North Coast Bottomfish Fishery Will Remain Open Through Labor Day

Local News

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on : July 27, 2012 at 4:02 am

Olympia, WA - The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) announced today that the recreational bottomfish fishery off the north coast of Washington will remain open through Labor Day, postponing a closure previously set for Friday (July 27).A new regulation approved today will allow sport fishing for rockfish, lingcod, Pacific cod and other bottomfish to remain open through midnight Sept. 3 in Marine Area 3 and the western portion of Marine Area 4 off La Push and Neah Bay."This is good news, not only for anglers but also the coastal communities whose economies rely on these fisheries," said Heather Reed, a WDFW fish biologist. "We know that a month of fishing means a lot to people on the north coast." The bottomfish season is open year-round, with the exception of lingcod which is closed during the winter month.Reed said the previous closure date, announced earlier this week, was designed to avoid exceeding yelloweye rockfish quotas established under a federal stock-rebuilding plan. While it is illegal to retain yelloweye, federally designated as an "overfished" species, anglers sometimes intercept the species unintentionally while fishing for other bottomfish.

"Anglers took most of the quota as bycatch during the popular north coast halibut openings in May," Reed said. "That didn’t leave us any margin for bottomfish seasons off the north coast for the rest of the year."Since then, however, the department has learned that the June yelloweye catch was lower than expected, and that yelloweye catch reserved for coastal research projects will be lower than originally anticipated."This new information gives us some flexibility to minimize the impacts to our coastal communities and allow our recreational bottomfish fishery to remain open through Labor Day," Reed said. "We still have to close the fishery early, but not as early as we had thought."Reed said the department plans to look for ways to address high yelloweye harvest rates in the early season to avoid the need for early bottomfish closures in future years.