Fish and Wildlife Commission modifies rockfish rule

Local News

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OLYMPIA - The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission today modified the boundaries of a recently adopted rockfish rule for waters off the northwestern tip of the Olympic Peninsula.

During a conference call, the commission voted to revise the new rule so that it will apply only to the eastern portion of Marine Area 4 (Neah Bay) - east of the Bonilla-Tatoosh line. The rule, as previously adopted, would have applied to all of Marine Area 4, which extends from Cape Alava on the coast to the Sekiu River in the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

The revised rule will require anglers fishing the eastern portion of Marine Area 4 to release all rockfish, except black or blue rockfish, and will limit anglers to six fish a day. The rule takes effect May 1.

Rockfish rules for the coastal portion of Marine Area 4 will not change from last year. Anglers fishing west of the Bonilla-Tatoosh line in Marine Area 4 will have a 10-rockfish daily limit and must release all canary and yelloweye rockfish.

The restriction was part of a package of sportfishing rules adopted by the commission in February. Today, the commission - a nine-member citizen panel that sets policy for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) - agreed that more public input was necessary before considering extending the new rule to all of Marine Area 4.

WDFW plans this year to begin a comprehensive review, with opportunities for public input, of groundfish management in the western Strait of Juan de Fuca and coastal waters.