

C-6 Sablefish pot longline gear
December 14, 2014

The Council releases the analysis for public review with the following purpose and need and alternatives. Staff should address SSC recommendations as practicable prior to releasing the analysis.

Purpose and Need:

Interactions with sperm whales ~~in~~ throughout the Central and Eastern Gulf of Alaska, and ~~killer whales in the Western Gulf~~ affect 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 developing technological solutions to deter whales and changes in fishing strategies 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 will also reduce the incidental take of seabirds. 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 that could result from allowing pot and longline gear to fish in the same regulatory areas.

Alternative 1. No action.

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.

Twit: useful to provide background in the analysis on various whale deterrents.