

Agenda B-5 (a)  
April 1996

**PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF THE SABLEFISH IFQ PROGRAM  
IN TERMS OF SIX CONSERVATION ISSUES**

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This report is a preliminary evaluation of the Sablefish IFQ Program in terms of the following six conservation issues:

1. Ghost fishing
2. Under reporting
3. Exceeding TACs
4. Pressure to increase TACs
5. Spatial and temporal distribution of catch
6. Catch per unit of effort (CPUE)

Some of the work that is underway by others who are involved in the evaluation of the IFQ programs will be integrated into the discussion of these conservation issues in the final report. Examples of that include estimates of under reporting provided by Enforcement and estimates of catch provided by the Restricted Access Management Division of the Alaska Region.

#### Ghost Fishing

There is no information that would allow for estimating the amount of gear losses in the sablefish fishery for 1995 and prior. The Alaska Department of Fish & Game has only collected anecdotal information from the inside waters Chatham Strait sablefish fishery. This anecdotal information is considered very subjective and not applicable to the outside fishery situations.

However, it would be reasonable to assume that the IFQ fishery would result in a reduction of fishing during inclement weather conditions, which would also reduce the amount of gear losses due to weather.

The National Marine Fisheries Service has logbook data that could be a source of information on gear losses. However, this information is not in an electronic database format which could be easily accessed and analyzed at this time.

#### Under Reporting

The current stock assessment methodology being applied to Alaskan sablefish utilizes a modification of the Schnute (1985) delay-difference equation in Stock Reduction Analysis (Kimura 1985). This application was modified to explicitly track estimates of exploitable biomass (from the longline survey), and instead provide estimates of recruitment each year ( $R_t$ ) (Fujioka, 1989). The model assumes no survey measurement error and assigns all variability to recruitment variability. The analysis assumes all sources of population change

can be accounted for by fishing and natural mortality, and growth and recruitment; however, the model occasionally computed negative recruitment when population decreases were greater than could be accounted for by natural mortality and reported catch. Estimates of declines of such magnitude may result from either unreported fishing mortality, underestimated natural mortality, an improper expansion of relative abundance to absolute abundance, random errors in relative abundance measurements, or emigration.

The foreign sablefish fishery ended after 1984 and was replaced by the domestic fishery. While the foreign fishery has had observer coverage since 1977, the domestic observer program was not implemented until 1990. Thus, domestic catches prior to 1990 were unobserved and catch data were based on a combination of the vessels' and processors' reported catch. The unobserved domestic reported catch was also principally landed catch, thus significant information on discards was lacking. Large unexplained declines in sablefish abundance occurred in 1987 and 1990 (Fujioka 1995, Fig. 4.3), with the largest decline (30%) in 1990. While we cannot determine the magnitude or establish a direct impact of unreported mortality, it was a likely factor, especially prior to the implementation of the domestic observer program. Although the domestic observer program is in place, it does not provide complete coverage of the sablefish fleet. The unobserved portion of the fleet is now largely small boats not subject to 100% coverage requirements. While the existence of unreported catches still cannot be ruled out, it is not as likely that significant amounts could be involved. There have not been the large unexplained abundance drops since 1990.

It should be noted that given the several sources of variability noted above, we are not able to separate out what portion, if any, of the unaccounted for population declines might be due to under reported catch. However, in a relative sense, the impact on the assessment of unreported catch was likely greater prior to 1990 than it is now.

### Exceeding TACs

Comparisons of recent annual sablefish hook and line catches relative to the Total Allowable Catches (TACs) are given for the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (Tables X.a and X.b). In the Gulf of Alaska, catches exceeded the TACs in the West Yakutat area in 1992 and 1993, and in 1991 and 1993 in the East Yakutat/Southeast area. In the Central Gulf, the TAC was exceeded in 1993. Total Allowable Catch levels have not been achieved in the Western Gulf in recent years. In 1995, catches from all areas of the Gulf remained below the TACs.

In the Bering Sea, the 1994 catch exceeded the TAC; the 1995 catch was at the TAC level (Table X.b). In the Aleutian Islands, the 1993 catch slightly exceeded the TAC level, but in 1994 and 1995, the catches were 77 and 76 percent, respectively.

There are at least two reasons why the differences between the TACs and reported catches in 1995 probably are not indicative of what they will be as the IFQ program mature. First, the

IFQ program is being modified to help ensure that the IFQs and therefore the fixed gear sablefish TACs will be utilized more fully in the future. Second, over time the transfers of IFQs are expected to decrease the amount of IFQ that is not used.

### Pressure to Increase TACs

Sablefish assessment scientists perceived little or no pressure to increase TAC's during the setting of the 1995 and 1996 ABC's, nor undue resistance to the 22% decrease recommended in the 1996 ABC. From 1991 to 1996 the Plan Teams' recommended ABCs were those recommended by the scientists; these ABCs were accepted by the Council and TACs were set equal to the ABCs. The setting of the sablefish TAC's has been relatively free of industry criticism since conclusion of the foreign fishery, with the only significant criticism since then, occurring during the setting of the 1986 and 1987 ABC's. In the resource assessment document for the 1987 ABC's, the Plan Team responded to specific comments from the trawl industry suggesting that the 1987 recommended ABC was too low. For whatever reason, the concern was no longer expressed.

While there has been increased scrutiny of the assessment, this may have been prompted by the recommended decrease, rather than by the change to IFQ management. The increased scrutiny has resulted in increased efforts to better understand the current methodology and to comment on how improvements might be made in the future, especially in measurement of abundance trends and understanding recruitment. The analysis of logbook data has been specifically requested. The other comments expressed concern about the level of research resources supporting sablefish assessment and expressions of industry providing support of research programs.

### Spatial and Temporal Distributions of Catch

**1995 observer data is not available at this time. It is expected that this data will be available by early summer, 1996.**

The spatial and temporal distributions of observed sablefish longline catches in 1993 and 1994 show concentrated effort along the 200m depth contour line (Figures X.1 and X.2). The data shown represent observed and sampled sablefish sets in which sablefish comprised the largest percentage (by weight) of the groundfish species composition. The data plotted represent the following percentages of the total (retained and discarded) sablefish catches:

Percent of total sablefish hook and line catch represented by observed hook and line sablefish target catches in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands. (Data plotted in Fig. X.1)

Management Area	1993	1994	1995
Bering Sea	2	1	
Aleutian Islands	22	17	

Percent of total sablefish hook and line catch represented by observed hook and line sablefish target catches in the Gulf of Alaska. (Data plotted in Fig. X.2).

Management Area	1993	1994	1995
Western Gulf	37	23	
Central	16	12	
West Yakutat	19	5	
East Yakutat/SEO	1	<1	

Figures X.1 and X.2 illustrate Aleutian Island and Gulf of Alaska data only. The Bering Sea data is very minimal; coverage was less than 5 percent, and not considered informative. The data shown in the charts represent less than 25% of the total sablefish hook and line catches by year and area, except for the 1993 Western Gulf of Alaska data. Thus, caution must be used in interpreting the data. If this data is to be considered representative of the directed hook and line sablefish fishery, one must assume that the small percentage of sets observed are generally representative of the time and areas fished by the unobserved fishery, and that observed vessels fish in the same manner as unobserved vessels. Because of the low level of observer coverage for the sablefish fishery, this data is of limited use for distinguishing changes in fishing patterns because it is not possible to distinguish areas where fishing did not occur as opposed to being unobserved.

The 1993 and 1994 Aleutian Islands data show fishing occurring year-round and throughout the Aleutian chain (Fig. X.1). The greatest concentration of observed hauls occurred in quarters 2 and 3 in 1993 (Fig. X.1c,e) and in quarters 2 and 4 in 1994 (Fig. X.1d,h). Notable areas where observed sets caught more than 1 mt occurred north and south of the chain from Atka Island to the Delarof Islands along the 200m contour (Fig. X.1c,d,e,h). Additionally, there were notable catches southwest of Kiska Island during the second quarter of 1993 (Fig. X.1c), and in Sequam Pass in the fourth quarter of 1994 (Fig. X.1h).

Gulf of Alaska data are only available for the second quarter of 1993 and 1994 as the hook and line sablefish fishery opened April 15 and TACs were generally reached by the end of

June. There was considerably more observed effort in 1993 relative to 1994 (Fig. X.2), despite the larger TAC in 1994 (25,500 mt compared to 20,900 mt in 1993). Fishing occurred along the 200m contour from West Yakutat through the Shumagin area. The East Yakutat/Southeast Outside fisheries are basically small boat fisheries for which there is minimal observer coverage. Fishing also occurred in Shelikof Strait in both years. There were a few observed sets offshore in 1993, presumably on seamounts. No particularly notable fishing areas could be discerned, however there were no observed sets which caught more than 10 mt in the Western Gulf in either year.

### Sablefish CPUE

The sablefish target catch data described above are plotted as CPUE values in units of kilograms per hook. The patterns described above are generally evident with the CPUE data (Figs. X.3 and X.4). In the Aleutian Islands, the greatest concentration of observed hauls overall and hauls with CPUE greater than 0.3 kg/hook occurred in quarters 2 and 3 in 1993 (Fig. X.3c,e) and in quarters 2 and 4 in 1994 (Fig. X.3d,h). Notable areas where observed sets caught more than 0.3 kg/hook occurred north and south of the chain from Atka Island to the Delarof Islands along the 200m contour (Fig. X.1c,d,e,h). Additionally, there were notable catches southwest and southeast of Kiska Island during the second quarter of 1993 (Fig. X.3c); the catch data showed only significant catches southwest of Kiska (Fig. X.1c). The catch data also showed significant catches in Sequam Pass in the fourth quarter of 1994 (Fig. X.1h), which were shown to be catches with lower ( $<0.3$  kg/hook) CPUE values.

Gulf of Alaska CPUE data show the same pattern (or lack of) as the catch data (Fig. X.4). It is interesting to note that while the catches shown in Shelikof Strait fell into the lower catch categories ( $<10$  mt), one of the observed sets actually produced a high CPUE ( $>1.0$  kg/hook).

Although the catch data also showed a lack of higher catches in the Western Gulf, the area did produce some high CPUE values in both years.

## References

Fujioka, J. J. 1989. Sablefish. In T. K. Wilderbuer (editor), Condition of groundfish resources in the Gulf of Alaska region as assessed in 1988. p. 77-91. U.S. Dep. Commer., NOAA Tech. Memo. NMFS F/NWC-165.

Fujioka, J. J. 1995. Sablefish. *In* Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation Report for the Groundfish Resources of the Gulf of Alaska as Projected for 1996. North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, P.O. Box 103136, Anchorage, AK.

Kimura D.K. 1985. Changes to stock reduction analysis indicated by Schnute's general theory. *Can. J. Fish. Aquat. Sci.* 42:2059-2060.

Schnute, J. 1985. A general theory for analysis of catch and age data. *Can. J. Fish. Aquat. Sci.* 42:414-429.

Table X.a. Gulf of Alaska Sablefish Catch and Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for Hook and Line Gear, 1991 to 1995

**EASTERN GULF OF ALASKA**

**West Yakutat (640)**

Year	Catch	TAC	%TAC
			Taken
1991	3,856	4,050	95
1992	3,955	3,740	106
1993	4,319	3,638	119
1994	4,224	4,608	92
1995	3,591	3,895	92

**East Yakutat/Southeast Outside (650)**

Year	Catch	TAC	%TAC
			Taken
1991	5,737	4,950	116
1992	4,713	4,990	94
1993	5,267	5,158	102
1994	6,719	6,783	99
1995	5,317	5,890	90

**CENTRAL GULF OF ALASKA (620 & 630)**

Year	Catch	TAC	%TAC
			Taken
1991	9,241	10,575	87
1992	8,047	9,570	84
1993	9,988	7,688	130
1994	7,518	8,976	84
1995	5,808	6,880	84

**WESTERN GULF OF ALASKA (610)**

Year	Catch	TAC	%TAC
			Taken
1991	1,658	2,925	57
1992	2,143	2,500	86
1993	687	1,624	42
1994	451	1,832	25
1995	1,668	2,080	80



Table X.b. Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Sablefish Catch and Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for Hook and Line Gear, 1991 to 1995

<b>BERING SEA</b>				<b>ALEUTIAN ISLANDS</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Catch</b>	<b>TAC</b>	<b>%TAC Taken</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Catch</b>	<b>TAC</b>	<b>%TAC Taken</b>
1993	643	638	101	1993	2,008	1,950	103
1994	320	270	119	1994	1,613	2,100	77
1995	638	640	100	1995	1,000	1,320	76

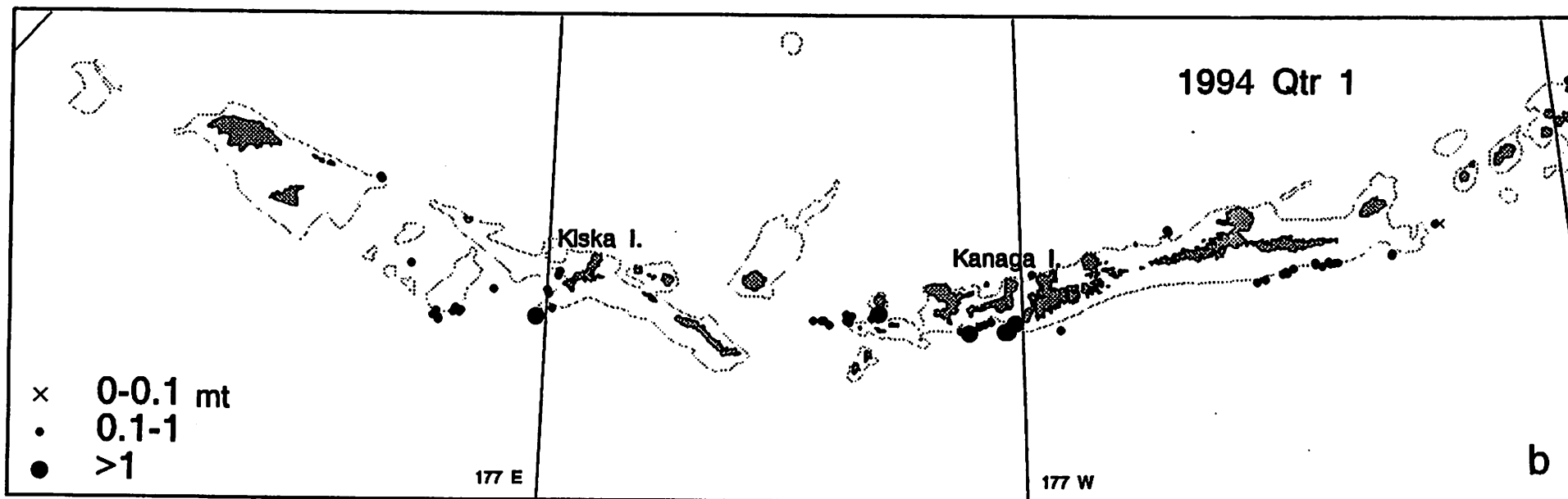
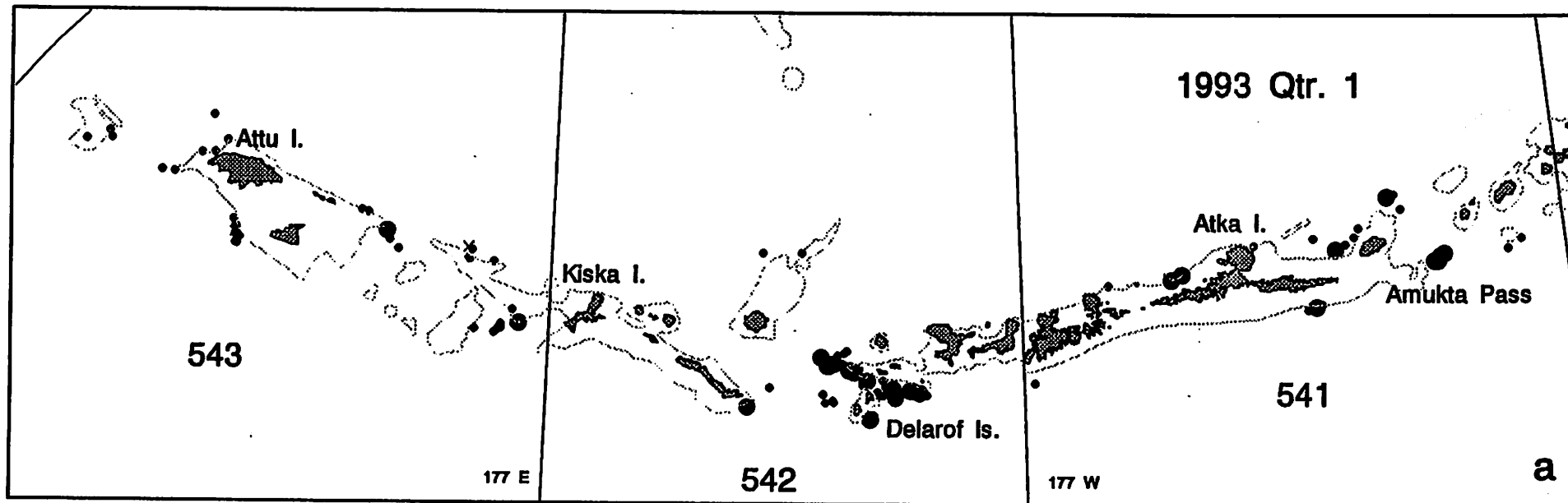


Figure X.1. Locations of observed and sampled sablefish sets in the Aleutian Islands in the first quarters of 1993 and 1994.

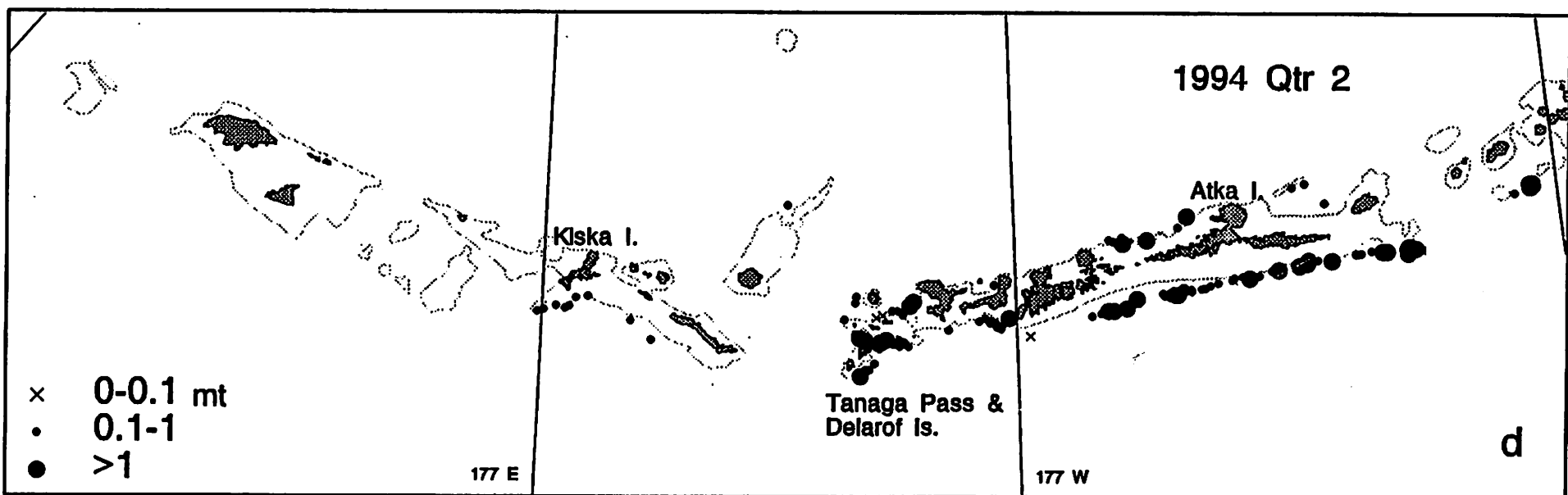
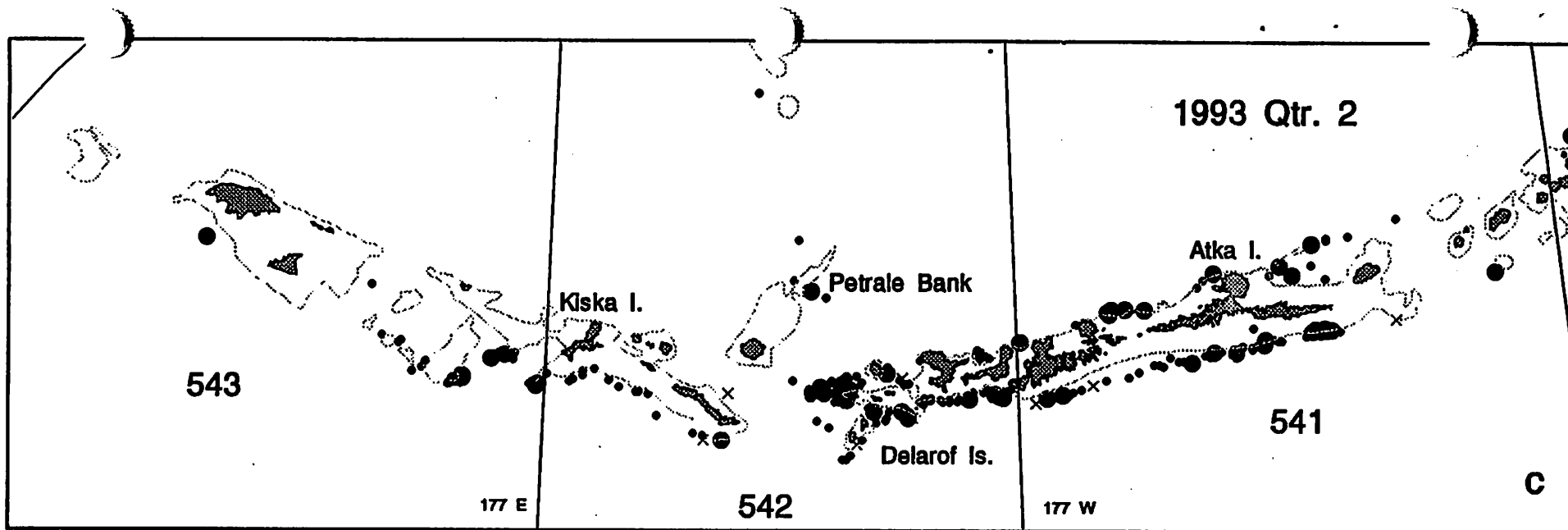


Figure X.1. cont. Locations of observed and sampled sablefish sets in the Aleutian Islands in the second quarters of 1993 and 1994.

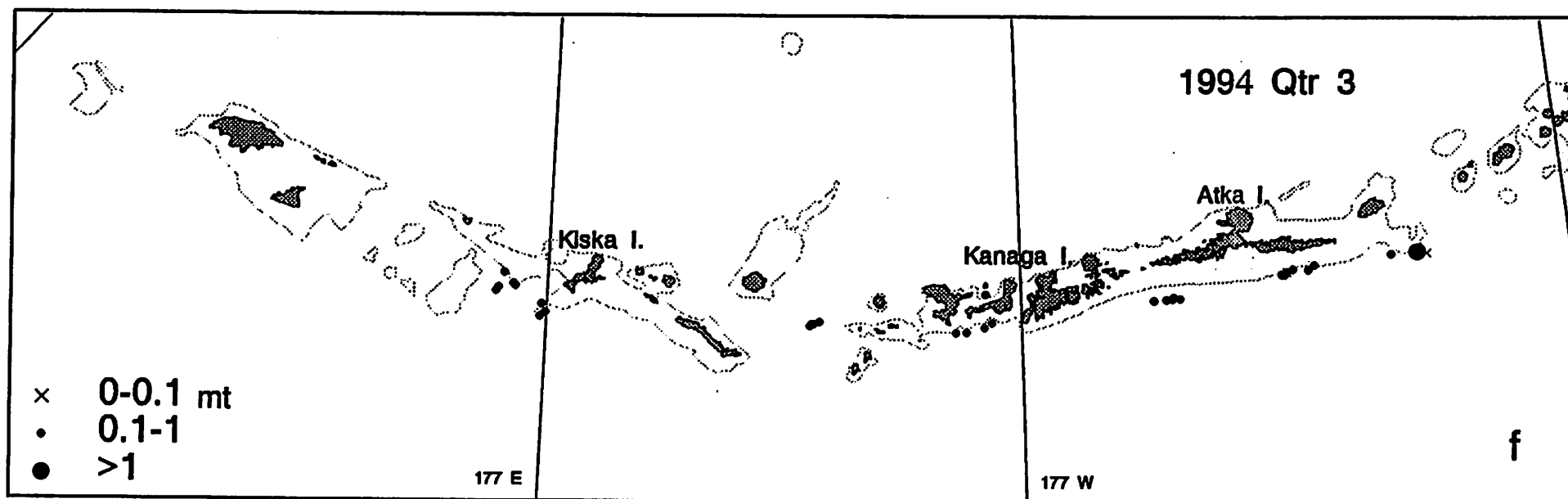
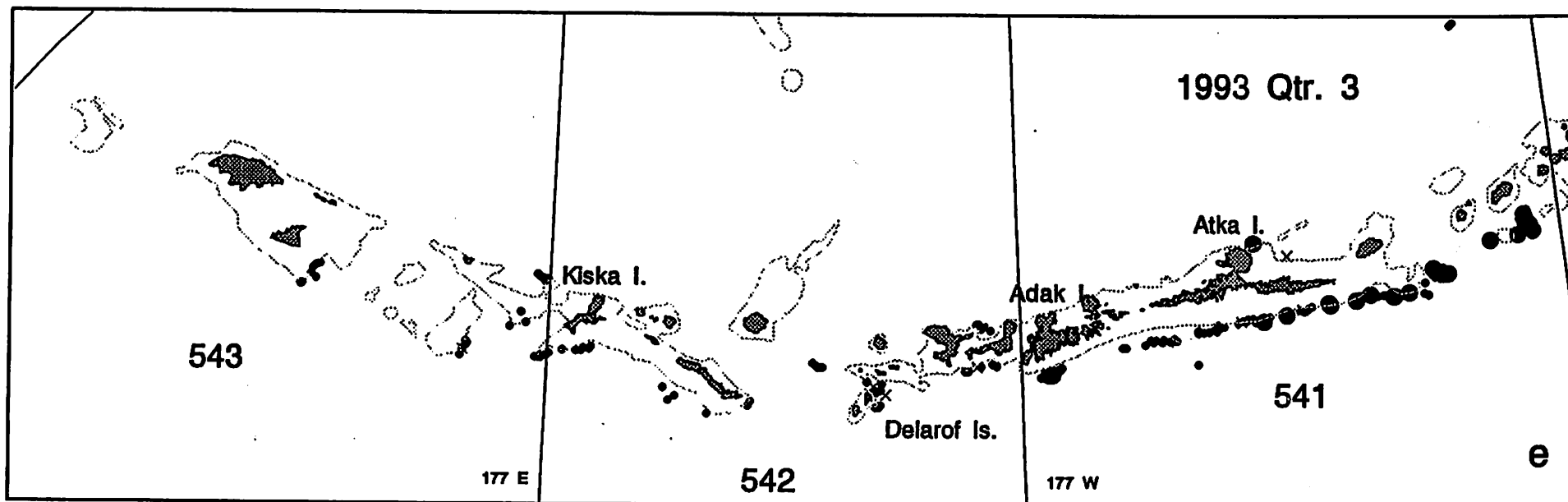


Figure X.1. cont. Locations of observed and sampled sablefish sets in the Aleutian Islands in the third quarters of 1993 and 1994.

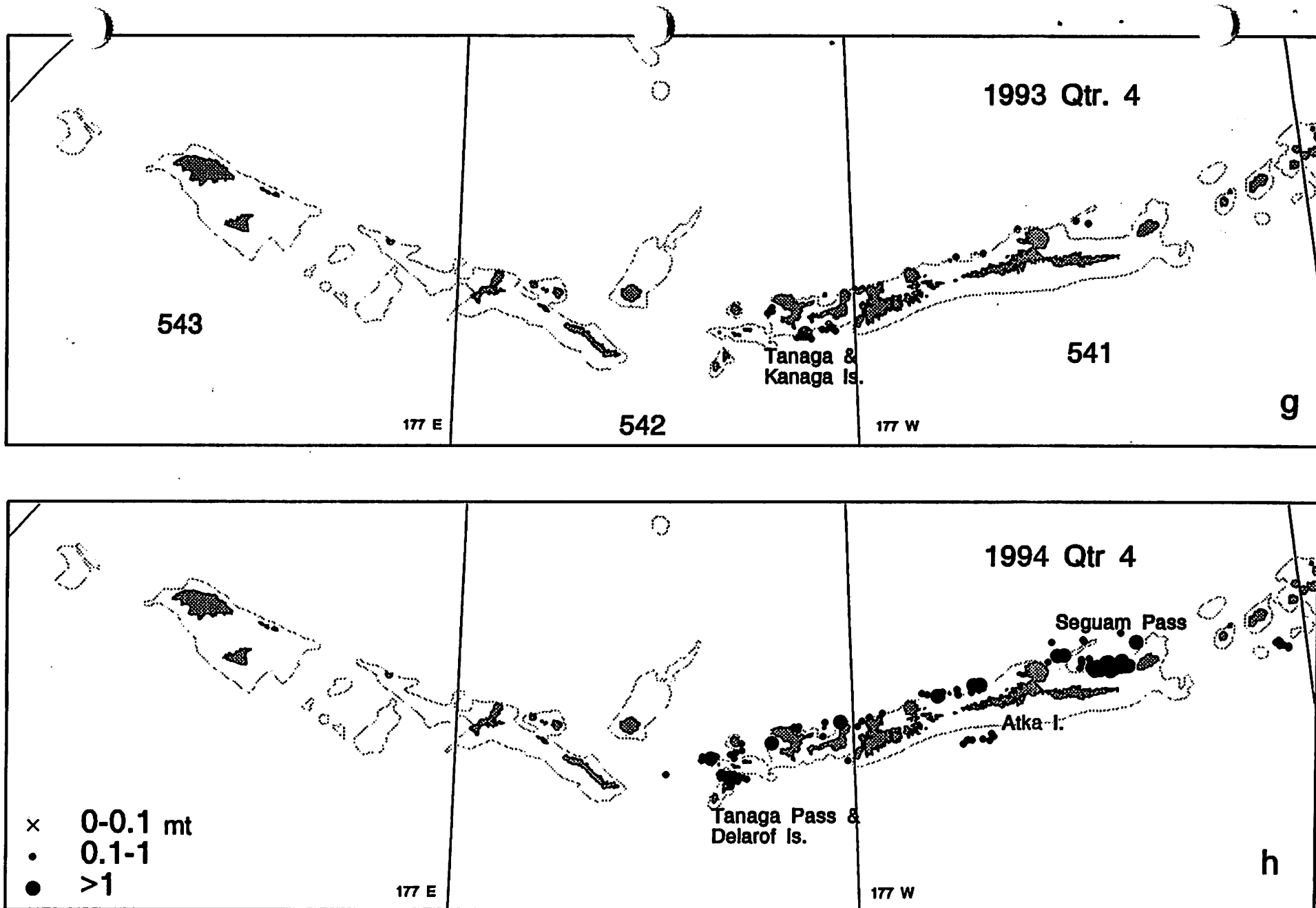


Figure X.1. cont. Locations of observed and sampled sablefish sets in the Aleutian Islands in the fourth quarters of 1993 and 1994.

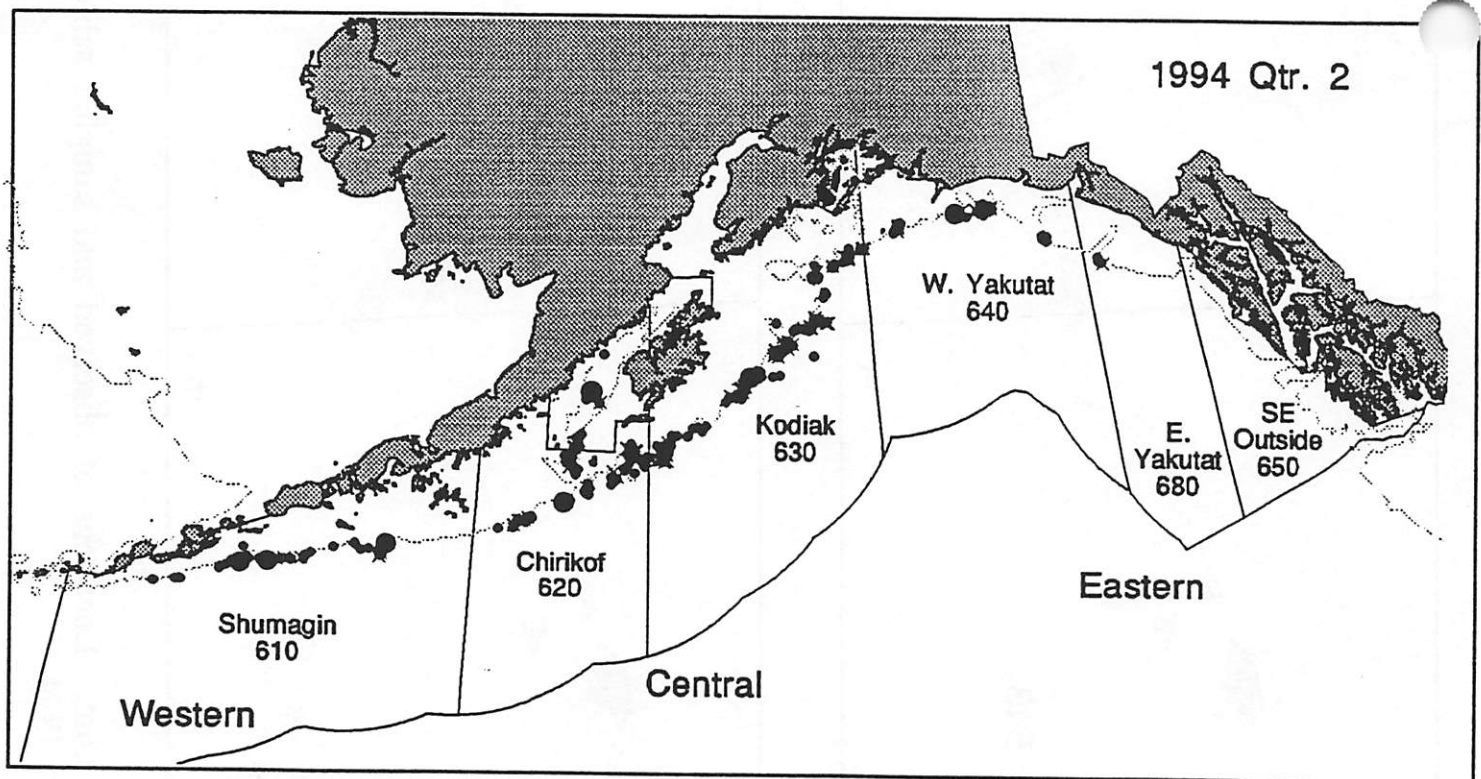
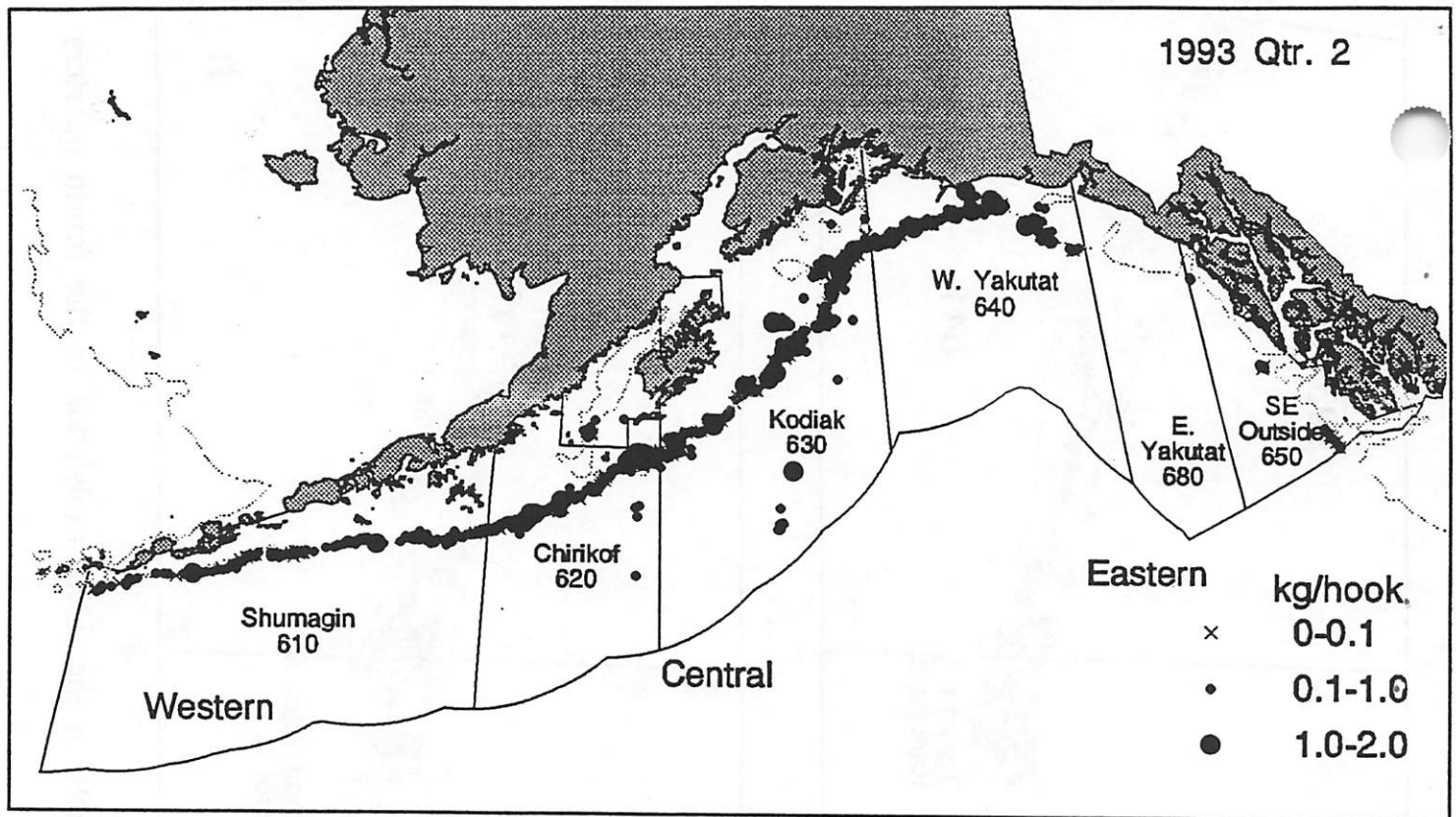


Figure X.2. Locations of observed and sampled sablefish sets in the Gulf of Alaska in the second quarters of 1993 and 1994.

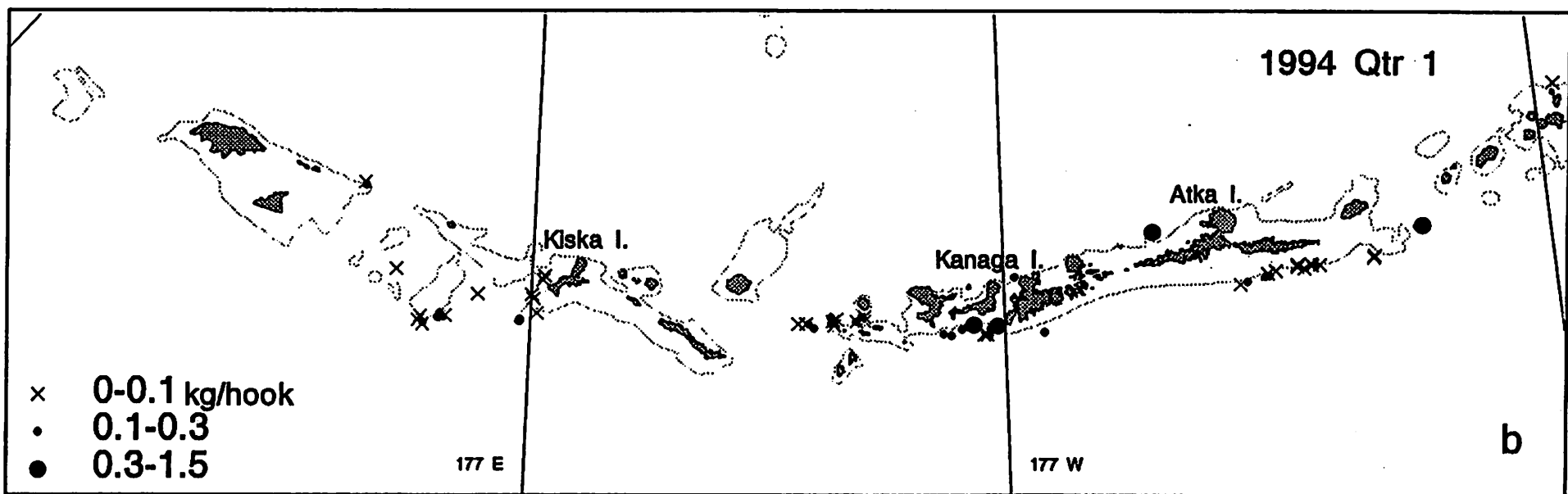
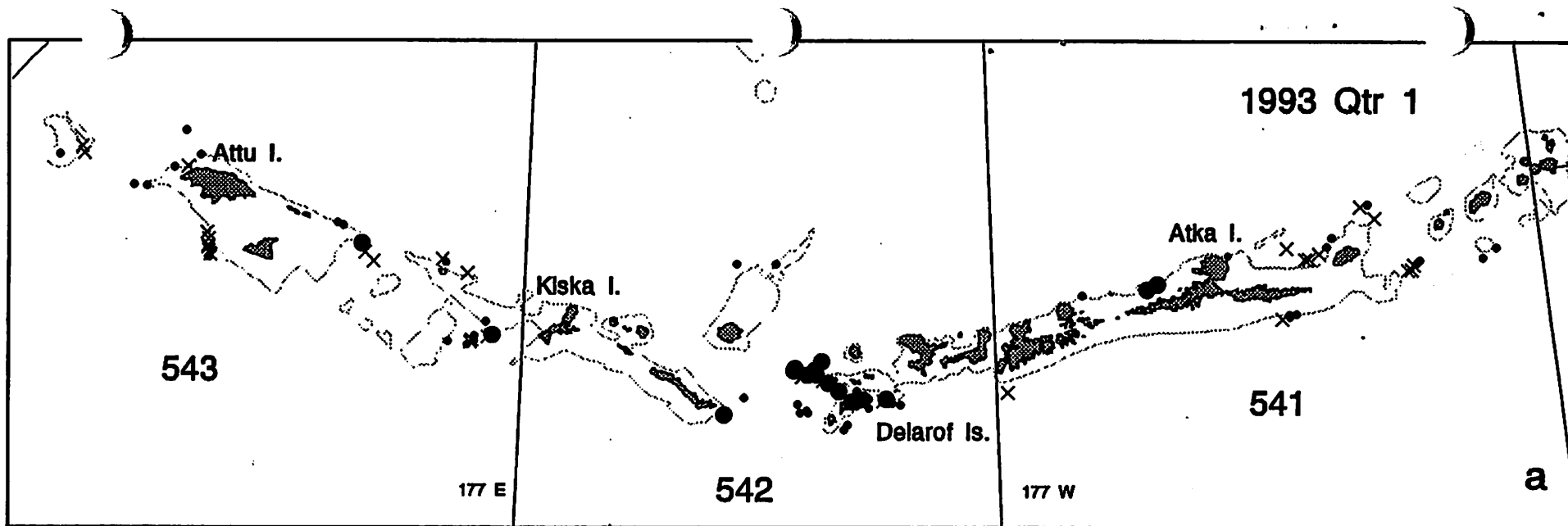


Figure X.3. Locations of observed and sampled sablefish sets in the Aleutian Islands in the first quarters of 1993 and 1994.

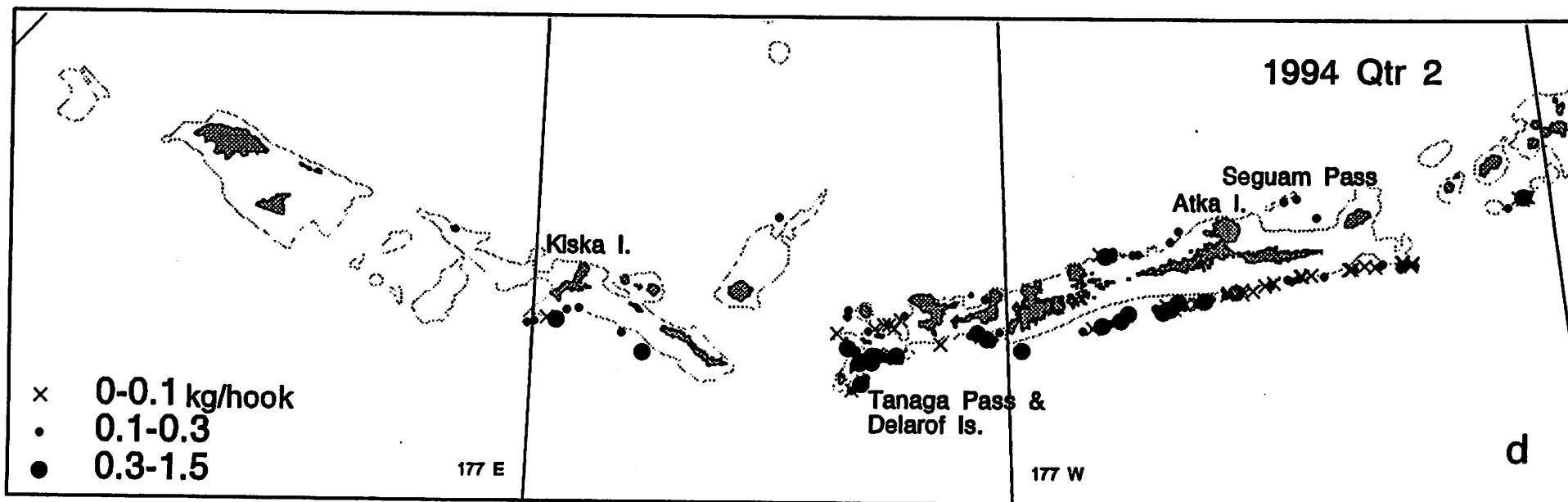
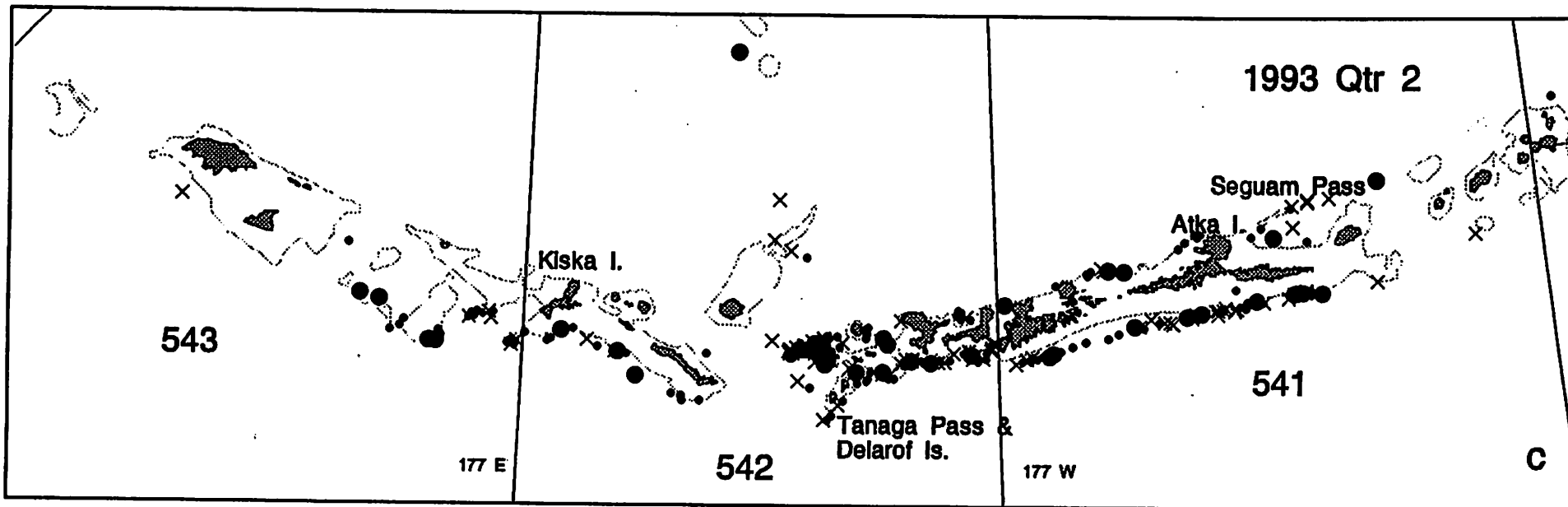


Figure X.3. cont. Locations of observed and sampled sablefish sets in the Aleutian Islands in the second quarters of 1993 and 1994.



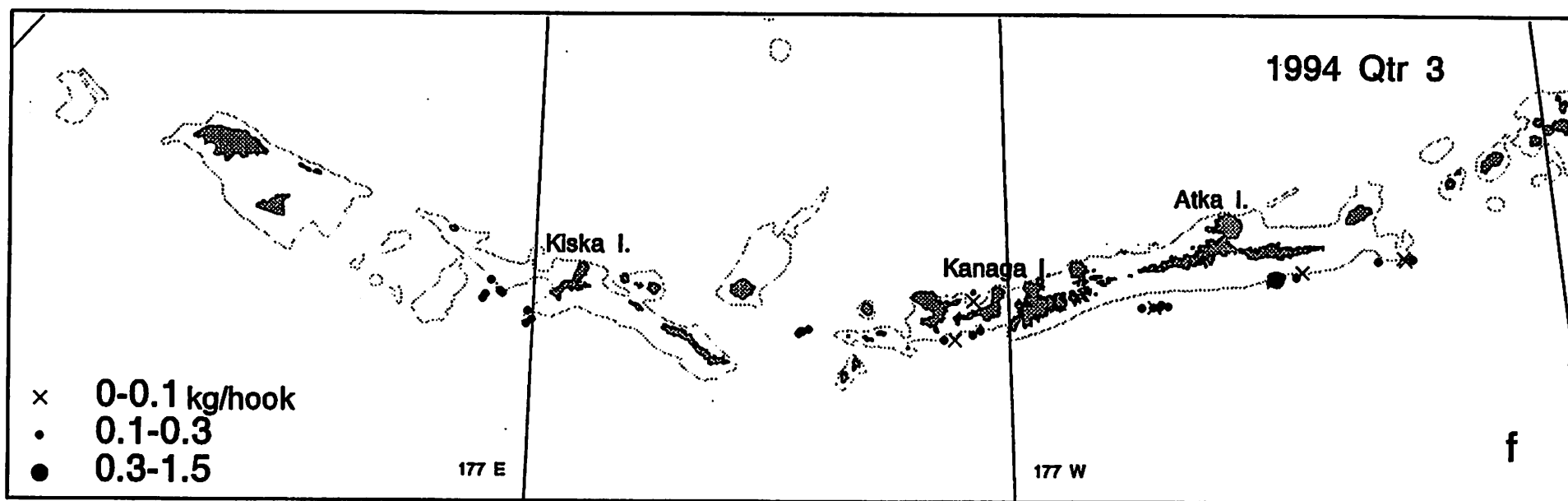
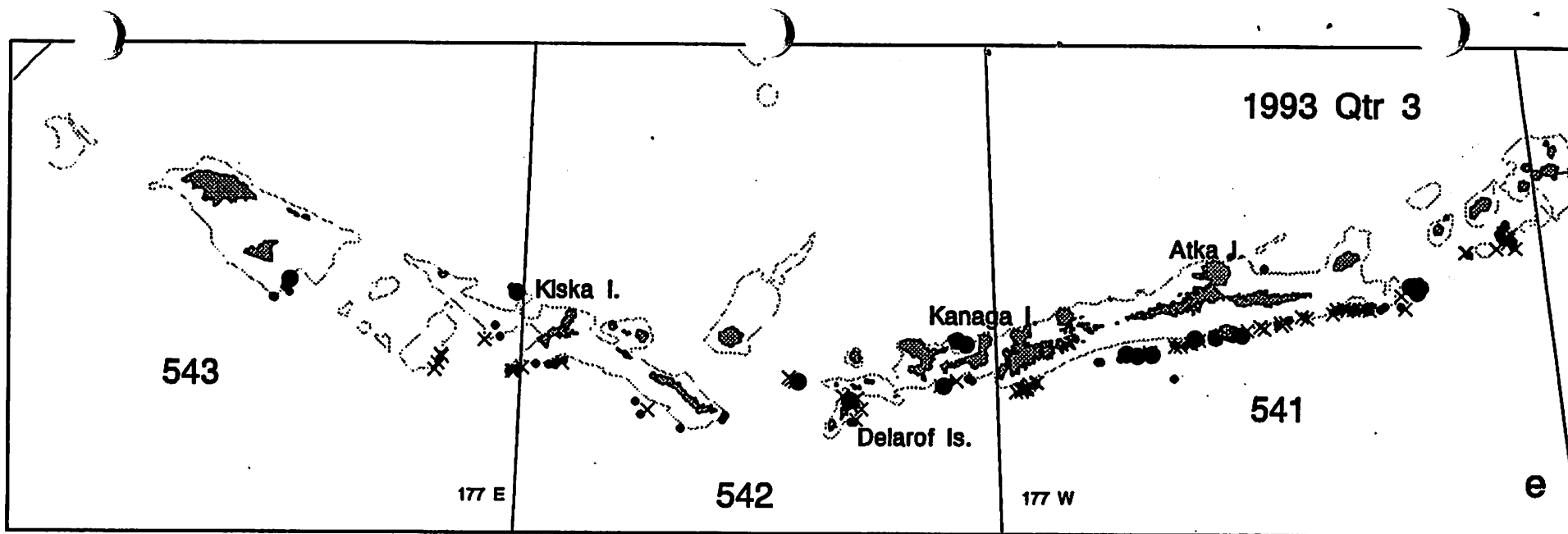


Figure X.3. cont. Locations of observed and sampled sablefish sets in the Aleutian Islands in the third quarters of 1993 and 1994.

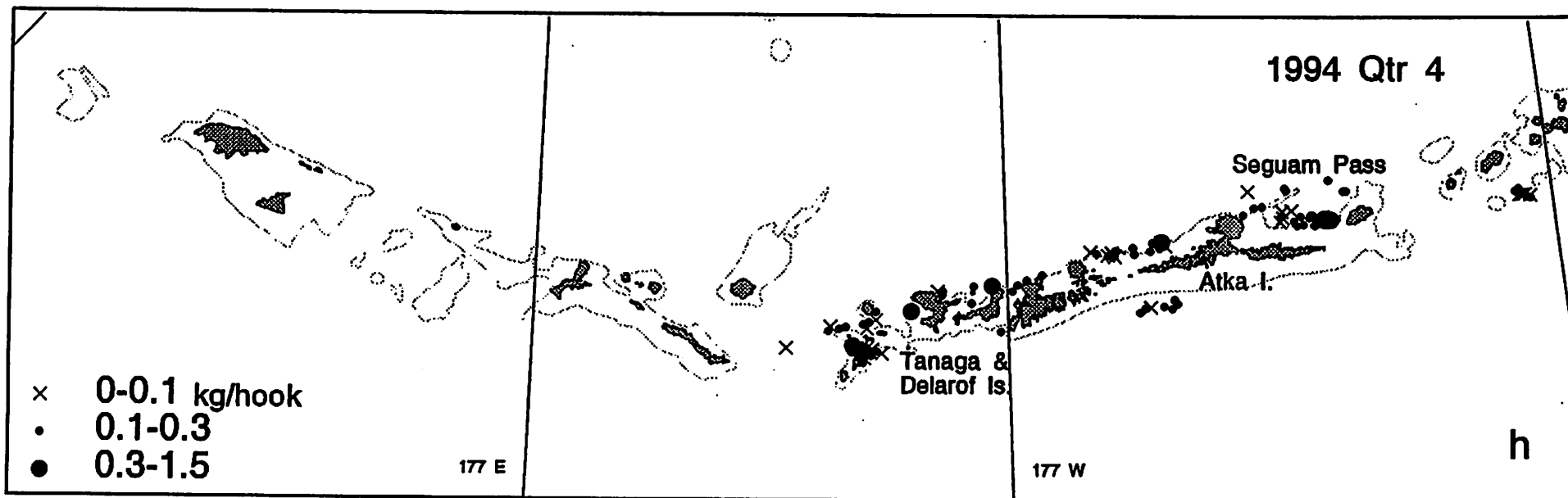
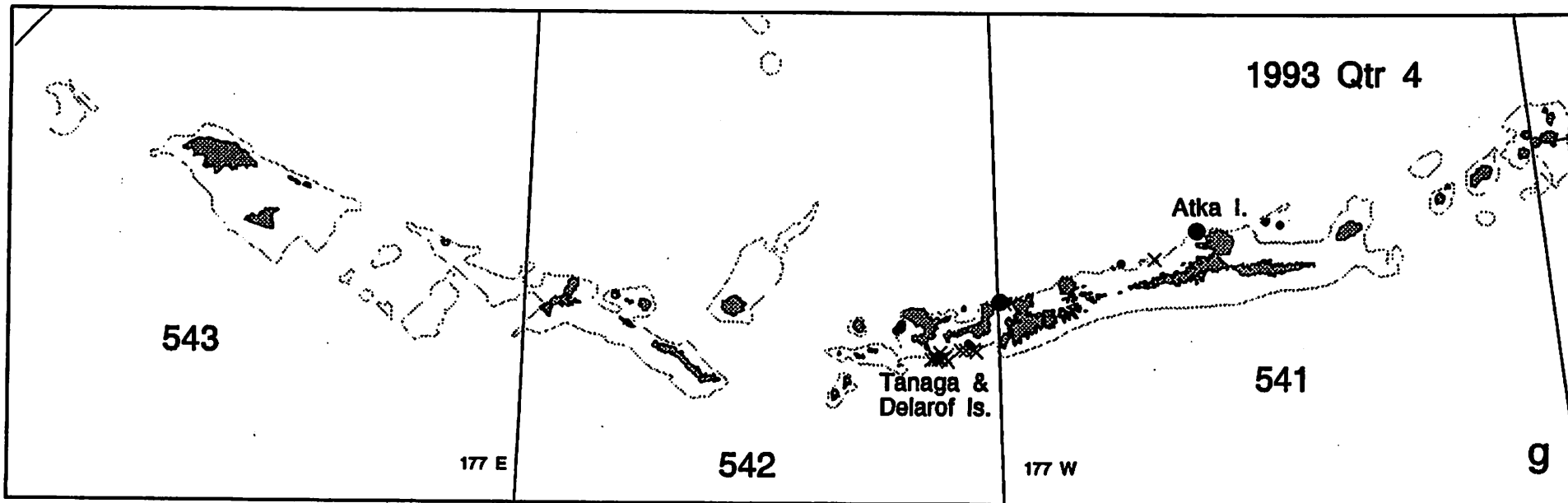


Figure X.3. cont. Locations of observed and sampled sablefish sets in the Aleutian Islands in the fourth quarters of 1993 and 1994.

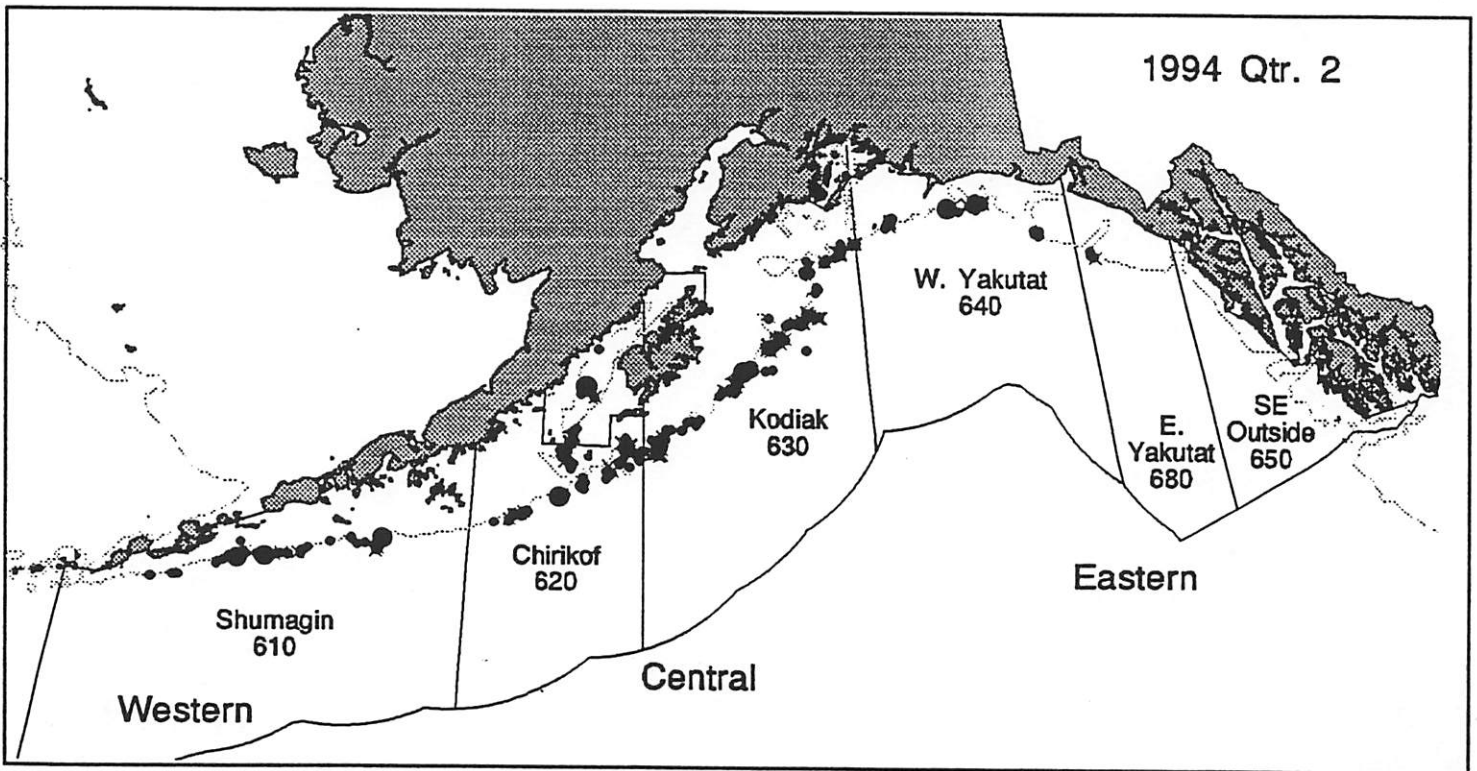
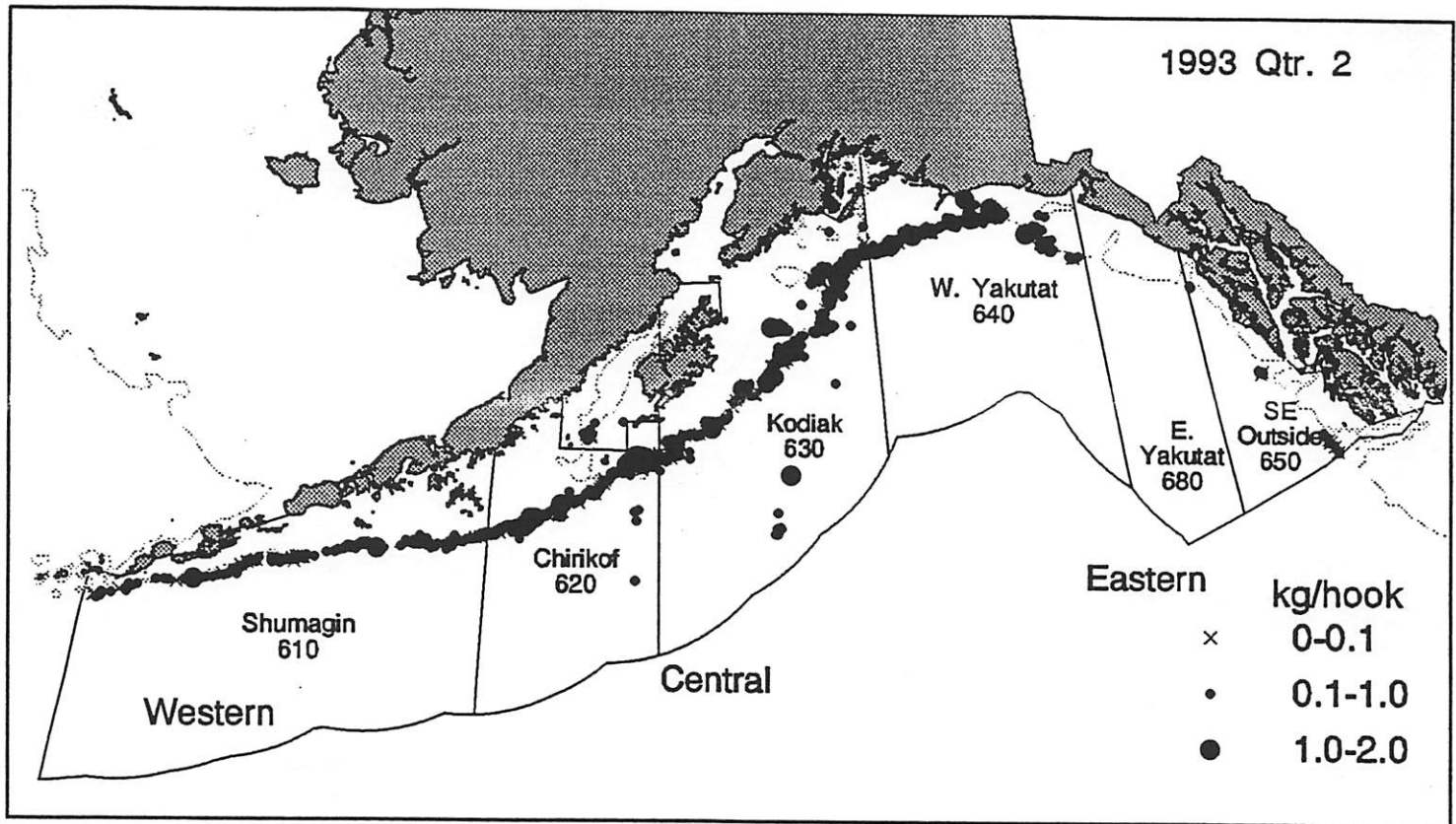


Figure X.4. Locations of observed and sampled sablefish sets in the Gulf of Alaska in the second quarters of 1993 and 1994.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
P.O. Box 21668  
Juneau, Alaska 99802-1668

April 15, 1996

Richard B. Lauber, Chairman  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 West 4th Avenue, Suite #306  
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252

**IMPLEMENTATION REPORTS:**  
**Vessel Moratorium Program**  
**Halibut/Sablefish IFQ Program**

Dear Mr. Lauber:

This report summarizes the ongoing activities of the Restricted Access Management (RAM) Division in continuing implementation of the Pacific halibut and sablefish IFQ program. It also addresses the steps that have been taken to implement the new Vessel Moratorium program for the groundfish and crab fisheries.

At the outset, it is necessary to acknowledge that the Division has experienced considerable difficulty with providing prompt, efficient, and effective public service during recent months. Although some of the problems we are experiencing can be attributed to insufficient staffing and the federal shut-down in December, the major source of concern has been the failure of the computer programs and database management systems that support the IFQ and Moratorium programs. A summary of the most significant problems follows:

**Item: 1996 IFQ Calculation.** Because of problems with the computer program for calculating annual IFQ (most of which resulted from overage/underage calculations), there was a delay of almost a month in the preparation and mailing of the 1996 IFQ Permits.

**Item: Transfers of QS and IFQ.** Partly because of the delay in getting the 1996 IFQ calculated and Permits distributed, there has been a tremendous volume of transfer applications to be processed. This volume has increased processing time to up to 2 full weeks, a situation that has led to considerable frustration for applicants. Further, because of problems arising from a computer program change (to allocate overages and underages when a transfer is completed), some (about 15) transfer requests cannot be processed, and have been pending for over a month.



**Item: Electronic Transaction Terminals.** Notwithstanding our stated confidence that the electronic transaction terminals for reporting and recording IFQ landings would be fully functional this year, immediately after the March 15 season opening a number of problems became evident. As a result, almost all landings are currently being recorded manually (by facsimile reports from registered buyers).

**Item: Moratorium Implementation.** Because of a lack of computer programming support (all moratorium processing and related functions are being accomplished manually) and my underestimation the impact of the program on the Division's workload, implementation of the Moratorium program has not proceeded as smoothly as anticipated. Although, to my knowledge, this has not kept people from fishing, it has frustrated proposed transfers and resulted in delays in processing Moratorium applications, including issuance Qualification Certificate and Permits, issuance of Initial Administrative Determinations; further, applications for transfer of Moratorium Qualifications has likewise been delayed.

**Item: Responsiveness to Industry.** All of the above has had a "snow-balling" on the Division's workload and, consequently, in the ability of Division staff to be responsive to the public. That, in turn, has led to additional phone calls, faxes, and other efforts by the industry to contact the Division -- which, in turn, leads to diversion of staff resources and even further delays . . .

To address these problems, Steve Pennoyer has directed that a regional task force be assembled, consisting of all regional data processing personnel and contractors, and led by Galen Tromble of the Fish Management Division. As a first priority, the task force has been directed to diagnose, make needed program modifications, and fully test the electronic transaction terminals. Additional contractual assistance to complete design of the moratorium system/database has been obtained, and the computer contractor who designed the IFQ system (who left Juneau in January) is returning this week to address ongoing software problems. We believe that this concentrated effort on our data systems will pay large dividends in the near future.

Additional permit staff is also being obtained (two permits assistants will be on the job by mid-May), to provide the necessary support as we recover from the current processing backlog.

I stress that the system is not in a "melt-down" phase; there is no evidence that insurmountable problems have arisen, nor that the overall IFQ database is in jeopardy; instead, we have experienced a large number of relatively small problems; taken one at a time, they would be merely aggravating, but the fact that they have all come at the same time has resulted in the problems outlined above. Meanwhile, and once again, we sincerely appreciate the patience, resilience, and good humor of the Industry as we grapple with them.

## VESSEL MORATORIUM PROGRAM

In spite of the problems noted above, the Division has begun implementation of the Moratorium Program. In mid-December, we mailed more than 3,300 applications to persons who, according to the Official Record (the database) appeared to be the current owners of moratorium-qualified vessels. In addition to the mailing, we also distributed an application to anyone who requested one.

To date, almost 1,600 completed applications have been completed and returned to the Division. As you know, there is no application deadline for this program, so we expect to continue to receive applications for the next year or so. All of the returned applications have received initial processing and, beginning the week of January 29, we began mailing Moratorium Qualification Certificates and Moratorium Permits to all qualifying persons.

Those applicants whose applications were incomplete or otherwise deficient receive an Initial Administrative Determination (IAD), on which the nature of the problem is explained. Accompanying the IAD is an "Interim" Moratorium Permit, with an expiration date 60 days from the date of issuance. During that 60 days, applicants may submit clarifying information or additional evidence and seek reconsideration of the IAD; alternatively, they may appeal the IAD to the Office of Administrative Appeals. Either step will insure the continued validity of the Interim Permit. Failure to take any action within 60 days will, however, result in the expiration of the Interim Permit.

As of last Friday, April 12, the actual numbers of Moratorium Qualifications/Permits processed by the RAM Division were as follows:

Qualifications/Permits Issued	1,127
Received Initial Determination (and Interim Permit)	<u>424</u>
<b>Total Initially Processed:</b>	<b>1,551</b>
Responded to Initial Determination	196
Completed Transfers of Moratorium Qualifications	36

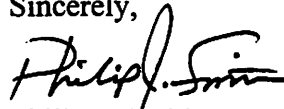
## HALIBUT/SABLEFISH IFQ PROGRAM

On March 15, 1996, the second halibut and black cod season conducted under the IFQ regime got underway. Attached to this report are tables (April 11, 1996) that summarize the 1996 IFQ Landings and Landings by Port. Also displayed is a summary of Transfer Activity under the IFQ program. These data sets should be familiar to you, and are self-explanatory, so I will not elaborate on them in this report.

A more complete implementation report will be distributed at the Council's June meeting. All noteworthy issues and developments that are not discussed herein, displayed on the attached charts, or discussed in my February report, are still under development. As part of the whole package of IFQ assessment reports, I will provide specific and detailed information on IFQ program implementation in June.

Meanwhile, I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Philip J. Smith  
Chief, RAM Division

Attachments

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Prepared: 11-Apr-96  
Restricted Access Mgmt Division  
(800) 304-4846

for Transfers Between Nov-94 and Apr-96  
halibut

Transfers of Quota Shares and Individual  
Fishing Quota Between Alaskans and Non-Alaskans

Area	To Alaska		From Alaska		Inside Alaska		Outside Alaska		Area Totals	
	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units
2C	69	2,004,228	58	1,598,943	377	8,770,055	58	1,551,759	562	13,924,985
3A	102	6,151,073	60	3,972,495	421	20,036,302	76	5,710,344	659	35,870,214
3B	23	1,390,849	43	1,174,499	115	4,898,755	19	1,496,476	200	8,960,579
4A	12	351,063	37	369,752	41	1,012,093	6	129,314	96	1,862,222
4B	3	53,080	0	0	8	424,080	3	72,746	14	549,906
4C	1	18,876	0	0	2	86,454	0	0	3	105,330
4D	0	0	0	0	1	39,715	1	69,848	2	109,563
4E	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tl	210	9,969,169	198	7,115,689	965	35,267,454	163	9,030,487	1536	61,382,799

Leases of Quota Shares and Individual  
Fishing Quota Between Alaskans and Non-Alaskans

Area	To Alaska		From Alaska		Inside Alaska		Outside Alaska		Area Totals	
	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units
2C	2	29,720	2	116,027	2	67,043	2	11,159	8	223,949
3A	4	321,258	0	0	4	192,425	7	1,896,753	15	2,410,436
3B	2	294,821	0	0	1	27,468	4	339,551	7	661,840
4A	2	118,108	0	0	0	0	3	161,514	5	279,622
4B	0	0	0	0	1	34,428	2	189,889	3	224,317
4C	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4D	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4E	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tl	10	763,907	2	116,027	8	321,364	18	2,598,866	38	3,800,164



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P.O. 21668  
Juneau Ak 99802-1668

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for Transfers Between Nov-94 and Apr-96  
halibut

Sweep-ups of Quota Shares and Individual  
Fishing Quota Between Alaskans and Non-Alaskans

Area	To Alaska		From Alaska		Inside Alaska		Outside Alaska		Area Totals	
	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units
2C	3	4,226	1	3,999	10	16,775	0	0	14	25,000
3A	2	5,941	0	0	20	42,336	1	2,399	23	50,676
3B	0	0	2	2,970	1	3,964	0	0	3	6,934
4A	0	0	0	0	2	9,068	0	0	2	9,068
4B	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4C	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4D	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4E	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
T1	5	10,167	3	6,969	33	72,143	1	2,399	42	91,678

Total IFQ Landings - Pounds and Percentages by Port

From 01-MAR-1996 To 11-APR-1996

Port	Halibut			Sablefish		
	Vessel Landings	Pounds Landed	% of Total	Vessel Landings	Pounds Landed	% of Total
<b>ALASKA</b>						
CORDOVA	17	160,784	4.67	7	96,557	2.68
CRAIG	34	64,012	1.86	7	71,520	1.99
DUTCH HBR/UNALASKA	1	12,316	0.36	7	298,611	8.29
GUSTAVUS	4	13,340	0.39			
HOMER	61	456,580	13.27	9	127,797	3.55
HOONAH	55	212,482	6.18	14	171,851	4.77
JUNEAU	22	135,974	3.95	5	74,374	2.06
KETCHIKAN	16	78,677	2.29	5	52,930	1.47
KODIAK	62	564,901	16.42	21	409,444	11.36
NIKISKI	1	754	0.02			
PELICAN				1	8,413	0.23
PETERSBURG	87	613,073	17.82	9	364,717	10.12
SEWARD	60	579,817	16.86	37	738,095	20.49
SITKA	96	261,527	7.60	55	953,106	26.45
WHITTIER	1	6,487	0.19			
WRANGELL	19	86,834	2.52			
YAKUTAT	40	78,520	2.28	8	118,776	3.30
<b>WASHINGTON</b>						
BELLINGHAM	6	95,429	2.77	4	115,516	3.21
<b>CANADA</b>						
PRINCE RUPERT	1	11,128	0.32	1	1,129	0.03
<b>UNKNOWN</b>						
UNKNOWN	2	7,232	0.21			
<b>Total</b>	<b>585</b>	<b>3,439,867</b>	<b>99.98</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>3,602,836</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Notes:

1. This report summarizes fixed gear IFQ landings reported by Registered Buyers. At sea discards are not included.
2. Halibut weights are reported in net (headed and gutted) pounds. Sablefish weights are reported in round pounds.
3. "Vessel Landings" include the number of landings by participating vessels reported by IFQ regulatory area. Each such landing may include harvests from more than one IFQ Permit Holder.
4. Landings at different harbors in the same general location (e.g. "Juneau, Douglas, and Auke Bay") have been combined to report landings to the main port (e.g. "Juneau").
5. Due to rounding, percentages may not total to 100%.
6. Data are derived from initial data entry procedures and are preliminary. Future review and editing may result in minor changes.

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Count of Alaskans/Non-Alaskans obtaining Transfer Eligibility Certificates by demonstrating IFQ Crew Member (crewmember) status, and entering the fishery by receiving QS by transfer. These are individuals who did not receive QS by initial issuance.

Number of Alaskan "crewmembers" receiving Transfer Eligibility Certificate:	770
Number of non-Alaskan "crewmembers" receiving Transfer Eligibility Certificate:	256
	-----
Total Transfer Eligibility Certificates Issued:	1026

Number of "crewmembers" who have received sablefish QS by transfer  
(by IFQ area)

Area	Alaskans	non-Alaskans
AI	2	2
BS	0	3
CG	15	8
SE	23	28
WG	1	2
WY	14	11

Number of "crewmembers" who have received halibut QS by transfer  
(by IFQ area)

Area	Alaskans	non-Alaskans
2C	119	43
3A	162	40
3B	42	13
4A	16	5
4B	3	0
4C	1	0
4D	0	1

Number of "crewmembers" who have received QS by transfer (sablefish)  
Alaskan : 42  
non-Alaskan: 39

Number of "crewmembers" who have received QS by transfer (halibut)  
Alaskan : 292  
non-Alaskan: 75

Number of "crewmembers" who have received QS by transfer (both species, all areas)  
Alaskan : 306  
non-Alaskan: 92

Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Allocations and Landings

From 01-MAR-1996 through 11-APR-1996

Area	Species	Vessel Landings	Total Catch Pounds	<----- Tac ----->		
				Allocation Pounds	Remaining Pounds	Percent Remaining
2C	halibut	317	1,261,414	9,000,000	7,738,586	86
3A	halibut	254	2,112,249	20,000,000	17,887,751	89
3B	halibut	12	53,888	3,700,000	3,646,112	99
4A	halibut	1	12,316	1,950,000	1,937,684	99
4B	halibut	0	0	1,848,000	1,848,000	100
4C	halibut	0	0	385,000	385,000	100
4D	halibut	0	0	539,000	539,000	100
4E	halibut	0	0	0	0	0
Total		584	3,439,867	37,422,000	33,982,133	91
SE	sablefish	105	1,861,236	10,346,188	8,484,952	82
WY	sablefish	33	715,398	6,366,885	5,651,487	89
CG	sablefish	47	924,422	12,169,392	11,244,970	92
WG	sablefish	4	93,388	3,880,096	3,786,708	98
AI	sablefish	0	0	1,587,312	1,587,312	100
BS	sablefish	1	8,392	970,024	961,632	99
Total		190	3,602,836	35,319,897	31,717,061	90

Notes:

1. This report summarizes fixed gear IFQ landings reported by Registered Buyers. At sea discards are not included.
2. Halibut weights are reported in net (headed and gutted) pounds. Sablefish weights are reported in round pounds.
3. "Vessel Landings" include the number of landings by participating vessels reported by IFQ regulatory area. Each such landing may include harvests from more than one IFQ Permit Holder.
4. Due to rounding, percentages may not total to 100%.
5. Data are derived from initial data entry procedures and are preliminary. Future review and editing may result in minor changes.

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sablefish

Transfers of Quota Shares and Individual  
Fishing Quota Between Alaskans and Non-Alaskans

Area	To Alaska		From Alaska		Inside Alaska		Outside Alaska		Area Totals	
	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units
SE	20	1,068,280	23	647,956	82	3,777,230	42	1,915,376	167	7,408,842
WY	13	770,127	12	627,150	35	1,144,656	29	1,170,547	89	3,712,480
CG	20	2,014,580	9	372,806	61	4,068,317	30	3,154,660	120	9,610,363
WG	5	367,779	4	316,325	11	693,383	8	1,685,896	28	3,063,383
AI	4	213,314	1	338,045	5	50,337	7	2,070,733	17	2,672,429
BS	2	85,938	1	11,880	4	572,501	6	502,434	13	1,172,753
TL	64	4,520,018	50	2,314,162	198	10,306,424	122	10,499,646	434	27,640,250

Leases of Quota Shares and Individual  
Fishing Quota Between Alaskans and Non-Alaskans

Area	To Alaska		From Alaska		Inside Alaska		Outside Alaska		Area Totals	
	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units
SE	9	573,995	1	110,053	1	8,684	6	608,309	17	1,301,041
WY	6	277,347	0	0	1	37,325	9	1,089,692	16	1,404,364
CG	8	1,656,834	0	0	1	90,688	9	1,847,033	18	3,594,555
WG	3	577,971	1	43,416	0	0	9	3,101,284	13	3,722,671
AI	2	290,855	0	0	0	0	10	6,202,648	12	6,493,503
BS	2	772,055	0	0	0	0	7	1,359,355	9	2,131,410
TL	30	4,149,057	2	153,469	3	136,697	50	14,208,321	85	18,647,544

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Sweep-ups of Quota Shares and Individual  
Fishing Quota Between Alaskans and Non-Alaskans

Area	To Alaska		From Alaska		Inside Alaska		Outside Alaska		Area Totals	
	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units	Count	QS Units
SE	0	0	2	4,095	9	8,411	0	0	11	12,506
WY	0	0	0	0	1	678	1	2,529	2	3,207
CG	0	0	1	1,121	3	17,752	1	6,356	5	25,229
WG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
AI	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tl	0	0	3	5,216	13	26,841	2	8,885	18	40



## THE 1996 SEASON A REPORT TO THE FLEET (February, 1996)

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Dear Friends,

In preparation for the 1996 Pacific halibut and sablefish Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) season, which opens on March 15, the Restricted Access Management (RAM) Division [Alaska Region, National Marine Fisheries Service] is providing your 1996 IFQ Permit, as well as additional information on the IFQ program. Enclosed with this packet of information, you will find:

- ✓ Your 1996 IFQ Permit, which displays the total amount (in pounds) of IFQ halibut or sablefish you may harvest during 1996;
- ✓ Your 1996 IFQ Permit Card, which must be used to make landings of IFQ halibut or sablefish (note that your PIN number has not changed);
- ✓ Revised RAM Division IFQ Forms (with Instructions), including forms to:
  - request the RAM Division to issue a "Hired Skipper" card to a person who does not hold IFQ;
  - request Transfer of QS and/or IFQ from one person to another; and,
  - request replacement copies of IFQ certificates, permits, or cards.
- ✓ A Special Notice, regarding avoidance of sea birds (especially short-tailed albatross, listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act) in the Gulf of Alaska, and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands IFQ regulatory areas; and,
- ✓ Another Special Notice to sablefish fishermen regarding the schedule for the 1996 longline sablefish surveys in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands and Gulf of Alaska IFQ regulatory areas.

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In addition to the enclosures, this letter also includes information on the following:

- 1996 Quota Share Pools (QSPs), and the ratio between QS and IFQ by species and IFQ regulatory area;
- Challenging your IFQ amounts;
- The 1996 Quota Share Use and Vessel IFQ Caps;
- "Sweep-Up" limits (for combining very small blocks of QS into larger blocks);
- Information on Transfers of QS and on Determinations and Appeals;
- Information on IFQ regulatory changes; and,
- Information on IFQ research activities (and a request for your cooperation).

### 1996 Halibut and Sablefish Fisheries -- Calculating your IFQ

The following table displays, by regulatory area and species, the total amount of QS that has been issued (the Quota Share Pool), the 1996 Total Allowable Catch (TAC), and the ratio between the QSP and the amount of Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ).

**QSPs, TOTAL IFQ POUNDS (TACs) BY REGULATORY AREA,  
AND RATIOS [QS UNITS/ IFQ] BY AREA**

<b>IFQ Area</b>	<b>1996 Quota Share Pool</b>	<b>1996 IFQ (Total Allowable Catch)</b>	<b>Ratio (QSP:IFQ)</b>
Halibut 2C	59,979,977	9,000,000	6.664
Halibut 3A	186,079,384	20,000,000	9.304
Halibut 3B	54,505,286	3,700,000	14.731
Halibut 4A	14,914,713	1,950,000	7.649
Halibut 4B	9,293,043	1,848,000	5.029
Halibut 4C	3,969,186	385,000	10.310
Halibut 4D	4,685,996	539,000	8.694
Halibut 4E	139,999	0	0
Sablefish SE	68,848,467	10,346,188	6.654
Sablefish WY	55,254,522	6,366,885	8.678
Sablefish CG	112,098,331	12,169,392	9.211
Sablefish WG	37,566,440	3,880,096	9.682
Sablefish AI	31,496,242	1,587,312	19.842
Sablefish BS	17,708,130	970,024	8.255

**Notes to Table:**

- The "ratio" displays the number of QS units that will yield one pound of 1996 IFQ.
- QSPs include small amounts of QS in "Reserve" (i.e., QS that will not yield 1996 IFQ).
- TACs do not include pounds that have been set-aside for the CDQ program.
- Halibut weights are displayed in net pounds; sablefish weights are displayed in round pounds.



To determine how many pounds of IFQ you may harvest in each regulatory area during 1996 (i.e., to check the calculation of the pounds displayed on your IFQ Permit), divide the amount of QS units you hold for each area by the number set out in the "Ratio" column in the above table. Note that the pounds of IFQ resulting from your 1996 calculation may be somewhat different (higher or lower) than this amount. The reason for the difference is "overage" and "underage" adjustments resulting from your 1995 IFQ fishing activities.

### Notice of Your Right to Challenge Your IFQ Amounts

If you disagree with the amount of IFQ pounds displayed on your IFQ Permit, you may seek an amendment to the Permit by notifying the RAM Division, in writing, of your disagreement. You should also set out the reasons for your disagreement. **To be considered, your written objection should be received by the Division by no later than 30 days after the effective date of the permit (or, by April 15, 1996).** Upon receipt of your written objection, the Division will review the records and provide you with an explanation of the exact basis upon which the calculation was done.

If the review reveals that the Division has made a mistake in its calculations, an amended (corrected) IFQ Permit will be issued to you. On the other hand, if the review reveals that no mistake was made (i.e., that the calculation was performed correctly), the Division will issue you an Initial Administrative Determination (IAD) to that effect. The IAD will explain the determination and give detailed instructions for filing an appeal with the NMFS Office of Administrative Appeals.

### 1996 QS Use and Vessel IFQ Caps

The IFQ regulations provide that no person may hold unrestricted QS (i.e., QS that yields annual IFQ) in amounts that exceed certain percentages of the total QS issued for various regulatory areas. This is known as the "QS Use Cap." The only exception to this provision is for those who received QS in excess of the Cap by initial issuance. The pounds of IFQ that may be fished from any vessel are likewise limited; this limit is known as the "Vessel IFQ Cap." The following tables display the 1996 QS Use Caps and the Vessel IFQ Caps for both species.

#### 1996 QS USE CAPS - HALIBUT & SABLEFISH

<u>IFQ Regulatory Area</u>	<u>QS Pool, Total Units</u>	<u>QS Use Limit as Percent of QSP(s)</u>	<u>QS Use Limit in QS Units</u>
Halibut 2C	59,979,977	1.0%	599,800
Halibut 2C, 3A, 3B	300,564,647	0.5%	1,502,823
Halibut 4A - 4E	33,002,937	0.5%	165,015
Sablefish SE	68,848,467	1.0%	688,485
Sablefish - All Areas	322,972,132	1.0%	3,229,721

## 1996 VESSEL IFQ CAPS - HALIBUT & SABLEFISH

<u>IFQ Regulatory Area</u>	<u>1996 IFQ (CDQ Removed)</u>	<u>Cap as Percent of IFQ</u>	<u>Cap in IFQ Pounds</u>
Halibut 2C	9,000,000	1.0%	90,000
Halibut - All Areas	37,422,000	0.5%	187,110
Sablefish SE	10,346,188	1.0%	103,462
Sablefish - All Areas	35,319,897	1.0%	353,199

**Notes to Tables:**

- QS Use Cap refers only to QS that will yield IFQ (i.e., QS that is not restricted).
- QS Use Cap applies to all QS held by a person, either individually or collectively (for instance, as an individual and as a partner or shareholder in another QS-holding enterprise).
- The TAC used to compute Vessel IFQ Caps does not include amounts that are set aside for the Community Development Quota (CDQ) program.
- Halibut weights are displayed in net pounds; sablefish weights are displayed in round pounds.

### "Sweep-Up" Limits for Small Blocks of QS

Under the IFQ regulations, persons who hold very small blocks of QS may combine them by transfer until they reach an amount of QS that would yield 1,000 pounds (or less) of halibut IFQ or 3,000 pounds (or less) of sablefish IFQ. This is known as the "sweep-up" provision. Because the Quota Share Pools (QSPs) and Total Allowable Catch (TAC) limits change from year to year, the regulations provide that the sweep-up limits will be set according to the QSPs as they existed in October, 1994, and as applied to the 1994 TACs. The following Table displays the sweep-up limits under the current regulations.

<u>IFQ Regulatory Area</u>	<u>Sweep-Up Equivalent (QS Units)</u>
Halibut 2C	5,146
Halibut 3A	6,779
Halibut 3B	13,040
Halibut 4A	7,532
Halibut 4B	4,346
Halibut 4C	5,685
Halibut 4D	6,397
Halibut 4E	1,390
Sablefish SE	12,339
Sablefish WY	14,640
Sablefish CG	15,564
Sablefish WG	24,861
Sablefish AI	19,209
Sablefish BS	81,900

To date, there have not been large numbers of "sweep-ups" of very small blocks of QS (a total of 33 halibut sweep-ups have been processed, while only 16 sablefish sweep-ups have been approved). Partly as a result of that fact, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) is currently reviewing these limits. No final Council action has yet occurred, and no changes to these limits are in effect at this time.

## **QS and IFQ Transfer Activity**

### Transfers of Quota Share

As of February 14, 1996, the RAM Division had completed processing a total of 1,894 transactions involving the transfer of QS (by permanent transfer, lease, or "sweep-up"). By far the largest number of permanent transfers have involved halibut QS (1,350 halibut transfers v. 387 sablefish transfers), while the opposite is true of leases (77 sablefish leases v. 31 halibut leases).

There continues to be a net gain of QS transferred to Alaskans. A summary of transfer data (by area of residence) follows:

In the halibut fishery, 183 permanent transfers to Alaskans from non-Alaskans, and 153 permanent transfers from Alaskans to non-Alaskans, yielded a net gain of QS to Alaskans in the amount of 2,312,678 units. Leases of halibut QS (and IFQ) during the 1995 season resulted in an additional 299,045 units of QS being temporarily transferred to Alaskans.

In the sablefish fishery, 55 permanent transfers to Alaskans from non-Alaskans, and 41 permanent transfers from Alaskans to non-Alaskans, yielded a net gain of QS to Alaskans in the amount of 849,714 units. Leases of halibut QS (and IFQ) during the 1995 season resulted in an additional 3,478,140 units of QS being temporarily transferred to Alaskans.

**Note:** The designation of a person as an "Alaskan" or a "non-Alaskan" is premised upon the addresses provided by the parties; no attempt is made to verify a person's legal residence.

### New Entrants to the Fisheries

A feature of the IFQ program is that only those who received QS by initial issuance and those individuals who qualify as "IFQ Crew Members" (by demonstrating that they have served at least 150 days on the harvesting crew in any U.S. fishery) may receive unrestricted Catcher Vessel QS (i.e., Catcher Vessel QS that yields IFQ) by transfer. Those who have gained the status of eligibility to receive QS and IFQ by transfer are issued Transfer Eligibility Certificates (TECs).

As of February 14, 1996, the RAM Division had received and processed more than 900 applications for TECs from individuals who did not receive QS by initial issuance. A total of 905 applications were approved (a very small number remain to be approved, pending receipt of additional

information).

Following approval of their applications for TECs, a total of 358 individuals actually entered the fishery for the first time as recipients of QS by transfer. Of those, 274 (76.5%) were Alaskans, while 84 (23.5%) were non-Alaskans.

## Determinations and Appeals

Throughout 1994 and 1995, the RAM Division received and processed almost 6,000 Requests for Application (RFAs) for halibut QS and almost 2,000 RFAs for sablefish QS, each of which represented an application for either halibut or sablefish QS (in appropriate IFQ regulatory areas and vessel categories). Each application could result in issuance of more than one QS Certificate, and many applicants did receive more than one. The following table displays the approximate numbers of both blocked and unblocked QS Certificates that were initially issued to applicants (the table includes those QS Certificates issued as compensation for lost fishing opportunity resulting from the Community Development Quota program):

	<b>Halibut</b>	<b>Sablefish</b>	<b>Total</b>
Blocked QS Permits	5,900	1,360	7,260
Unblocked QS Permits	<u>1,610</u>	<u>1,020</u>	<u>2,630</u>
<b>Total QS Permits Issued:</b>	<b>7,510</b>	<b>2,380</b>	<b>9,890</b>

If an applicant failed to demonstrate his/her eligibility for QS, or some related claim (vessel category, qualifying pounds, etc.), s/he was issued an Initial Administrative Determination (IAD) by the RAM Division. By early February, 1996, the Division had issued more than 1,600 such Determinations. The following table displays the numbers of IADs issued, disaggregated to show the reasons for denials:

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Number of Denials</b>
Untimely Applications	105
Not Eligible for Quota Share	1,190
Conflicts with other Applicants	139
Denied Vessel Category Claim	22
Partial Denial of Claimed Pounds	140
Multiple Reasons/Miscellaneous	<u>15</u>
<b>Total Denials:</b>	<b>1,611</b>

**Note:** Conflicts, by definition, involve at least 2 applicants; these data display the number of applicants in conflict situations.

These represent virtually all denied claims to initial issuance of QS. Although a few more claims continue to trickle in, only a handful remain that have not been addressed with an IAD.

## Appeals

As of early February, 1996, only 158 appeals of Initial Administrative Determinations had been lodged with the Office of Administrative Appeals. Thirty-two final decisions had been issued, fourteen cases were settled or otherwise dismissed, and a number of additional decisions had been drafted, but not finalized.

## **IFQ Regulatory Changes**

### **NOTE OF CAUTION**

*The following discussion of IFQ regulations and proposed changes is for information purposes only, and is not intended to create any rights enforceable by law. Regulations governing the IFQ program can be found at 50 CFR 676. For current copies of the regulations, contact the RAM Division, or access the Internet, at the telephone number and address set out on page one of this document.*

*Questions about IFQ regulations under development may be addressed to the NMFS Fish Management Division (907-586-7228) or to the Council (907-271-2809).*

The IFQ program has been called a "work in progress" -- when the program was adopted, the Industry, the Council and the Secretary contemplated that adjustments to its provisions could prove to be necessary. They were right.

During the past year, several amendments to the IFQ regulations were adopted by the Council and approved by the Secretary. These changes are discussed below, as are additional proposals that are in various stages of the Council review and NMFS regulatory process.

### Regulatory Changes Approved During the Last Year

One change, approved last summer, provides for the extension of the sablefish season in the Aleutian Islands IFQ regulatory area past the end of the calendar year. In essence, this creates a year-round fixed gear sablefish fishery in the Aleutian Islands.

Another change, also approved last year, eases the restrictions on fishing for IFQ halibut or sablefish in more than one regulatory area. Under the new regulation, an exemption from the rule that IFQ species retained on-board must never be in excess of the total amount of unharvested IFQ (for the species and in the area in which gear is deployed) held by all IFQ permit holders aboard the vessel is provided. The exception is only valid if an observer is on-board the vessel and if daily fishing logs are being maintained.

Also, changes to some of the regulations that govern the calculation, use, and transfer of QS issued

to fishermen in compensation for lost fishing opportunities resulting from the Western Alaska Community Development Quota (CDQ) program have been made. Specifically,

- the regulation verifying that CDQ compensation would not be issued as a block has been adopted; and,
- the regulation that allows for a "one-time-only" transfer of CDQ compensation QS to be transferred to a different vessel category from the one in which it was initially issued has been adopted. Note that this provision remains in effect only through February 24, 1997.

### Regulatory Changes on the Way

Because of Industry advocacy and action by the Council, a number of other changes to the program are in the regulatory process. They are contained in a set of proposed regulations known as "Omnibus II," and include:

- A provision to eliminate the 72-hour "fair start" (no fishing) requirement before the opening of the sablefish season;
- A provision to allow Emergency Transfer of IFQ when the QS holder is unable to continue fishing (similar to the State of Alaska's Emergency Transfer provisions);
- A provision to transfer QS and IFQ to the surviving spouse of a QS holder who passes away and who has expressed no contrary intent for the disposition of the harvest privilege;
- A provision to ease the requirement that an IFQ holder remain on-board the vessel until the fish are offloaded;
- A provision to ease current restrictions on deliveries of IFQ halibut and sablefish to tenders;
- A provision to amend the regulations that govern reports of shipment of IFQ halibut and sablefish by Registered Buyers; and,
- A variety of smaller, technical, amendments.

It is possible that these changes will be in place before the end of the 1996 season.

### Council Proposal -- the "Buy-Down" Amendment

The Council has approved an amendment to the IFQ program that would allow persons to fish catcher vessel IFQ on vessels smaller than the vessel category to which the IFQ is assigned. This would enable a fisherman to (for instance) fish vessel category "B" IFQ (which could currently be used only on vessels greater than 60' Length Over-All) on vessels smaller than 60' LOA. However, there are limits to this privilege in the halibut 2C and sablefish SE regulatory areas. Further, the exemption would not be allowed the other way (i.e., smaller vessel IFQ could not be fished on a vessel with a LOA greater than that designated for the IFQ).

Although this change has passed the Council, it has not yet gone through the regulatory process. Therefore, the activity it permits is not currently allowed, and may not be allowed during the 1996 season.

#### Currently Under Consideration -- Raising the "Sweep-Up" Limits

As noted earlier, the Council is currently studying the possible effects of raising the "sweep-up" limits to provide for easier consolidation of small QS blocks. Changes to the limits have not yet passed the Council, nor have any such changes undergone the regulatory process; therefore, it is unlikely that the sweep-up limits will change during 1996.

#### Currently Under Consideration -- QS Use Cap in the Bering Sea

Another suggestion being considered by the Council is a change to the QS Use Cap in the Bering Sea halibut regulatory areas. Some Industry representatives have commented that the current Cap is too low to allow for efficient fishing activities. Again, note that no change to the Cap has been adopted by the Council, nor has any change undergone the regulatory process. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that any change will be finalized during the 1996 season.

#### Future Regulatory Changes

At its recent meeting in Anchorage, the Council established a schedule for considering additional amendments to the IFQ Regulations. According to the Council's newsletter:

*... the Council will call for IFQ proposals over the summer. In September, the proposals will be forwarded to the IFQ Industry Implementation Team. In October, the Team will review the proposals, assess staff workload and availability, and rank the need and importance of proposed amendments. In December, the Team will report their findings to the Council. NMFS/IRAM Division will also provide a preliminary report on the conclusion of the IFQ season. The Council will review the Implementation Team recommendations on IFQ plan and regulatory amendments and direct staff to initiate particular analysis in light of other staff assignments and other proposed groundfish amendments . . . In April, the Council will schedule initial review for amendments and take final action in June . . .*

#### **Research on the Performance of the IFQ Program**

To objectively and professionally assess the performance of the program, an inter-agency group (the "IFQ Research Planning Team") has been formed. Members of the Team include representatives of NMFS, the Council, the State of Alaska, the University of Alaska, and the International Pacific Halibut Commission. Team members have been working together to conduct an in-depth analysis of various impacts resulting from the program, and have committed to produce reports that are:

*... professional, objective, coordinated between interested parties, premised on independently verifiable data, and subject to peer review . . .*

Last September, the team reported to the Council that major research would be undertaken in three critical areas, including: 1) Conservation effects (such as bycatch, catch per unit of effort, gear loss, etc.); 2) Distributional effects (initial issuance of QS and changes resulting from transfers, and distribution of landings during the season by both location and time); and, 3) Individual and community impacts (effects of the program on vessel operations, employment, ex-vessel and wholesale prices, etc.). A series of smaller reports (on Initial Issuance of QS, the 1995 Enforcement experience, implementation costs, effects of the program on safety, etc.) are also planned.

The current schedule for reporting on the research calls for preliminary reports on a number of items to be available in time for the Council's April, 1996, meeting; final reports will be presented to the Council at its June, 1996, meeting in Portland.

Although most of the data to properly conduct these research activities are already available, some of the information will be obtained from surveys (questionnaires) sent to IFQ holders and Registered Buyers. If you receive a survey from the University of Alaska, be assured that it is part of the on-going research needed to assess the IFQ program. Your cooperation in completing and returning the survey would be appreciated.

## **Conclusion**

Most observers agree that the 1995 halibut and sablefish seasons went fairly smoothly, in spite of some "start-up" difficulties. In large measure, that success resulted from the patience, flexibility and good humor of IFQ holders and Registered Buyers who worked closely with NMFS Enforcement, the RAM Division, and others. We certainly appreciate that cooperation, and look forward to the 1996 season and beyond. Working together, we can solve existing problems and continue to implement improvements to the program in the future.

Sincerely,

Philip J. Smith  
Chief, RAM Division

Enclosures