

Executive Summary

This document analyzes proposed management measures that would apply exclusively to the Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) fishery in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) for sablefish (*Anoplopoma fimbria*), also known as black cod. A proposed FMP and regulatory amendment would allow the use of pot longline gear for the sablefish IFQ fishery in the GOA. The considered measures include: (1) redefine legal gear to include pot longline gear, potentially subject to a pot limit enforced by pot-identification tags, (2) require the location of sablefish pots set or lost on the fishing grounds to be submitted to an electronic database, (3) require that pot longline gear be moved or tended within a certain amount of time after being set, (4) require marking of pot longline gear, and (5) allow retention of Pacific halibut (*Hippoglossus stenolepis*) if sufficient IFQ is held by fishermen to cover both the sablefish and halibut IFQ caught using pot longline gear.

Purpose and Need

Whale interaction with fishing gear affects the ability of sablefish quota share holders to harvest their sablefish IFQs by reducing catch per unit of effort and increasing fishing costs. Research into whale deterrence strategies and changes in fishing practices has not resolved the problem. Additional sablefish mortality associated with whale depredation is difficult to quantify, but increases total mortality and uncertainty in sablefish abundance indices. The use of pot gear for sablefish could reduce sperm whale and killer whale interactions with fishing gear in the Gulf of Alaska. The Council seeks to reduce the problems associated with whale depredation while minimizing gear conflicts and excessive grounds preemption that could result from allowing pot and longline gear to fish in the same regulatory areas.

Alternatives

Alternative 1. Status Quo (hook-and-line gear is the only legal gear type for sablefish IFQ in the GOA).

Alternative 2. Allow the use of pot longline gear in the GOA Sablefish IFQ fishery (the Council can select any or all GOA areas: WGOA, CGOA, WY, or SEO).

Element 1. Limit of 60 to 400 pots (different pot limits can be selected for each area).

Option 1. Require identification tags for each pot.

Element 2. Gear retrieval

Option 1. Require the location of pots set, left, or lost on the grounds to be submitted to an electronic database when in the water.

Option 2. Gear cannot be left more than (Options) four or seven days without being moved.

Element 3. Gear specifications.

Require both ends of the sablefish pot longline set to be marked with buoys and/or flagpoles and transponders that work with AIS or an equivalent system.

Element 4. Retention of incidentally caught halibut.

Allow the retention of halibut caught incidentally in sablefish pots, provided the sablefish IFQ holder also holds sufficient halibut IFQ.