

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members

FROM: Chris Oliver *Chris*
Executive Director

ESTIMATED TIME 2 HOURS (All D-1 items)
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DATE: September 20, 2013

SUBJECT: (b) GOA Gear Committee Report on implementing a sablefish pot fishery

ACTION REQUIRED

Review committee report and take action as necessary

BACKGROUND

A proposal to amend the regulations implementing the sablefish Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program to redefine legal gear in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) was recommended to the Council by its IFQ Implementation Committee and Advisory Panel (AP) during the 2009 call for IFQ proposals. In February 2010, the Council requested a discussion paper on this proposal to allow the use of pots to retain sablefish IFQs in the GOA to be scheduled after Council action was completed on several other higher priority proposals. The Council also decided to appoint a gear committee to advise it on a wide range of management issues related to the proposed action.

In April 2012, the Council approved the formation of a gear committee composed of affected stakeholders to assist in the development of the requested discussion paper and make recommendations to the Council. The committee was charged in providing information on the following topics:

- 1) gear restrictions
 - a) single vs longline pots
 - b) pots retained on grounds for long soaks vs retrieved during deliveries
 - c) pot storage
 - d) gear configuration requirements
 - e) gear conflicts
 - f) use the 200 fathom depth contour to mark open areas
 - g) pot soak time
- 2) area management (SE vs GOA)
- 3) exacerbation of halibut mortality
- 4) dynamic (social/economic) effects
 - a) safety issue related to use of pots by small vessels
 - b) crew employment
 - c) QS prices
 - d) ongoing acoustic research for avoiding whale depredation

In June 2013, the Council reviewed a draft discussion paper that was prepared by staff without the benefit of committee guidance on the above issues to move the proposal forward. The Council issued a call for nominations for a Gear Committee to be comprised of persons who may be affected by potential deployment of single or longline pots in the GOA sablefish IFQ fishery. The Council charged the committee with developing implementation strategies to allow the use of pots in the GOA sablefish IFQ fishery to mitigate negative impacts of whale depredation on sablefish caught on longline gear. The committee will assist staff in expanding information in the next draft of the paper on a variety of topics related to the use of sablefish pot gear in the Gulf. Agency staff with expertise on management of the sablefish IFQ fishery, marine mammal depredation and gear avoidance techniques, and sablefish biology, surveys, and stock assessments will assist the committee. The committee is scheduled to meet September 30 (agenda attached at Item D-1(b)(1)) and its report will be provided to the Council during this meeting.

In addition to the original list of topics to be covered in the paper, the Council identified the following additional items to address:

- Update on whale depredation and interactions
- Update on whale deterrent work in progress
- Update on Canadian sablefish gear usage and pricing by gear type
- Discussion of pre-emption of fishing grounds due to lost gear
- Gear conflicts between all gear types
- Discussion of shifting predation to halibut
- Review of current literature on whale predation

Background documents include a committee list (Item D-1(b)(2)) and the June 2013 discussion paper as Item D-1(b)(3).