

Council members,

I am writing to you today to ask you to consider an opening of the commercial shelf rockfish fishery in the extreme southern district of California for the remainder of the March - April management period.

Reasons for request; Consistant availability of product is hurt by the closure.

Over the Easter holiday there is a strong demand for fresh local fish. Holiday visitors expect to find fresh seafood. In addition to the closure of waters to U.S. fishermen, importation from Mexico shuts down as fishermen take long periods of time off for the religious period. Poor weather during this period often makes for few days at sea.

My catch is marketed directly to restaurants in the San Diego area. The March - April closure hurts my business because I have to start all over again in May. Many Chinese restaurant owners are unfamiliar with the laws and communication can be difficult. When I do not show up for two months it is difficult to re-establish a working agreement and often the price has to be re-negotiated.

Fishing for shelf rockfish is open for sportfishing during the March -April period and this leads to increased sales of sport-caught fish. Enforcement agents have little chance of catching the weekend fisherman who sells his catch. When restaurants have a supply of commercially caught fish they are not tempted to purchase sport-caught fish. Sportfishermen have argued that a commercial closure is "fair" because the sportfishing for shelf rockfish is closed during Jan-Feb. Sportfishermen have many advantages including access to fish that are not commercially legal and the opportunity to travel to Mexican waters to avoid the closure.

January-February catch totals for Seaforth Landing, Mission Bay, San Diego:

3800 Anglers
152 trips
45 days

2081 Bass (sand/kelp)
2392 Rockfish
722 Vermilion rockfish
125 Sculpin (scorpionfish)
311 Ling Cod
305 Ocean Whitefish
10 Halibut
4 Sheephead
216 Yellowtail
254 Bonito

3 Barracuda
882 Mackerel
6321 Giant Squid

These numbers show that the sport fleet is able to carry passengers and produce sport fish without being hurt by a rockfish closure.

The March - April period was opened at the last minute during 2006 and it helped the commercial fishermen while having created no problems for the sportfishermen. Please consider my request.

Thank You.

John Law - Wild West Commercial Fishing