WDFW statement on the listing of 3 Puget Sound rockfish species for protection under the ESA

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on : April 27, 2010 at 10:38 am

"Today’s decision by NOAA-Fisheries to list three Puget Sound rockfish species for protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is the latest step in an on-going effort to conserve and rebuild these important, slow-growing and highly vulnerable fish. Since the 1980s, WDFW has attempted to stop the decline by imposing increasingly stringent measures to protect Puget Sound rockfish and welcomes federal support for this effort.

"Since 2004, WDFW has required anglers to release any canary or yelloweye rockfish they encounter in Puget Sound. Few, if any, bocaccio - the third species listed today - have been observed in either the commercial or recreational catch in the past decade. It is clear that harvest restrictions, alone, will not be enough to recover these fish, which have suffered the effects of pollution, declining environmental conditions and increased predation by marine mammals.

"To provide additional protection for these fish, WDFW recently closed fishing for all species of rockfish from southern Puget Sound north to the Canadian border and west to Port Angeles, effective May 1. In addition, anglers fishing for other bottomfish in Puget Sound will be required to observe a 120-foot depth restriction. This new measure is specifically designed to reduce mortality of rockfish incidentally intercepted in these fisheries.

"This summer, WDFW plans to release a final Puget Sound Rockfish Conservation Plan, establishing a comprehensive framework for rockfish conservation in the Sound. In the meantime, we will work closely with NOAA-Fisheries to ensure consistency with the provisions of the ESA listings announced today."