

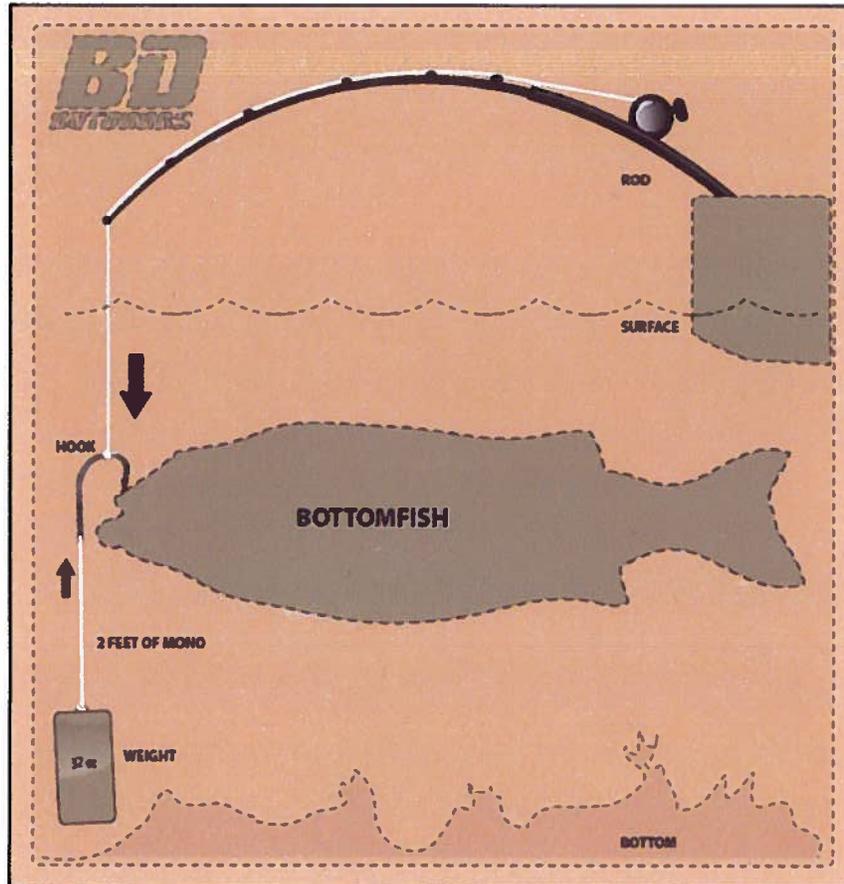
BOTTOMFISH RELEASE RIG

TIP From: BRANT CRENSHAW at BD OUTDOORS – August 14, 2012

There are several tools on the market these days that help anglers safely release rockfish, snapper and grouper back to the bottom to increase their survival rate. But a lot of these tools are expensive and/or hard to use.

The change in depth when reeling in a fish from the deep can cause the fishes' eyes to bulge and its swim bladder to expand, often forcing its stomach to stick out of its mouth. The idea is to get the fish back to the depths quickly to relieve the pressure for a safe release. Venting a fish with a knife or needle has often proved more harmful than helpful as many people puncture the fish's internal organs and do other damage.

Over the years I've been using this simple technique to release both rockfish and black seabass, and it won't cost you more than a few bucks to set up.



Step 1: Tie the mainline to an upside-down "J" hook (size 4/0). Crimp the barb down with a pair of pliers. Attach the hook to the line by tying a knot in the middle of the bend, as pictured in the diagram. You can use a Uni-Knot.

Step 2: Tie a small piece of 50 pound mono, approximately 50 feet long, to the upside down hook through the eye of the hook and attach a 2-pound weight to the bottom.

Step 3: To release the fish, place the upside-down hook into the upper lip of the fish you plan to release. Hook the fish from the outside. The weight will be situated in front of the fish's mouth.

Step 4: Put the reel in free-spool and sink the fish using thumb on the spool. The weight will carry the fish down. This will decompress the fish.

Step 5: Once the fish is safely sunk to depth of capture, pull up sharply on the rig and the hook will easily release from the upper lip. Release complete.

Also may want to try a longer point hook like "VMC" siwash hook to reduce chance fish will fall off prematurely.

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