

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Council, SSC, and AP members  
FROM: Jim H. Branson *JMB*  
Executive Director  
DATE: November 30, 1982  
SUBJECT: Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery Management Plan

*ACTION REQUIRED*

1. *The Council needs to clarify the July 1982 motion to make the sablefish fishery an exclusive hook and line fishery in the FCZ east of 140°W longitude to Cape Addington.*
2. *The Council needs to establish the Equilibrium Yield for sablefish for 1983.*
3. *The Council should consider establishing a workgroup to study the problem of prohibited species by-catch in the Gulf of Alaska.*
4. *The Council should consider a recommendation from the PMT to amend the FMP to "framework" the establishment of OY.*

*BACKGROUND*

1. Exclusive hook and line fishery for sablefish in the FCZ east of 140°W longitude to Cape Addington.

At the July meeting the Council voted 6 to 5 to limit pot fishing for sablefish in the FCZ east of 140°W to the grounds between Cape Addington and Dixon Entrance. I understood the motion to say that only hook and line gear may be used for directed sablefish fishing in the FCZ east of 140°W to Cape Addington, that pots cannot be used in that area (between Cape Addington and 140°W) for sablefish, and that trawlers can take sablefish only incidentally. Most of the Council members with whom I discussed this after the meeting had the same understanding.

Unfortunately the record is not at all clear on the actual motion and the transcript of Council discussion and public testimony does not do much to clarify the question. The transcript and notes of discussions could be interpreted to mean that the Council intended to close the entire area from Dixon Entrance to 140°W longitude to everything but hook and line fishing, or that hook and line gear was the only type that could be used for sablefish in the entire area.

Because the meeting adjourned after the action was taken in July, the motion cannot be reconsidered. Properly there should be a "motion to amend something previously adopted."<sup>1/</sup>

The wording of the motion should be something on this order:

"I move to amend the motion adopted at the July meeting which made the sablefish fishery east of 140°W longitude to Cape Addington an exclusive hook and line fishery by changing the wording to read, 'Ban the use of pot gear for sablefish east of 140°W longitude to Cape Addington.'"

This still leaves the Council's intention to make hook and line gear the only legal method for a directed sablefish fishery in Southeast unresolved. The July discussion left that subject even less clear than the pot ban.

If only the above motion is made pot gear from east of 140°W to Cape Addington will be banned for sablefish but trawling will be unaffected.

If the Council wishes to ban trawling for sablefish as a directed fishery the motion should be along these lines:

"I move to amend the motion adopted at the July meeting which made the sablefish fishery east of 140°W longitude to Cape Addington an exclusive hook and line fishery by changing the wording to read, 'Ban the use of pot gear for sablefish east of 140°W longitude to Cape Addington and prohibit retention of sablefish by trawlers except for those fish taken incidental to fishing operations for other species in the (Southeast Regulatory area) (area from Dixon Entrance to 140°W longitude) ✓(area between Cape Addington to 140°W longitude)✓ (Gulf of Alaska).'"

An alternative could be to go with the first proposed motion which does not mention trawling but state for the record a Council position on trawling and sablefish. As a policy statement it would be considered in all future development of fisheries in this area without impacting any current fisheries or operations.

2. Establish the sablefish Equilibrium Yield for 1983.

The November 11, 1982 Plan Maintenance Team report which was sent to you in the last Council mailing, contained the PMT's recommended sablefish EYs for 1983. The Council has set the sablefish OY equal to 75% of the established EY. If the PMT's recommendations are approved, the 1983 sablefish EYs and OY will be as follows:

	<u>Western</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>W. Yakutat</u>	<u>E. Yakutat</u>	<u>Southeast</u>
EY	2,225(mt)	4,075	2,240	1,135-1,510	1,290-2,580
OY	1,669	3,056	1,680	851-1,133	968-1,935

1/ Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, Scott, Foresman and Co., 1981, 256 p.

The PMT recommended that in the Eastern Yakutat and Southeast districts, if the in-season indicators, namely catch per unit effort and size of fish caught, are similar to the 1982 fishery, then the two areas be managed to arrive at the 1982 catch level. If the in-season fishery indicators reflect a decrease in abundance and average size the fishery should be managed for the lower portion of the OY range. 1982 domestic catches of sablefish are as follows:

	<u>Western</u>	<u>Central</u>	<u>N. Yakutat</u>	<u>E. Yakutat</u>	<u>Southeast</u>
1982 Catch (mt) (date)	0.0 (Aug)	15.1 (Aug)	235 (Oct)	386 (Oct)	1,998 (Oct)

3. Establish a working group to study the catch of prohibited species in the Gulf of Alaska.

The PMT has reported on the historical catch of prohibited species in the Gulf of Alaska. The PMT noted that the 1977-81 average halibut by-catch of 2,639 mt equaled nearly 40% of the 1981 harvest of 6,658 mt in IPHC area 3 which includes the Gulf of Alaska west of Cape Spencer.

The PMT also noted that although the nature of the groundfish fishery has changed considerably due to the domestic pelagic fishery for pollock in Shelikof Straight, there is still potential for continued by-catches in the foreign fishery with a TALFF of 50,976 mt in the Central area and 62,086 mt in the Western area. Most of the TALFF is for species best caught in bottom trawls.

The PMT has recommended that the Council establish an ad-hoc working group to evaluate the prohibited species by-catch problem in the Gulf of Alaska. They suggest that the group examine the scope of the problem, evaluate various management strategies to reduce the by-catch, and estimate the benefits and costs of reducing the by-catch. The group's objective would be to prepare the background material necessary to develop a Gulf of Alaska prohibited species amendment.

The SSC may want to suggest the appropriate terms of reference and the composition of the ad-hoc working group for Council consideration.

4. Amend the FMP to establish a framework procedure for determining each species OY annually.

A portion of the FMP management regime was frameworked in Amendment 11, which the Council approved at the May, July and September 1982 meetings. The DAH for the coming fishing year will now equal the current year's domestic catch plus amounts necessary to meet the increased needs of the domestic fishery. The sablefish OY will equal 75% of the EY.

The PMT has recommended that an amendment be prepared that would establish a framework procedure whereby each species and species group OY is determined annually by the Regional Director of NMFS. This kind of procedure is desirable because of the inability of the current system to respond to changes in status of stocks and the expanding domestic fishery in a timely manner.

The PMT recommends that the procedure should specify a timetable, that a resource assessment document be prepared, that OYs be point estimates where possible, and that OYs should be determined for each species or species group and for each regulatory area.

If the Council agrees with this general approach, the PMT will prepare an amendment for Council review. The PMT's goal is to have the Amendment implemented for the 1984 fishery.

5. Information for Council/Board meeting, Board proposal #241, Postpone the opening of the sablefish fishery in the outside districts.

This proposal would close the sablefish fishery in State of Alaska waters off Southeast from Cape Spencer to Dixon Entrance from January 1 to March 14.

The Council considered a similar proposal to close the FCZ from December 15 to March 15 at the May 1982 meeting and rejected it upon the advice of the Plan Maintenance Team, the Scientific and Statistical Committee, and the Advisory Panel because no scientific justification for the proposal had been presented.

6. 1983 Gulf of Alaska DAH.

The November 11 PMT report contained the 1983 DAH estimates received from the National Marine Fisheries Service. The figures are based on this year's catch plus additional amounts necessary for 1983 domestic fishery expansion. DAH estimates have increased for the following species:

<u>Species</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>1982 DAH</u>	<u>1983 DAH</u>	<u>Increase</u>
Pollock	Central	7,940 JVP	104,020 JVP	96,080
Pacific Cod	Western	840 DAP	3,900 DAP	3,060
Pacific Ocean Perch	Central	960 JVP	2,700 JVP	1,740
Rockfish	Gulf-wide	200 JVP	1,250 JVP	1,050

NMFS has reduced the TALFF available for allocations by the amount of the DAH increases. Additionally, current national policy is to allocate to foreign nations only a portion of the available TALFF at the start of 1983. A complete table of OY, DAP, JVP, and TALFF for all species and regulatory areas in the Gulf of Alaska is in the PMT report, p. 2 and 3.

7. Other items, information only.

The PMT report contains information on sablefish catch reports in Southeast, the pollock OY in the Central area, and field order authority to resolve foreign-domestic gear conflicts.

The question of misreported sablefish catches in Southeast and Eastern Yakutat districts was raised at the September 1982 Council meeting. The problem arises where the State of Alaska Management District 16 cuts

across 137°W, the boundary between Southeast and Eastern Yakutat. Apparently, fish caught in Eastern Yakutat were reported in Southeast, but always in Alaska Management District 16.

The PMT reported that the ADF&G groundfish staff is aware of the problem, that they are working with the fishermen, and that ADF&G will closely monitor sablefish fish tickets to ensure accurate catch reports.

The most current status of stocks report on groundfish from the Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Center estimates the pollock ABC in the Central area to be 113,400 to 216,700 mt. The previous ABC estimate was 95,200 to 190,600. The PMT cautions that alternative analyses suggest that pollock biomass has not increased and could even be lower than previously reported in the Central area and that for now, the Council should not consider changing the OY for pollock in the Central area from 143,000 mt.

Part 5 of Amendment 8 would have conferred upon the Regional Director field order authority to resolve gear conflicts between foreign and domestic fishermen. This part was disapproved during Secretarial Review, although the Council has indicated that this kind of authority is still necessary and should be included in the groundfish management regime.

The PMT has revised the original field order authority language so that it responds to the reviewers objections. The revised section was included in the PMT report.

The Council staff has reviewed the revised language, and although the field order authority is workable, it does not seem adequate to respond to the problem of foreign mobile gear preempting grounds from domestic fixed gear. The staff has asked NMFS to consider this question, so that appropriate language can be included in such field order authority.

#### 8. Status of FMP amendments.

The Council approved Amendment 11 for Secretarial review at the September meeting. Amendment 11 raised the pollock OY in the Central area from 95,200 mt to 143,000 mt, created the Western Yakutat and Eastern Yakutat districts for sablefish management, set the sablefish OY equal to 75% of the EY, set the DAH equal to the catch of record plus amounts necessary for future domestic fishery expansion, specified that domestic vessels report their catch or advise the management agencies in Alaska by radio or telephone of the departure before landing fish outside Alaska, and gave the Regional Director field order authority to adjust time-area closures on foreign fisheries for conservation reasons.

NMFS and Council staff are currently preparing the amendment for Secretarial review. It should be ready for submission by January 1983.

REPORT TO THE BOARD OF FISHERIES  
1982 SOUTHEASTERN - YAKUTAT GROUND FISH FISHERY

By:

Region I Staff

Southeast Region  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Commercial Fisheries Division  
November 1981

1982

## ABSTRACT

Region I groundfish catch increased 47% from 3.9 million pounds in 1981 to a projected 5.8 million pounds in 1982. Value of the catch to fishermen doubled from \$1.8 million to nearly \$3.5 million. Most of the increase was due to an increase in sablefish price with a resultant increase in harvest. There were no dramatic changes in other fisheries.

As was the case last year, only sablefish and rockfish catches greatly surpassed recent year averages. These species are expected to dominate the catch again in 1983 and slight increases are expected in both species.

There may be an increase in trawl catches next year as several boats have expressed an interest in fishing groundfish for bait and there may be some trawl effort for rockfish along the outer coast. Two permits have been issued and one more requested for the winter season.

Groundfish regulation proposals are discussed. Staff proposal justifications are expanded and public proposals are commented on.

Research projects including sablefish tagging, port sampling, and on-board observer programs are discussed.

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## INTRODUCTION

Region I (Figure 1) encompasses all waters surrounding the Alexander Archipelago from Dixon Entrance on the south and along the outer coast northwest to Cape Suckling.

The Southeastern groundfish project is responsible for management of the groundfish resources in state waters within the region and provides catch information and other resource data from the adjacent Fisheries Conservation Zone (FCZ) to the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (NPMFC). Involvement with the Council is also required by the groundfish project leader's involvement with the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Plan Maintenance Team.

Primary fisheries include sablefish, rockfish, starry flounder and Pacific cod. Sablefish, by regulation, are fished with longline and pot gear in state waters of Southeastern and primarily with longline in the FCZ. Rockfish are taken by longline and jigging machine and starry flounder are taken by trawl gear. Besides the target fisheries, rockfish, Pacific cod, and lingcod are landed incidental to the salmon troll and halibut longline fisheries. Several species of sole are also landed incidental to the flounder trawl fishery. Pollock trawl fisheries which averaged nearly 1 million pounds from 1979-1980 were minimal during 1981 due to lack of a local market. A very small fishery occurred for bait. Flounder trawl fisheries continued on a reduced level and most trawl caught fish were delivered to ports outside the State.

Virtually all pacific cod and starry flounder have been harvested in state waters. Sablefish landings from state waters have varied from 98% of the total region catch in 1973 to 33% in 1981 and 31% in 1982. The reduction in percentage of catch in state waters is due to expansion of effort in the FCZ since the foreign longliners withdrew from the area in mid-1978. Average commercial harvest and 1981-1982 landing and value for major groundfish species is presented in Table 1.

#### SABLEFISH (BLACKCOD) FISHERY

##### Management Unit

Southeastern has historically been separated into inside and outside waters with the approximate division between these waters occurring at the surf line. The Yakutat area extends from Cape Fairweather to Cape Suckling. The Yakutat INPFC area extends from 137 W. long. to 147 W. long. Harvest is reported to the NPMFC by INPFC area. Adult sablefish are generally fished in depths greater than 200 fathoms and so most offshore catches are from the area outside of state jurisdiction.

In state waters, the fishery is regulated by season and guideline harvest levels. In the southern area, which includes Districts 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8 (Figure 2) the season extends from June 15 to November 15 or until a guideline harvest level of 125,000 to 500,000

pounds is reached. Most of the fish are taken from Districts 1, 2, and 6, which include the deep water areas of Clarence Strait and Behm Canal. In the northern area, which includes all waters of Districts 9, 10, 11, 12, Section 13-C and Districts 14 and 15, the season extends from September 1 to November 15 or until a guideline harvest level of 300,000 to 900,000 pounds has been taken. The lower end of the guideline range was reduced from 500,000 pounds to 300,000 pounds by regulation this year. Most of the fish from the northern area are harvested from Districts 9 and 12 in Chatham Strait. There is no season and no separate quota in District 4, Section 13-A and B, and District 16. Those districts are managed in conjunction with the adjacent Fisheries Conservation Zone (FCZ) and the appropriate harvest level is still in contention. Because of the generally shallower depths, very little actual harvest comes from those districts.

#### Catch

Projected domestic sablefish landings in Region I for 1982 total 4.5 million pounds dressed weight which converts to 6.4 million pounds (2,915 MT) round weight. This is slightly below the 1979 harvest of 5.2 million pounds dressed weight but is nearly twice the Region I average in recent years. Price increased by nearly 50% this year contributing to an increase in effort. Catch in inside waters increased from 0.9 million pounds in 1980 and 0.7 million pounds in 1981 to 1.1 million pounds in 1982. Outside and Yakutat area catches increased from 2.0 million pounds in 1981 to 3.4 million pounds in 1982.

The outside area including adjacent state waters was closed by joint State-Federal action on August 2. The closure was announced when the harvest was expected to reach 1250 mt round weight. The actual harvest of 1307 mt was higher due in part to intensified effort when the closure was announced and because of late reporting of harvests earlier in the year which were not included in the catch projection. Non-reporting and late reporting of out-of-state landings continues to be a major problem in this fishery. Catches in the outside area would have been much higher had the fishery continued. The closure was the first domestic groundfish closure since the Magnuson Fisheries Conservation Act went into effect in 1977. The Department continues to take an active role in the management of Federal waters.

Effort in the Yakutat area increased dramatically after the outside Southeast closure. For the first time there was major domestic effort in the western Yakutat area (west of 140 W. long.). The foreign longline fleet agreed to stay out of the area between August 2 and October 16 to eliminate direct gear conflicts. Domestic vessels caught over 350,000 pounds in that portion of the Yakutat area during that period. Of that, over 70,000 pounds came from the portion of the Yakutat INFC area west of Cape Suckling and is not included in the Region I catch totals. The total Yakutat area harvest to date of over 950,000 with an annual projection of over 1.3 million pounds will constitute the largest domestic harvest on record from the area. The staff maintains the position that directed foreign sablefish fishing should be eliminated from the Yakutat area to allow for continued domestic expansion.

In the northern Southeast area the season was closed by Emergency Order on September 16 with a total of 774,000 pounds landed. This was a 20% increase over 1981 even though the 1981 season was four weeks longer. The Department announced prior to the season opening that the season would close September 16 to allow the staff to evaluate data collected by port samplers and to examine catch levels to that point. The pre-season guideline was 500,000 pounds. Because of increased effort caused by the outside closure the catch exceeded expectation and the area was not reopened. Although percentage of large fish increased slightly from 1981, port sampling data showed that both CPUE and average size were below the 1980 levels. Since there was no port sampling program in 1981 those indicators are impossible to assess for last year. We will likely manage for a split season again next year particularly if the outside area is closed prior to the northern area opening. We will attempt to obtain independent indicators using commercial gear before September 1.

The southern area catch of 290,000 pounds was the highest since 1975 and over three times the 1976-81 average harvest. The increase was largely due to the recruitment of the 1977 year class into the marketable size category. The adult population is still considered extremely depressed and since the 1977 year class is not fully recruited into the reproductive population the fishery was closed October 1 by Emergency Order. The closure, justified because of the high percentage of small fish, was the first on record for that fishery. An even more conservative harvest may be necessary next year to assure that the remaining juvenile population reaches

spawning age. Those fish will not be fully recruited into the spawning population until 1984 or 1985.

#### Gear

Sablefish fishing is restricted to longline and pot gear in all state waters of the Southeastern area although some incidental troll landings of juvenile sablefish do occur. In addition, state waters between Cape Addington and Cape Spencer are restricted to longline gear only. The North Pacific Fisheries Management Council recently adopted a parallel regulation restricting waters of the FCZ between Cape Addington and 140 W. longitude to longline only. It is my understanding that that decision might be reversed. The outcome will be addressed in my oral report.

Longline gear again dominated the fishery and 98% of the 1982 landings were by that gear type. We received word that two large out-of-state pot boats were fishing off southeastern but no landing records have been received. The names of the vessels have been sent to Federal enforcement authorities for action. One of the vessels was also reported fishing in state waters closed to pot fishing during a closed season. That information has been sent to Fish and Wildlife Protection.

Sablefish vessels reporting landings from Region I totaled 94 this year, up slightly from the 89 which fished last year. All but one were longline vessels. Both the quality of vessels and fishing

intensity (number of trips) increased this year so total effort was greater than the slight numerical increase in vessels would suggest. A list of boats, landings and percentage of fish over 5 pounds dressed weight by management area is presented in Table 2.

### Management

Most of the vessels fish offshore during the summer and move into Chatham Strait when the northern area opens September 1. With the early outside closure this year many of the vessels fished the Yakutat area prior to the northern area opening.

The pre-fishing registration requirement implemented in 1979 was less essential for projecting harvest this year because the closure date was announced prior to opening. It is still very useful for assessing effort levels and tracking landings and should be retained. Six vessels violated registration and/or reporting regulations. Citations were issued this year for the first time.

The staff is continuing to use commercial catch information as the preliminary management tool. Port samplers were placed in Petersburg, Sitka, and Juneau during the northern area fishery this year. Samples were obtained from 50% of the landings representing 76% of the fleet this year. Skipper interviews to collect detailed catch data were taken from 43% of the landings and 34% of the fleet. Data has been entered on the computer and comparisons of CPUE and size composition will be made to data collected in 1980. We will continue to expand the sampling program as funding allows. We hope

to sample landings from the FCZ more heavily in the future and place observers aboard sablefish vessels in both state waters and the FCZ to obtain sex and maturity data as well as discard rates of undersized sablefish and other species. A logbook program is also being worked on.

Because funding has not been available to continue the abundance indexing program started in Chatham Strait in 1981, we are contemplating contracting commercial longline vessels to conduct test fishing and tagging experiments prior to and after the commercial fisheries in state waters.

We will likely continue to manage the northern area with a pre-assessment closure date. Additional fishing time would be allowed if warranted. This year out prediction of total northern area harvest based on effort and early landings was off by nearly 100%. The initial opening may be shorter next year to correspond more closely to a single trip length. This should give more control on harvest and increase the potential for a second opening. The benefit of a split season would be to spread the effort to lessen the impact of such heavy fishing pressure during a single time frame each year.

No additional tagging was conducted during 1982, but tag returns are coming back at an accelerated rate. The higher returns are the result of increased fisherman awareness of the program and the larger harvest this year. To date, 438 tags have been returned



which represents over 4% of the fish at large. So far 36% (158) have been recovered outside the area of tagging. Most of these were tagged as juveniles in Behm Canal and have been recovered from Cape Flattery, Washington to Adak Island. The direction of movement by size discussed at the last Board meeting is still very evident. The smaller fish, less than 60cm, tend to move north and westward throughout the Gulf while larger fish move south into Canadian waters. So far 62 tags have been returned from the Gulf of Alaska including four from Chatham Strait, 58 from the outer coast of British Columbia and 38 from Dixon Entrance. The remaining 280 have been returned from Clarence Strait primarily by the vessel chartered for tagging. We are currently attempting to weigh the recoveries by effort and return date. Informational Leaflet No. 199 which was published this year shows that directional movement by size applies to Japanese and NMFS tagging experiments as well. These results have broad reaching management implications and render our past strategies of managing for discrete populations by area suspect. Until the data is analyzed more thoroughly we should maintain our current regulations to minimize the potential for localized short term depletion which could effect distribution of effort. Results of the 1981 Chatham Strait tagging suggest that movement out of that area may not be as rapid. However, juvenile fish were tagged at a larger average size and more adult fish were tagged. We have received four tags from offshore, two off Southeast and two off Yakutat, and 29 from within Chatham Strait.

The staff is participating in an INPFC sponsored project to compile a Joint Comprehensive Report on Sablefish. I attended working group

meetings in Tokyo and Shimizu, Japan this fall to share research and fisheries data with Japanese and Canadian scientists. In addition, an International symposium on sablefish is planned for Anchorage in March, 1983.

With a total coast-wide catch of over 65 million pounds annually and large fish prices approaching \$1.00 per pound, this species is becoming increasingly important. Most of the Region I groundfish budget and time is devoted to sablefish management and research.

The staff has not submitted proposals for changes in sablefish regulations this year. There are two public proposals for season adjustments and one staff proposal that would extend state management authority.

The first public proposal (No. 240) is a request for a change in the northern area opening date from September 1 to August 1. This is the same proposal that was passed by the Board in January last year and reversed at the spring meeting. The only new consideration is the August 2 offshore closure this year. August is still a favorable month for larger vessels to fish the Yakutat area. The staff takes no position on this proposal.

The second public proposal (No. 241) is to delay the outside opening to March 15. A parallel request will be made to the NPMFC to delay opening of the adjacent FCZ. Justification includes an increase in product quality and concentrating effort during the most favorable fishing months. I have talked to processors in Petersburg and Sitka

about product quality during the winter. Apparently a reduction in quality does result from spawning and fish are better quality later in the year. A 1940 study suggests that quality gradually improves throughout the summer and probably peaks in October. There may be some advantage to minimizing disruption of spawning fish, but there is no biological evidence. This is not a new idea. In 1945 a December 1 to March 15 closure was imposed by the Fish and Wildlife Service. The closure was extended until May 1 in 1947. The reasons for the closure included shortening fishing time to curb declines in CPUE, improved quality and a savings of incidental halibut caught in deep water during the winter and early spring. It should be noted that in 1982 only 8% of the catch occurred before April 1. However, as pointed out in ALFA's justification, with the threat of a closure more early season effort is likely. The staff takes no official stand on this proposal but is not opposed to the concept of a winter closure.

Staff proposal number 244 was made as a result of inequities in fishing time of Canadian and U.S. vessels in Dixon Entrance. The U.S. fishery closed August 2 along with the outer coast fishery and the Canadian fishery continued in the same area until August 22. The staff feels that management authority over the area between the AB line and the FCZ boundary would provide us with more management options and result in more equitable management between Canadian and U.S. fishermen in the same area.

Equilibrium Yield levels established in the NMFS status of stocks documents changed little from last year. Southeast and the eastern

Yakutat areas were provided with a range between the 1980 and 1981 estimates due to uncertainties in indexing results. The western Yakutat area, central and western Gulf EY estimates remained the same despite objections voiced by our staff. There is still no evidence of increases in abundance of large fish despite harvests approximately 30% below EY since 1978. Our recommendations to use the actual harvest level as EY level until improvements in spawning populations observed were ignored by NMFS scientists. We will again recommend that directed foreign fishing for sablefish be eliminated from the western Yakutat area. That would help reduce interception of fish moving into the Southeastern area and promote domestic expansion westward.

#### Projection

Outside harvest should be managed similar to this year, but if prices remain high I expect more domestic harvest in the Yakutat area. The Chatham Strait harvest will be between 0.5 and 0.8 million pounds dressed weight depending on in-season indicators. Unless there are definite signs of an improved average size, the Clarence Strait fishery will be managed for a harvest of between 200,000 and 250,000 pounds.

I expect the total regional catch to increase, but the southeastern harvest should remain about the same as 1982.

## ROCKFISH FISHERY

### Management Unit

Rockfish including Pacific Ocean Perch (POP) are landed throughout the region incidental to fisheries for other species. In the past three years target fisheries using longlines and automatic jigging machines have been increasing along the outer coast.

### Catch

Total rockfish landings for all species in 1982 will exceed 500,000 pounds. This is down slightly from the domestic catch of 662,000 pounds in 1981, but well above the 370 thousand pounds landed in 1980, and well above the 14 year average of 233 thousand pounds.

POP are considered severely depressed and the recommendation to NPMFC to reduce POP harvests in the eastern Gulf to a maximum of 1,000 mt became law in June, 1982.

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### Gear

Through October 62 vessels reported directed landings of rockfish. All but two were longline vessels and the others used automatic jigging machines.

Directed effort in this fishery is difficult to determine since most of the longline vessels have gear cards for halibut and sablefish as

well as miscellaneous finfish. We consider a miscellaneous finfish ticket that has rockfish as the primary species to be a directed landing. This is somewhat misleading since several vessels land the incidental rockfish caught in the halibut or sablefish fisheries on their miscellaneous finfish gear card.

### Management

There are currently no regulations concerning rockfish in Region I. Proposal number 242 seeks to establish a small closure area on the outer coast of Baranof Island. The purpose is to provide an area exempt from directed rockfish fishing so that we can study natural variability in a rockfish population without having to compensate for fishing mortality. The Baranof site was selected for three reasons:

- 1) It encompasses an area included in Rick Rosenthal's Alaska Coastal Research - ADF&G cooperative reefish study which has been ongoing since 1980.
- 2) It is the only established study site that does not have a record of directed rockfish landings and would be the least disruptive of existing fisheries.
- 3) It is on the south end of the Baranof-Chichagof coastline. Since most larval drift is northward along the outer coast, a southern site would act as a reproductive reservoir and should help repopulate areas to the north if overfishing occurs.

Unfortunately, the proposed closure will work only with fishermen's cooperation. One of the most productive Sitka fishermen has spoken out publicly against the proposal and both the Port Alexander and Sitka Advisory Committees have voted against the proposal.

Copies of Alaska Coastal Research reports on the study are available on request. They provide good baseline data on the nearshore rockfish communities.

As mentioned in previous reports rockfish are long-lived, slow growing fish. Most species do not mature or reach market size for up to ten years. This factor makes them vulnerable to over harvest and slows recovery if overharvest occurs. For these reasons, target fisheries should be monitored closely as they develop.

We hope to intensify port sampling to detect changes in length and species composition. We will also provide for sub-area reporting in our catch reporting system and ask fishermen to provide more accurate catch area information.

#### Projection

We expect rockfish catches to increase slightly over the next few years unless major market or gear breakthroughs develop, the catch will probably not exceed 0.8 million pounds in the near future. We predict between 0.5 million and 0.75 million pounds will be harvested in 1983.

## TRAWL FISHERIES

### Introduction

In past reports that trawl fisheries for flounder and pollock have been separated into two sections, one for each species. However, because of trawl regulations imposed this year requiring a special permit and because of lack of effort on pollock in recent years, we feel that this topic is better discussed as a gear rather than species category.

### Management Unit

Trawl fisheries have been limited in recent years due to lack of a local market. Starry flounder, the major flatfish species in Southeastern, have been fished primarily in three locations. Major harvest areas included Port Camden and Hamilton Bay in District 9, Level Island and Duncan Canal in District 6, and the Stikine Flats in District 8. Landings have also been made from Shaken Bay and lower Rocky Pass in District 5, Anita Bay in District 7, Seymour Canal and Taku Inlet in District 11, Hood Bay in District 12 and Peril Straits and adjacent bays in District 13. Limited landings from the Yakutat area have also been made. The fishery occurs on soft bottom in close proximity to shallow mud or sand flats.

The pollock fishery has occurred in inside waters with most of the harvest from Frederick Sound. A limited harvest was taken in Icy Strait in the spring of 1982.



### Catch

Starry flounder landings for the 1981-82 season totaled 330,600 pounds of which 204,400 pounds were taken in 1981 and 126,200 pounds in 1982. This is below the 1980-81 harvest of 556,000 pounds and very close to the 344,000 pounds taken in the 1979-80 season.

Pollock landings totaled only 55,000 pounds in 1982 spring fishing. More effort is expected to furnish bait for the Tanner crab fishery which opens December 1 this year. An update will be provided in the oral report.

### Gear

Four vessels landed flounder in the 1981-82 season. Two were out-of-state and two were local vessels. All significant deliveries were made out-of-state.

One local vessel which fished flounder was also responsible for the pollock landing.

### Management

Trawl fisheries have been managed by Emergency Order closures in the flounder fishery and unregulated in the pollock fishery up until this year. At the spring Board meeting a regulation proposed by the staff to require a special permit to trawl in the region was passed. This will give the staff more control over bottom trawl effort to

minimize conflicts with prohibited species catch and other gear types. So far this year two permits have been issued. One vessel was issued a permit for the outer coast in District 13. The vessel sunk after very few insignificant landings of mixed groundfish. One permit has been issued for Icy Strait to fish for crab bait and another permit has been requested. One out-of-state vessel and one local vessel operators have expressed interest in flounder permits but no requests have been received.

The Sitkine Flats were closed to fishing by Emergency Order December 15, 1981 after test fishing showed that CPUE average size and sex ratios were below the parameters set by the staff for that fishery. Less than 20,000 pounds were taken. Very little effort occurred in the Level Island area and the boats were asked to leave the area because of high incidental catches of tanner crab and the presence of crab gear.

During the season, 34 observer days were spent by staff aboard trawl vessels. Forty-seven sets were sampled and over 4,500 fish measured and sexed. Detailed logbook data including CPUE, incidental catch and discard rates was maintained. A progress report was drafted in August and copies are available on request.

A fecundity study was started to determine the relationship between female length and number and size of eggs. It was determined that there is a definite positive correlation between length and fecundity and a slight positive relationship between fish length and egg size. A report will be available later this year.

Fishermen have been very cooperative in the trawl fisheries with both the Department logbook and observer programs. Data collected in those programs will provide a basis for permit issuance in the future.

### Projection

Other than the limited bait market there is no local market for trawl caught fish. As long as that situation exists in the region, pollock offer the greatest potential but we expect total catch to be less than 200,000 pounds in 1982 even if the two out-of-state boats fish bait through December. We do not anticipate large catches to occur in 1983 unless a local market is established.

We have received word that a large trawler may fish rockfish on the outer coast. With perch stocks as low as they are and the rough bottom, we would not expect trawl harvests of over 0.5 million pounds to occur in that fishery. There is more potential in the Yakutat area.

The flounder fishery is expected to continue at a low level due to poor stock conditions and distance from market. Harvest is not likely to exceed 0.5 million pounds during the 1982-83 season.

Other groundfish including skates, Pacific cod and sculpins will be marketed as part of the bait fishery. Catch of those species could approach 250,000 pounds if the demand is high.

## PACIFIC COD

### Management Unit

Pacific cod are harvest incidental to troll, longline and trawl fisheries for other species throughout the region. Target fisheries using sunken gillnets and longline gear occurred in Districts 11 and 14 again this year.

### Catch

Pacific cod catch through October totaled 89,000 pounds. The total 1982 catch should be under 100,000 pounds compared to 82,000 pounds landed in 1981 and 174,000 pounds in 1980.

There was only one active participant in the sunken gillnet fishery in 1982 and landings of less than 10,000 pounds were reported. The directed longline fishery for bait was slightly more successful and over 20,000 pounds were taken. Virtually all of these fish were sold round to Tanner crab fishermen as bait. The remainder of the catch is considered incidental to other fisheries including halibut and rockfish longline and salmon troll fisheries. It is assumed that discard and personal bait use exceeds the reported catch for this species. No attempt is made to determine the number of vessels that landed cod.

## Management

No regulations are currently in effect. Proposal number 243 to eliminate the sunken gillnet fishery is partially in response to the continued decline of CPUE observed in the target fishery in the Juneau area. CPUE declined steadily from 45 cod/100 fathoms in 1979 to 5 cod/100 fathoms in 1982. Table 3 is a summary of the catch in the Juneau fishery from 1979-1981. As you can see, as CPUE of cod decreased, the incidental catch of other species expressed as a percent of the total harvest increased. Prohibited species including halibut, salmon, and crab made up nearly 15% of the total catch in 1981. That is not a best blend or extrapolated total, but the actual logged catch. Actual catch of prohibited species may have been even higher since we have noticed that incidental catch seems to increase when an observer is onboard.

The Board asked the staff last year to make recommendations for the sunken gillnet fishery which has been an experimental fishery since 1977. After considering all the data included the Ketchikan experimental fishery, the Juneau fishery and log data from attempts to use the gear elsewhere in the region, the staff has concluded that this is not a viable gear type. The risk to other resources is so great that it is our recommendation to delete the provision to allow the use of sunken gillnets in Region I.

Cod landings incidental to other fisheries continued to be low compared to past seasons. Interviews with longline fishermen suggest that adult cod stocks are still low throughout the region.

This low point in abundance may be a cyclic phenomenon or an indication of overharvest. There are some indications of increased abundance of young cod in the region, but these will most likely not reach marketable size until 1983 or 1984.

### Projection

Catches will increase slightly over the next year if the bait trawlers in Icy Strait are successful. I do not anticipate landings over 150,000 pounds in 1983.

### LINGCOD

No target fisheries on lingcod occur in the region and they are harvested incidental to the coastal troll, longline and jig fisheries. Projected landings through 1982 should reach 60,000 pounds. The 1981 harvest of 84,000 was the highest in recent years, almost double the 1980 harvest of 43,200 pounds. Annual catch records indicate that lingcod stocks are well below the level that sustained annual harvests above 80 thousand pounds in 1972, 1973 and 1975. Recent communication with other agencies indicates that lingcod stocks are beginning to rebuild after a low cycle coastwide. We predict a slight increase in harvest in 1983 but total landings are not likely to exceed 85,000 pounds.



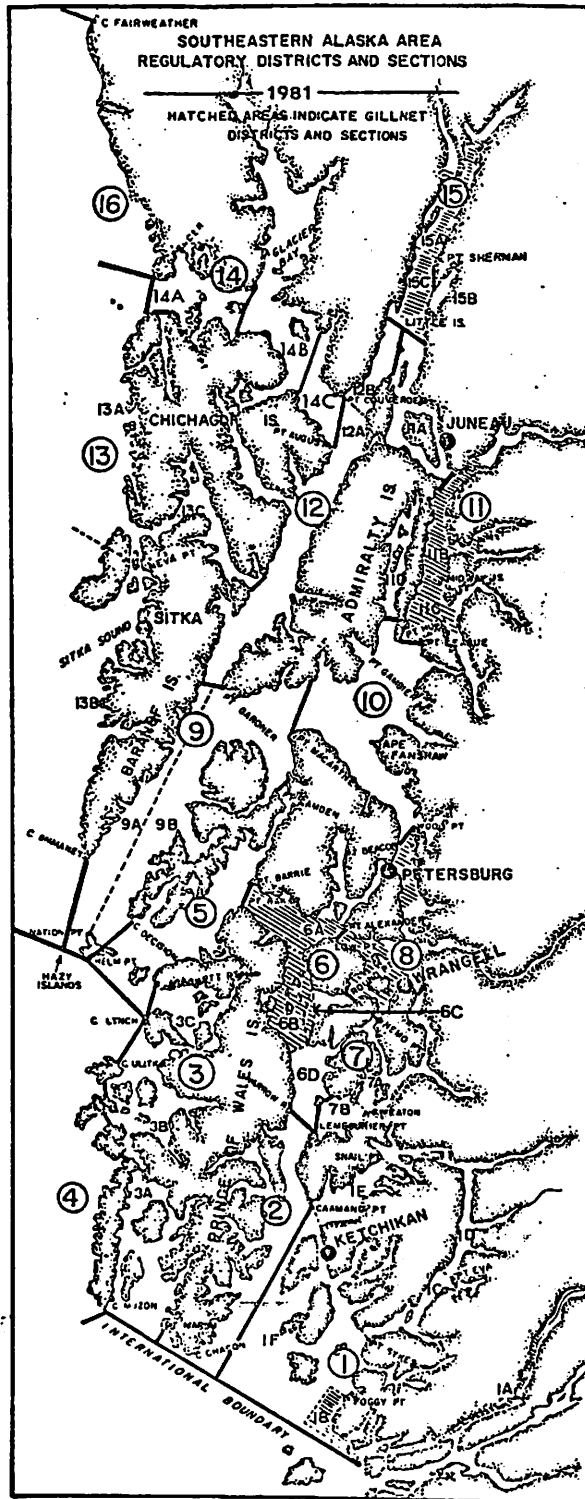


Figure 2. Southeast Alaska area regulatory districts and sections.



Table 1. Region I Commercial Harvest and Value of Major Groundfish Species 1981-1982.

Species	Mean Catch Thousands of Pounds	Year of Landings	1981	1981	1981	1982	1982	1982
			Catch In Thousands of Pounds	Ex-vessel Price Per Pound	Value In Thousands of Dollars	Catch In Thousands of Pounds	Ex-vessel Price per pound	Value In Thousands of Dollars
Sablefish	2,230	14	2,745.0	.54	1,482.3	4,500	.70	3,150
Flounder <sup>2/</sup>	586	11	331.0	.25	82.8	350	.25	87.5
Pollock	589	7	3.0	.35	1.1	75	.25	18.8
Rockfish (all species)	233	14	622.3	.30	186.7	550	.40	227.5
Pacific cod	119	14	82.9	.30	24.9	100	.35	35
Lingcod	62	14	83.8	.35	29.3	75	.40	30
Others	--		71.8	.25	18.0	125	.25	36.3
Totals	3,819	.	3939.8		1825.1	5775		3580.1

1/ Projected harvest based on known fishing activity.

2/ By season, i.e. 1980 is 1980-81. Starry flounder comprise 99% of landings. Does not include landings made from September-December 1981-82.

Source: Catch information - ADF&G fish ticket computer stat. run and WDF groundfish reports.  
Price information - fish tickets.

Table 2. Summary of Domestic Sablefish Catch in the Eastern Gulf of Alaska, Jan.-Oct. 1982.

Area	No. of Boats	Landings Round Wt.(mt)	% of Large Fish (over 5 lbs.)
S.E. Outside <sup>1/</sup>	69	1308	66.1
Chatham <sup>2/</sup>	38	502	62.4
Clarence <sup>3/</sup>	14	188	46.0
S.E. Total <sup>1/</sup>	62	1998	63.2
Yakutat (INPFC area)			
E. 140 W. <sup>3/</sup>	28	386	65.7
W. 140 W. <sup>3/</sup>	15	231	65.1
Yakutat Total <sup>3/</sup>	33	617	65.5
Eastern Gulf Total	95	2614	--

- 1/ Preliminary
- 2/ Final
- 3/ Fishing Continues

Table 3. Number and Percent of Major Species Groups Landed in the Region I Sunken Gillnet Pacific Cod Fishery from Vessel Logs, 1979-1981.

Year	Fathoms Set	P. Cod No. (%)	Sculpins No. (%)	Pollock No. (%)	Hallbut No. (%)	King Salmon No. (%)	King Crab No. (%)	Tanner Crab No. (%)	Sablefish No. (%)	Other No. (%)
1979	10,850	4865(76)	692(11)	310(5)	32(.5)	28(.4)	5(.1)	107(.1)	37(.1)	310(5)
1980	51,180	7672(58)	2514(19)	943(7)	728(5)	31(.2)	63(.4)	325(2)	63(.4)	905(7)
1981	34,925	3189(41)	1257(16)	1306(17)	683(8.7)	9(.1)	47(.6)	348(4.4)	75(.9)	928(12)

Notes:

1. The "other" category includes flounders, sole, skates, herring, prowlfish, poachers and snailfish.
2. Most halibut caught are under 10 pounds and mortality is thought to be less than 25%.
3. Mortality on crab varies according to handling and is thought to range from 10-30%.
4. Mortality on king salmon is 100% and over 50% on sablefish.
5. Most prohibited species are caught during exploratory fishing and is much lower when fishing of concentrations of cod.

Gentlemen of the council -

My name is Wilbur Kim. I am the owner-operator of the Aloha, a fifty three foot longliner. I have been longlining blackcod for the past six years, mainly from Cape Addington to 140°.

I am concerned about the conflict of my gear with pot gear on these fishing grounds. The bottom in this area is very rugged which seems to cause a high incidence of pot loss.

I believe This is in part due to the fact that gear is sometimes left on the grounds when the boats leave ~~the~~ and go to town. With our weather conditions many times the gear is left unattended too long and is chafed off. This, and other lost pots have a ~~detrimental~~ negative effect on my fishing efforts. ~~to really~~ If I run into them with my gear, I end up losing it. My gear ~~that~~ is not strong enough to lift the pot gear. I have lost gear this way several times.

After encountering the lost pot gear, we then are aware of where it is so can avoid it in the future. ~~Letter~~ <sup>Letter</sup> but this costs us some of our better grounds. The amount of <sup>fishing</sup> ground in this area



have

is not tremendous and ~~the~~ ~~there~~ there has been relatively few pot ~~to~~ into taking out here and already a considerable amount of ground has been pre-empted by last year with an increase in the efforts of pot fishermen, if it is allowed to continue, ~~it~~ it will be just a matter of time until ~~I can no longer~~ a longer can no longer effectively fish these grounds).

We have been told by <sup>(by fishermen)</sup> some pot that pot fishermen generally retrieve any lost gear.

In this area, that has obviously not been the case. In fact, this spring I was deliberately set down by a pot boat.

As I would like to point out again,

the regardness of the bottom here is not conducive to good pot fishing and for this reason, should pot fishing be allowed to continue, our fishing grounds in this area will be completely pre-empted.

Thankyou for your consideration.

Respectfully,

William Oles





**SITKA SOUND SEAFOODS, INC.**  
*Seafood Processors*

Box 830, Sitka, Alaska 99835  
Phone: (907) 747-~~6662~~ 747-~~6663~~  
6662 6663

Dec. 4, 1982

Mr. Jim Branson  
Executive Director  
NPFMC  
Box 3136DT  
Anchorage, Ak. 99510

Dear Mr. Branson:

Sitka Sound Seafoods would like to go on the record as being in favor of the proposal before you to prohibit pot fishing for black cod between the Latitude of Cape Attington and 140 degrees W. Longitude, for the following reasons:

1. The blackcod fishermen in the Sitka area have made a tremendous effort in the past few years to improve the quality of their product and we believe we are starting to see those efforts pay off. The 80-85¢ price we have seen all of this season was in large part because of the good reputation of Alaskan (longline) blackcod versus other (trawl or pot) blackcod. Sitka Sound refuses to buy pot caught because of it's poor quality. Allowing pot-fishing, we believe, would harm the reputation of Alaskan sablefish in general.
2. The waters off S.E. Alaska and farther north are traditional longline grounds and this fishery means a lot to the economy of Sitka and S.E. Ak. We have over 20 medium and small size blackcod vessels that home-port Sitka. Volume through Sitka Sound this year has been 1.5 million # and much of it is bought during the slower months of the year, providing work for our local employees at times when there is no other product to run.
3. Our final point is that we are afraid that pot-fishing could effectively exclude the hook and line fishery. We have already seen much of the grounds off Kruzoff Is. near Sitka, made unusable due to strings of pot gear that have been lost. There have also been incidents of lost longline gear resulting from conflicts with pot gear this past summer.

We consider future pot-fishing off S.E. Alaska a serious problem if allowed to continue. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,   
Harold Thompson-Plant Mgr.

November 23, 1982

Mr. Robert W. McVey  
Director  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
709 West 9th Street  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Bob:

I would like to comment on the proposal to close portions of Southeast Alaska to pot fishing for Sablefish.

I have been longlining Sablefish both inside and outside waters between Cape St. Elias and Dixon Entrance since before statehood, at least 1955. In the earlier years I was a crewman on various vessels, then later as my own boss in 1960. I have personally been responsible for the landing of probably five million pounds of Sablefish in the last twenty-five years, some years good, and some not so good. We have seen the coming and going of foreign fleets that more or less drove us off the grounds for a few years due to saturation of gear and disregard for U.S. longliners.

Then, with the help of the MFCMA and the MPFMC we longliners got rid of the foreign fleet here off Southeast and during these years past we, the U.S. longliners, have been busy working towards improved quality and marketing, many times spending our own money in this regard. We have shortened up our trip length or time on the ground and improved on-board handling practices at our own expense therefore developing a better image of longline-caught Sablefish, especially those caught in the Southeastern Alaska region.

As we were doing all these things there has been over the years an attempt to break into the Sablefish fishery with pots and/or crab-type operations -- we learned many years ago that pot gear and longline gear don't mix on the same ground. Most of the area off Southeast Alaska has just a narrow band of ground that is inhabited by schools of Black Cod commercially valuable to the fishery and with very few exceptions both types of gear could not operate at the same time, and with the superior size of the lines and weight of the pots, the longliners would be forced to leave and either find other grounds or tie up.

This brings up an interesting question. Who has the grandfather rights? Longliners have been fishing here for years and years. We have developed the fishery, we have politically removed the foreigners -- and we are continuing to strive for conservation of the resource and

Page Two  
November 23, 1982  
Mr. Robert W. McVey

better management -- personally I don't remember any pot Sable fishermen involved with any of these things. One other very important thing to remember also is we, the Southeast Alaska longliners, live here in this area, pay taxes here, and are deeply concerned about the future of our fishery. Also, we are talking about employing from 2-6 men per boat and the longline fleet numbers about 100 vessels which operate out of Southeast Alaska. So, we are talking about making at least a part-time living for several hundred people compared to a few pot boats with 3 or 4 crew members. So I think there is also an economic and social aspect to the decision to ban pots off Southeast Alaska.

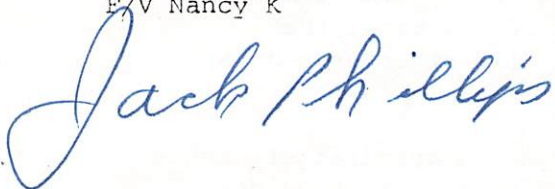
The last concern I have is quality. The pot fishermen have argued that ALFA has started a rumor or stories about the less than desirable qualities of pot caught Black Cod.

To set the record straight -- longliners were told not to plan on going into pot fishing Black Cod if we wanted to continue our high prices and we were told this by all the major buyers on the Pacific Coast, not only Alaska, but Washington, Oregon, and California. I personally have seen documents pertaining to this from major buyers to fishermen's organizations and can prove it if I have to. All major buyers of Sablefish prefer longline-caught fish because of quality. They will take pot-caught if necessary to fill orders but would then use longline-caught to bring up the quality to market standards. I don't really think there is a need to go any further on this particular argument but it is a fact.

All this I think points to a need for management to take a hard look at all reasons for banning pot fishing for Black Cod off Southeast. We have a social and economic impact to an existing fleet and, in my opinion, we are just learning proper biological management of a fishery resource that has been harvested historically by longliners.

Sincerely,

Jack D. Phillips  
E/V Nancy K



JDP:btm



5

TO: Members of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
FROM: Tom Stewart  
DATE: Dec. 7, 1982  
SUBJECT: Sablefish Pot Gear

I live in Petersburg and fish for sablefish as well as several other species. I would like to briefly reaffirm the position I took and testified on at the July, 1982 NPFMC meeting in Anchorage. My position is that the use of pot gear for Sablefish should be prohibited from Cape Addington to 140 degrees west longitude. The justification is as follows:

(1) The grounds where sablefish are caught in this area are of such a steep, narrow and rugged nature that the use of pots is difficult at best. Lots of pots are lost, thus preemting the grounds from other gear users. Strong currents in some of this area further increase the chance of lost gear, such as the mouth of Chatham Straits and Cross Sound. I know about lost gear because I did fish sablefish with pots in 1975 and lost 51% of my pots. There are several areas where pot gear has been lost that preemts the use of longline gear already. These areas are off Sitka Sound and Cape Edgecombe, also Salisbury Sound and Slocum Arm. There may be other areas that I am unaware of. I do know that so much pot gear was lost off Cape Muzon that to longline there now you have to make very short sets to minimize the chance of becoming entangled with lost pots and losing longline gear.

(2) Sablefish caught in pots is of low quality and doesn't yield a high price in the market place. Icicle Seafoods and Whitney-Fidalgo in Petersburg and Sitka Sound Seafoods refuse to buy pot caught sablefish.

Thankyou for your attention on this matter, respectfully yours,

*Tom Stewart*

Tom Stewart

I

BEFORE THE NORTH PACIFIC  
FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

STATEMENT RE SABLEFISH  
GULF OF ALASKA GROUND FISH  
FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN  
AMENDMENT #11

December 1982

My name is Henry Haugen and I appear on behalf of several vessels engaged in the sablefish fishery on the West Coast, including Southeast Alaska, utilizing pot gear. Before the Council is a clarification of previous action regarding the use of pots for the domestic sablefish fishery off Southeast Alaska.

The basic question is whether or not pots should be banned as a conservation measure. This in turn requires an examination of two points - lost gear and size of sablefish caught by this gear.

I have ~~been~~ reviewed data for an active pot fishing vessel operating off Washington and Southeast Alaska for the last three years with the following results:

<u>TOTAL NUMBER OF POTS PULLED</u>	<u>TOTAL POTS LOST</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE LOST</u>
57,450	195	0.33%

No attempt was made to identify the cause of the losses, but a number (probably the majority) were lost to foreign and domestic trawl operations - that is taken up in bottom trawl nets. Those pots which remain on the bottom are all equipped with biodegradable escape panels and do not "ghost fish."

Biologists have regularly used pots to survey the resource off Southeast Alaska. The JOHN N. COBB has set about 900 pots per year for each of the last five years. There have been no reports of any significant pot losses from those operations. See, for instance, Document D-5 Supplemental, for your July 1982 agenda. Mr. Zinger of the National Marine Fisheries Service informally reports a loss of a total of 8 pots in the four years between 1978 and 1981 out of 3,800 trap sets, or 0.21%

Thus, the number of pots lost is extremely small and cannot be found to have any major conservation impact.

As to the size of fish captured by pots, we believe that pots take larger fish than do either trawls or long-lines. We perhaps have a definitional problem as to what is the desirable size of fish.

According to the Pacific Coast Groundfish Plan, the maximum biomass and economic return occurs at age 5 to 6,

that is an average size of 24 inches (61 cms.), round weight of 5 pounds. According to the data presented in the report accompanying Amendment #11, longline vessels operating in the Eastern Gulf of Alaska take about 60% large sablefish (over 5 pounds) and 40% small sablefish (under 5 pounds). This ratio has remained relatively constant over the past 5 years. A casual examination of the fishing records of the vessels I here represent indicates that the landings of small fish, that is between 3 and 5 pounds, is well under 10% of the total catch. One fish ticket indicates that 25% of the catch was greater than 7 pounds, and in another instance 45% was over 11 pounds. Thus, the information indicates that the hook and line gear catches an excessively large amount of small sablefish, whereas pots take much larger fish.

It should also be noted that both the Plan Maintenance Team and the Scientific and Statistical Committee have not found any conservation reason to recommend to you either a winter closure or making sablefish an exclusive hook and line fishery. (net vs  
now pots)

In conclusion, we believe that you should clarify your earlier actions on Amendment #11 to the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Plan to reflect that there is no conservation ground for reserving the sablefish fishery for hook and line gear only.

*Alon Swenson*  
(B)

COMMENTS IN OPPOSITION TO PROPOSAL #241

NO. 241 PROPOSES TO "POSTPONE THE OPENING OF THE SABLEFISH FISHERY IN THE OUTSIDE DISTRICTS UNTIL MARCH 15, 1983."

The longline vessel ZENITH fishes year around for sablefish and rockfish in the Gulf of Alaska. From this position, the ZENITH owner-operators are opposed to #241 because:

1. It is based on erroneous information; and
2. It is not in the overall best interest of the still developing sablefish fishery.

The assumption that sablefish harvested in the early months of the year are "of lower quality/value" is not substantiated by actual prices offered in the marketplace. Sablefish caught by the ZENITH are exported to Japanese processors who are considered among the most "quality/value" conscious fish buyers in the world. The price indices below are shown to compare prices paid over the past year for ZENITH sablefish caught in Southeast Alaska. They reflect prices for all sablefish four pounds dressed weight and over, and are based on yen paid by the processors, therefore are not affected by exchange rate fluctuations.

Time Fish Caught:	<u>Sep-Nov</u>	<u>Jan-Mar</u>	<u>Apr-May</u>	<u>Jun-Jul</u>	<u>Jul-Aug</u>
Price Index:	71	83	84	82	84

In no way do the above figures indicate a difference in "quality/value" for fish caught during January through March.

It is true that some sablefish have a more "soft" or "jellied" texture than what is considered normal, but in Southeast Alaska fish not fit for sale are very few in number. On the ZENITH usually only one or two fish each day are discarded because they are too "soft" or "jellied". Also, this phenomena cannot only be attributed to or explained by the January and February spawning season. "Jellied" fish are caught throughout the year and various theories on the cause of this still remain. Depth at which the fish live and catching method are but two other theories.

The "jellied" fish problem has been exaggerated and is often used as an excuse for various situations. For example, one very reliable top producing Southeast Alaska boat made a sablefish trip this past July and delivered it to Seattle. When he arrived, the buyer refused the trip because it was "soft" or "jellied". However, the fisherman is sure the quality was fine and remains convinced the real reason the buyer reneged on his original offer was due to a weak market.

To fully develop the U. S. Sablefish fishery, more effort will be required to fully utilize the resource. If more effort cannot be justified because it is not considered economically viable, emphasis should be placed on improving financial return by increasing productivity. This would not require major capital outlays but may be accomplished by adjusting fishing technique and

learning new fishing grounds. Turning Southeast Alaska into a fair weather fishery would not be consistent with this approach and may reduce the incentive for fishermen to improve operating efficiency and productivity. If fishing the early months helps fill the quota by August, some good weather will be left with which to find new grounds. The harsh winter months have more limited fishable days so prospecting new fishing grounds can be accomplished more efficiently during the fair weather summer months.

#### SUMMARY

Proposal #241 is based on misleading information and offers a solution to a marketing problem which does not exist. Proposal #241 says not allowing fishing effort in Southeast Alaska during the early months "will improve the economic viability of the fishery", but it ignores the fact that Gulf-wide the sablefish resource is still underutilized by the U. S. fleet and requires more fishing effort not less. In actuality, the proposal will only serve to limit competition within a framework that will favor particular fishermen, while not providing any tangible benefits to the resource, consumer, or overall fishing industry.

Submitted by:

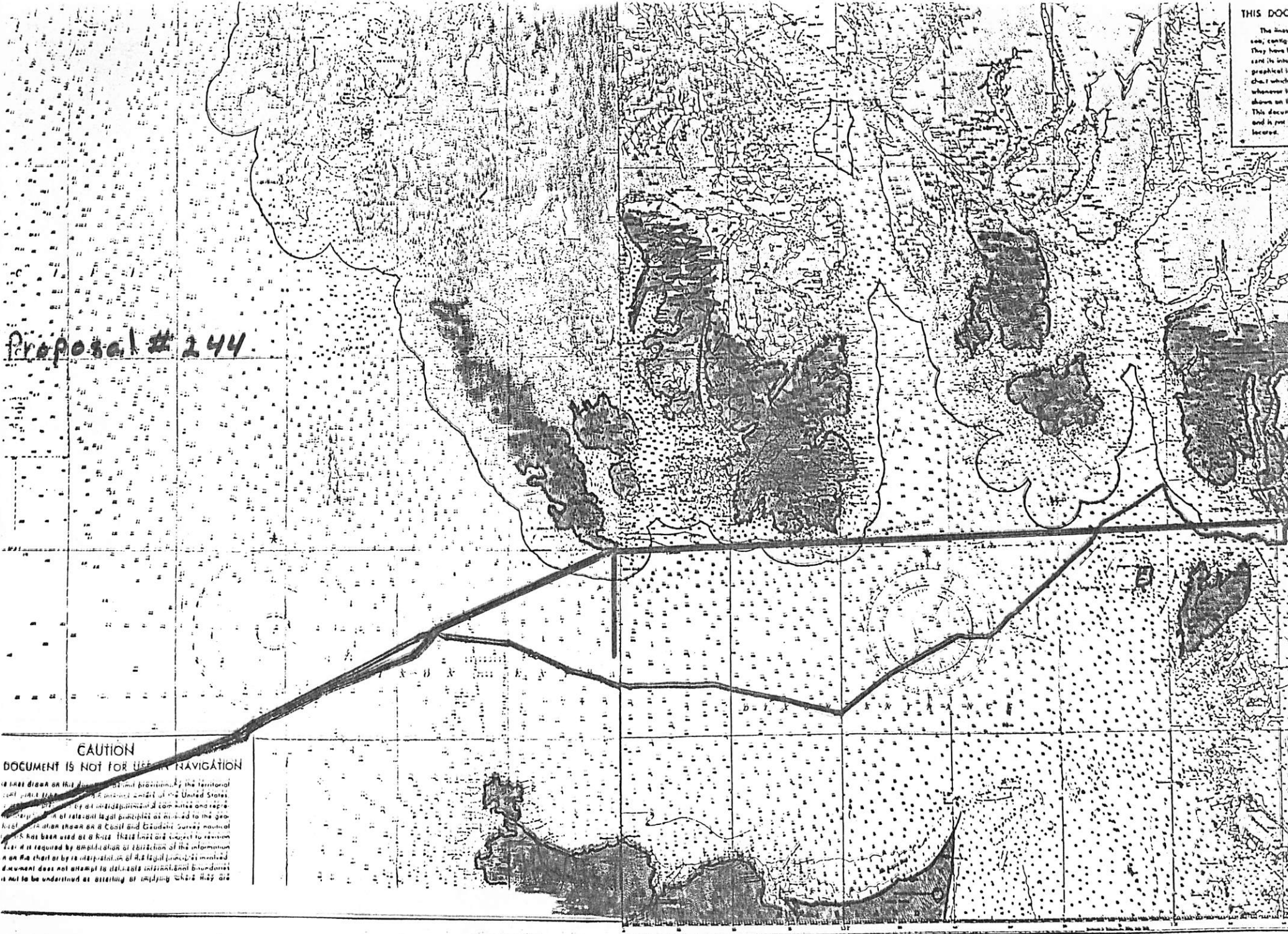
Russell B. Sleipness  
Donald C. Iverson  
Philip J. Werdal

THIS DOCUMENT CONTAINS INFORMATION OF A CONFIDENTIAL NATURE

Proposal # 244

**CAUTION**  
DOCUMENT IS NOT FOR USE IN NAVIGATION

is based upon the latest available information of the territorial jurisdiction of the United States, and is not intended to represent any independent claim and represents a statement of relevant legal principles as applied to the geographical situation shown on a Coast and Geodetic Survey nautical chart. It has been used as a basis. These lines are subject to revision and it is required by application of this information on the chart or by interpretation of this legal principle. This document does not attempt to delineate international boundaries and is not to be understood as asserting or implying what they are.





SOUTHEAST  
BOTTOMFISH

244

5 AAC 33.200. (q) (New Section). FISHING DISTRICTS AND SECTIONS. (Regulation page 136). Clarify the State of Alaska management authority into Dixon Entrance between the international boundary (A-B line) and the U.S. Fishery Conservation Zone boundary.

The proposed regulation reads as follows:

5 AAC 33.200. FISHING DISTRICTS AND SECTIONS.

(q) District 150: all waters south of a line from 54° 42' 29" N. lat., 130° 36' 55" W. long. to 54° 40' 00" N. lat., 131° 45' 00" W. long. to the southernmost tip of Cape Muzon, projecting seaward at the latitude of Cape Muzon and north of the 59 point line established as the boundary of the U.S. Fishery Conservation Zone.

Justification: The area between the A-B line and the established Fisheries Conservation Zone Boundary is not currently managed. The National Marine Fisheries Service is not managing fisheries east of the longitude of Cape Muzon and the Department is not managing south of the A-B line. During 1982 the area was unofficially closed to sablefish fishing by U.S. fishermen on August 2 along with the closure of the outer coast fishery. The Canadian fishery continued in the area until August 22. State management jurisdiction would give the Department the option of managing the area as an extension of the Clarence Strait fishery, the offshore fishery or to coordinate with Canada to manage the area to correspond with the Canadian fishery.

Proposed by: Staff

FAVOR

OPPOSE

Wrangell AC (35)  
Ketchikan AC (40)  
Petersburg AC (43)  
Petersburg Vessel Owners Assn. (53)

Action Taken:

(A)

Regby

1982 ALASKA GROUND FISH FISHERY CATCH PROJECTIONS AND REVIEW <sup>1/</sup>

Again in 1982 we see the continued rapid expansion of the U.S. groundfish fishery demonstrated. The total 1982 catch projection for the domestic fishery of 217,000 mt is 106% greater than the 1981 catch of 105,000 mt. Yet with this rapid growth, the potential for growth within the domestic fishery is tremendous. The U.S. catch is only 14% of the total 1982 projected catch (1,540,000 mt), that is both foreign and domestic catches combined.

The joint venture fisheries will take 188,000 mt in 1982, a 95% gain over 1981 (Table 1) and will contribute 85% of the U.S. catch, a slightly lower proportion than in 1981. The rate of growth for the JV fisheries can be expected to double again in 1983. This geometric rate of increase could be continued up through 1984 if the political and economic climate is favorable. However at this rate the JV fishery would be catching in the neighborhood of 800,000 mt by the end of 1984, one third of the total groundfish OY off Alaska; and it seems likely that this fishery's two fold rate of increase will be reduced during the next several years.

The non-joint venture component of the fishery will take approximately 30,000 mt in 1982, a 1.5 fold increase over 1981. Pacific cod taken in the Bering Sea by salt cod and catcher/processor vessels will provide over 80% of the non-joint venture catch statewide. The shorebased fishery off Kodiak Island has focused primarily on Pacific cod and pollock and will take approximately 3,000 mt in 1982. Vessels based in the Cook Inlet/Prince William Sound area took less than 200 mt of various groundfish, although the first deliveries of sablefish taken in a directed fishery were made this year. A small vessel fishery for rockfish and lingcod, as well as an offshore fishery for sablefish, continues as a potential for this area.

For Southeastern Alaska including the Yakutat area, sablefish remains the species of primary importance. The projected catch for this longline fishery is 2,900 mt, still below the 1979 high of 3,400 mt. Catches through October by area are recorded in Table 2. Although sablefish comprises less than 10 percent of the non-JV catch, its ex-vessel value is essentially equivalent to the ex-vessel value of all other groundfish taken in the non-JV fishery.

With good prices and a precedent setting August 2 closure in Southeastern Alaska, U.S. sablefish fishermen moved into the Yakutat area and will take a projected 800 mt in this area during 1982. Further expansion in the Yakutat area is expected in 1983. The total 1982 catch of sablefish in State waters was approximately 700 mt.

<sup>1/</sup> This report is based on preliminary data and projected catches.

Table 1. Projected Catch (mt) by Species and Region, of the Joint Venture Fisheries in 1982.

Species	Bering Sea	Gulf of Alaska	Total Alaska
Pollock	57,600	74,300	131,900
Yellowfin Sole	17,200	-	17,200
Other flounders	9,000	4,000	13,000
Pacific cod	13,500	200	13,700
Atka mackeral	11,100	-	11,100
Pacific ocean perch	5	3	8
Other rockfish	1	-	1
Sablefish	100	1	101
Other fish	1,100	300	1,400
Total 1982	109,600	78,800	188,400
Total 1981	78,500	17,000	95,400
% Change	+40	+365	+95

1) Data from NMFS, Alaska Region

Table 2. Summary of Domestic Sablefish Catch in the Eastern Gulf of Alaska, Jan.-Oct. 1982. <sup>1/</sup>

Area	No. of Boats	Landings Round Wt. (mt)	% of Large Fish (over 5 lbs.)
S.E. Outside <sup>2/</sup>	69	1308	66.1
Chatham <sup>3/</sup>	38	502	62.4
Clarence <sup>2/</sup>	14	188	46.0
S.E. Total <sup>2/</sup>	62	1998	63.2
Yakutat (INPFC area)			
E. 140 W. <sup>4/</sup>	28	386	65.7
W. 140 W. <sup>4/</sup>	15	231	65.1
Yakutat Total <sup>4/</sup>	33	617	65.5
Eastern Gulf Total	95	2614	

- <sup>1/</sup> Data from ADF&G fish tickets  
<sup>2/</sup> Preliminary  
<sup>3/</sup> Final  
<sup>4/</sup> Fishing Continues

Fig. 1 ALASKA DOMESTIC GROUND FISH HARVEST BY MAJOR SPECIES - ALL AREAS

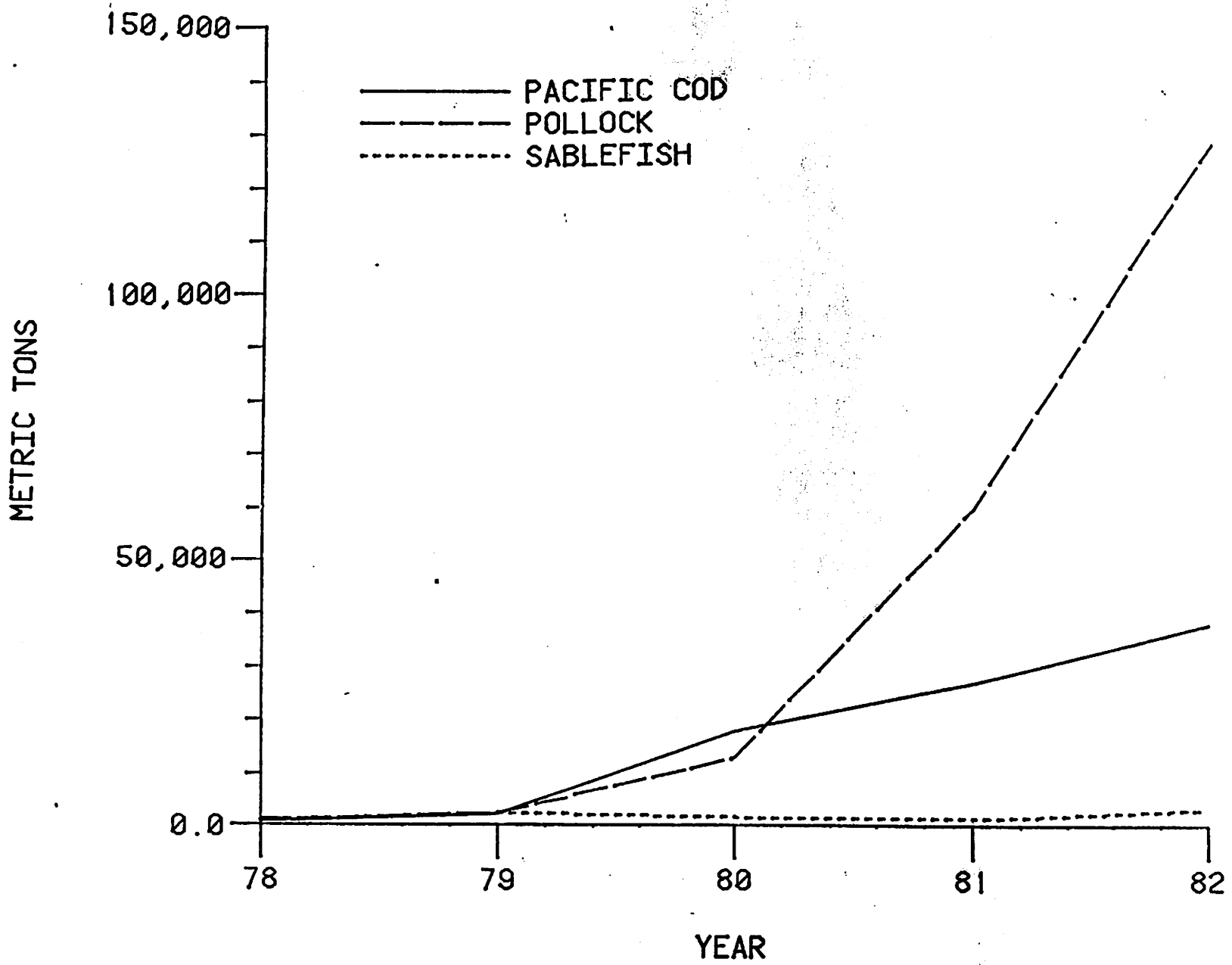


Fig. 2. TOTAL ALASKA DOMESTIC GROUND FISH HARVEST - ALL SPECIES

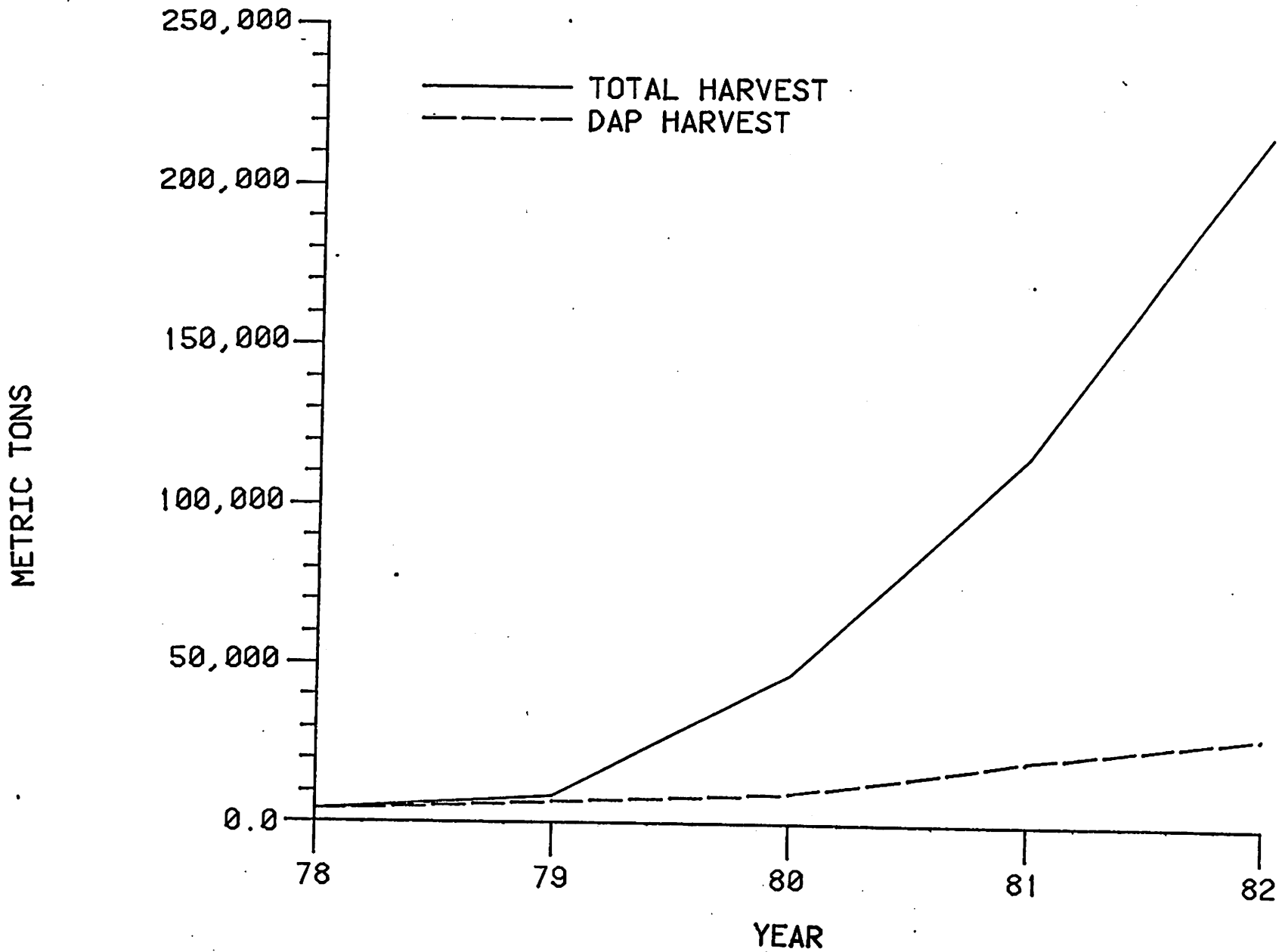


Fig. 3. ALASKA DOMESTIC GROUND FISH HARVEST BY AREA - ALL SPECIES

