

Make a Disposable Gaff For Releasing Rockfish from a Troller

Troll fishers are often faced with having to release bycaught rockfish. If the boat is in motion, it must be stopped to release the fish—consuming precious time and fuel.

A simple, inexpensive solution is to use a disposable gaff, as shown at right. The gaff is easy to use from a moving boat—just hook the fish through its upper lip and drop gaff and fish into the water. There is no need to stop the boat.

Aquarium tests have shown that rockfish are able to shake free of the gaff's barbless hook either on the way down or when they reach the bottom. It's important to be sure the gaff is heavy enough to sink the fish; if not, add extra rebar to increase the weight. One to three pounds is sufficient for most fish, but a large yelloweye may require up to six pounds.

It's also a good idea to avoid overtaping the hook to the rebar, in case a fish has difficulty shaking the hook.

You may be able to find scrap rebar around construction sites; ask builders if you can help them “recycle” any scraps they have.

Note: *If you find yourself having to release a lot of rockfish, the best course of action is to avoid catching them—either by moving to a new location or by changing your gear. Although using this disposable gaff should increase the survival rate of released rockfish, it also leaves rebar, hooks, and tape on the ocean floor. So please, use it only when necessary.*

Materials



Barbless salmon hook



Rebar



Masking tape

Finished Product



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