



D6 Small Sablefish Release: DMR & Analytical Approach (SSC Only)

February 2024

Action Memo

Council Staff: Sara Cleaver
Other Presenters: Dr. Dan Goethel (AFSC)
Action Required:

1. Review discussion paper
2. Recommend a sablefish DMR or range of DMRs for analysis.
3. Provide feedback and endorse the proposed simulation parametrization and scenarios to be run for evaluating the effects of the proposed action on the sablefish population and fishery.

BACKGROUND

In June 2023, the Council revised its [alternatives](#) for the small sablefish release action (last brought to the SSC/Council for initial review in February 2021) to include an option for a minimum size retention requirement of 22 inches total length. This option would allow for voluntary release of sablefish under 22 inches, which corresponds to roughly 3 lbs dressed weight, and require retention of sablefish ≥ 22 in. Current regulations require sablefish IFQ holders to retain all sablefish, regardless of size. The Council's purpose and need statement describes the Council's interest that providing limited operational flexibility to carefully release sablefish may increase the value of the commercial harvest and allow small fish to contribute to the overall biomass.

There are several reasons for this item to come in front of the SSC at this time:

- Reduce the level of uncertainty in the next iteration of analysis by providing the SSC with the best scientific information available (BSIA) with which to recommend a discard mortality rate (DMR) for sablefish that are caught and released in the IFQ fishery. The DMR is a critical assumption when trying to evaluate potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts of this action.
- Refamiliarize the SSC with this topic and highlight the previous issues with the initial review analysis presented in 2021, which was not approved by the SSC for final action. Bringing information forward at this time may allow for greater efficiency when the SSC receives the larger second initial review analysis (scheduled for June 2024), as this action includes many complex elements and pre-dates newer SSC members.
- Seek SSC approval of and feedback on the analytic approach to undertake for the next iteration of the analysis. The goal of the forthcoming analysis (June 2024) is to provide the SSC with sufficient information to make a final evaluation of the Council's proposed action regarding its effects on the sablefish population, given the data deficiencies and associated assumptions that need to be made.