Fisheries within the reserve are managed by the Metlakatla Indian Community for authorized fisheries participants. Metlakatla residents are also reminded that waters beyond 3,000 feet of Annette Island, Ham Island, Hemlock Island, Spire Island, Walker Island, Lewis Island, and adjacent rocks and islets are managed by the State of Alaska. Proper licensing, permitting, and reporting are required.

The Emergency Order corresponding with this announcement is EO 1G0123.

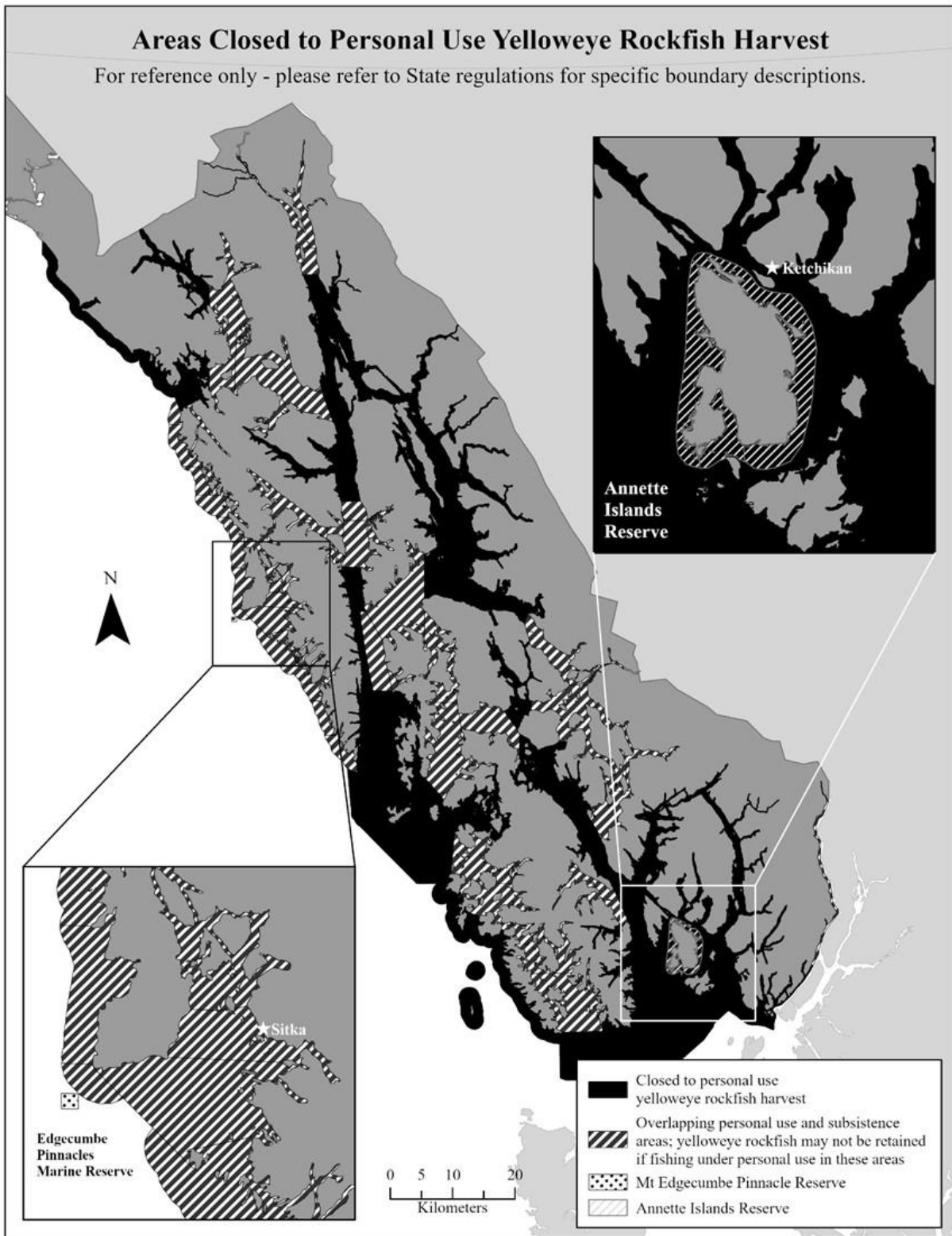


Figure 1.—Map of areas closed to personal use harvest of yelloweye rockfish. This map is for general reference only. For descriptions of management area boundaries, refer to 5 AAC 77.655, 5 AAC 77.674, and 5 AAC 01.716.

Advisory Announcement web site: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>.

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