



RE: Small Sablefish Release

March 2021 IFQ Committee Meeting

From Committee Report

From Page 7 of March 2021 IFQ Committee Report:

In February, the Council asked the IFQ Committee to include this ongoing Council action, to allow voluntary release of sablefish by fixed gear sablefish IFQ vessels, in its prioritization exercise. As a result, the Committee did not receive a presentation on the analysis or agenda a discussion on the merits of the action, but rather focused on how to prioritize it among other IFQ actions. The majority of the Committee thinks this action is a high priority that is worth the time to work through the stock assessment and catch accounting issues that were highlighted in the initial review draft, citing concerns about harvesting immature fish and the economic impacts of a full retention requirement with so many small fish being caught. Individual Committee members have differing perceptions about how complex it should be to implement, given that it is a tool that is already in sablefish fisheries elsewhere and used in other target fisheries in Alaska. At the very least, Committee members favor the development of a discard mortality rate specifically for small sablefish, and likely differing by pot- versus longline-caught. The Committee acknowledged as excellent a presentation provided in public testimony which estimated the potential levels of discarding and mortality of released fish resulting from this action in the context of overall sablefish removals in Alaska.