Alaska's Rockfish Program

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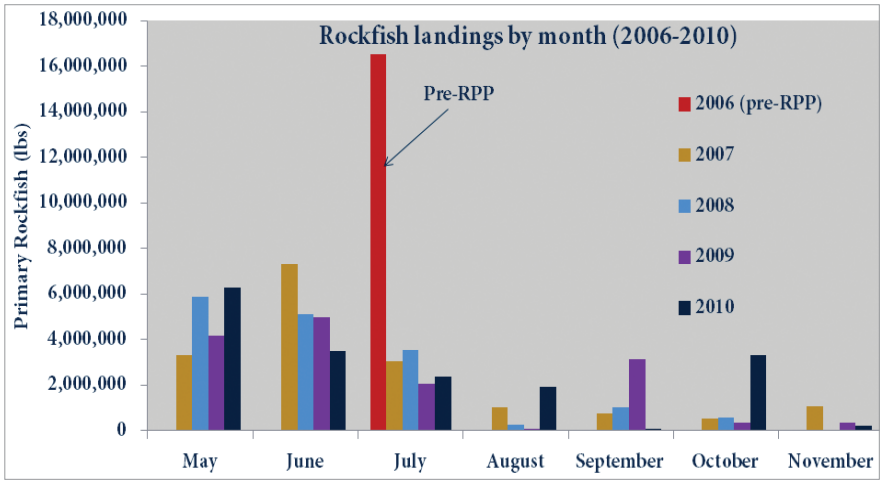
Fishing under the Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA) Rockfish Pilot Program (Pilot Program) began in May 2007. The Pilot Program was a multi-species trawl catch share program in Kodiak, Alaska, for approximately 62 catcher vessels and catcher/processors. The Pilot Program expired five years later in December 2011, and was recently replaced in 2012 by the CGOA Rockfish Program. The Pilot Program was implemented to provide economic stability for Kodiak, which was challenged by a race for fish and conflicts with other fisheries.



Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish landings (in lbs) by month, 2006-2010.

Catcher vessels and catcher/processors qualified for exclusive harvesting and processing privileges based on their history in CGOA rockfish fisheries during the qualifying years 1996–2002. Participants were required to form cooperatives to receive cooperative quota (CQ), which was harvested by the cooperative members each year. Catcher vessel cooperatives were required to form an association with a shoreside processor to which their members had historically delivered CGOA rockfish. Participants also had the option to join a separate limited access (i.e., non-catch share) fishery on an annual basis instead of forming a cooperative, but were required to compete for their catch. Sideboards limited the ability of rockfish harvesters to expand into other fisheries beyond historical participation levels during July.

An eligible rockfish catcher/processor had the option to opt out of many of the Pilot Program requirements. Additionally, with five percent of the rockfish program species catch limits, an entry level fishery was established to provide harvesting and processing opportunities for catcher vessels and shoreside processors who had not traditionally participated in the CGOA rockfish fisheries. The Pilot Program allowed transfers of quota share between eligible recipients and transfers of CQ between cooperatives. Four different types of use caps were designed to limit the degree of consolidation that could occur. Monitoring and enforcement provisions included observer coverage on vessels, a catch monitoring and control plan for shoreside processors, and observer monitoring of deliveries.

The limited duration of the Pilot Program allowed for thorough program review and for the implementation of a new CGOA Rockfish Program in 2012. The CGOA Rockfish Program is similar to the Pilot Program in implementation, management, monitoring, and enforcement measures. However, some changes were made based on the review by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. These changes included the cessation of the non-catch share limited access fishery, the restriction of the entry level fishery to non-trawl gear, the removal of the requirement for catcher vessels to deliver to a specific processor, and the implementation of a cost recovery program for all participants.