

# Halibut Retention in Sablefish Pots in the BSAI

Initial Review Draft

Presentation to the Council

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# History of Related Action (p12-14)

Action to allow sablefish pot fishing, and halibut retention in sablefish pots in GOA (Amend 101: final action 2015; effective 2017)

**CURRENT PROPOSAL:** Proposed action to allow halibut retention in BSAI sablefish pots (June 2017, Oct 2017)

IPHC action to change regulations allowing halibut retention in pot gear, contingent on Federal regulations (Jan 2018)

# Alternatives (p16)

**Alternative 1:** No action

**Alternative 2:** Allow retention of legal-sized halibut in pot gear used to fish sablefish IFQ in the BSAI, provided the IFQ holder also holds sufficient halibut IFQ for that IPHC regulatory area.

**Element 1:** Applies to both single pots and longline pots

**Element 2:** Gear retrieval

*Option 1: No gear tending requirements (status quo)*

*Option 2: A vessel with unfished sablefish IFQ onboard cannot leave gear on the grounds untended for more than (sub-options 5-10 days)*

**Element 3:** Limit of 9-inch maximum width of tunnel opening does not apply when vessel has unfished halibut IFQ onboard

**Element 4:** All vessels using pot gear to fish IFQ are required to use logbooks and VMS

NMFS will include pot gear effort and catch of IFQ species in its annual management report to the Council. The Council intends to review the effects of allowing retention of halibut in pot gear three years after implementation.

# “Targeted” versus “incidental” caught halibut

- Regulations don’t make a distinction for targeted or directed fishing of IFQ species.
- We use this distinction for analytical purposes only.

No retention  
(Alt 1)

## Retention of only intrinsically incidental-caught halibut

- No fishing behavior change
- All impacts would likely be *de minimis* given the low levels of (legal-sized) halibut PSC in sablefish pot gear

## Halibut targeted with pot gear

- Would constitute fishing behavior change
- Likely expand all environmental and economic impacts
- Under current proposal, still would need quota for both species

Pot gear as an  
authorized  
gear type for  
halibut  
(not part of  
current  
proposal)

# Purpose and Need (p12)

## Increase resource efficiency and economic efficiency for individual harvesters

→ Responding to 2 types of whale problems:

- Pot gear - “fishing twice” due to required discards
- HAL gear - halibut mortality due to killer whale predation on halibut caught on HAL gear.

→ Individual economic impacts:

- Decreasing variable costs of fishing
- Fishing more opportunistically, increase flexibility for harvesters

→ Also:

- Minimizing gear conflicts
- Reducing unaccounted for mortality due to whale depredation

# Whale Depredation in the BSAI, p75

- Occurs where longline fisheries overlap with high densities of resident killer whales.
  - Primarily killer whales in BSAI, sperm whales more of an issue in the GOA
- Large pods find and stay on gear/fish
- Reduces catch rates
- Decreases accuracy of stock assessments
- Longliners drop gear back down or move → increased costs

**Environmental  
Assessment  
Section 3  
Page 23**

**Marine Mammals**

**Sablefish**

**Halibut**

**Seabirds**

**Other Incidental Catch**

**Pribilof Islands Blue King Crab (PIBKC)  
& Habitat Conservation Zone (PIHCZ)**

# Marine Mammals – Section 3.8, p66

## Alternative 2:

- Potentially decreased opportunity for gear interactions (already minimal) with killer whales
  - Other marine mammals: Risk of entanglement is the same as long as number of vertical lines in the water is the same.
- Decreased potential for modified whale foraging behavior
- Consider gear storage over winter, even without “unfished IFQ” onboard- can increase risk of entanglement
- BSAI sablefish/halibut HAL and pot fisheries are Category III

# Sablefish – Section 3.4, p27



- Additional opportunity could incentivize participation
- Minimal increase in sablefish harvest
  - Gear set differently for sablefish vs. halibut (depth, location)
- BSAI sablefish TAC not fully harvested
  - 2017: BS = 54%, AI = 30%
- Element 3 - changes in tunnel opening maximum size → changes in sablefish size selectivity.

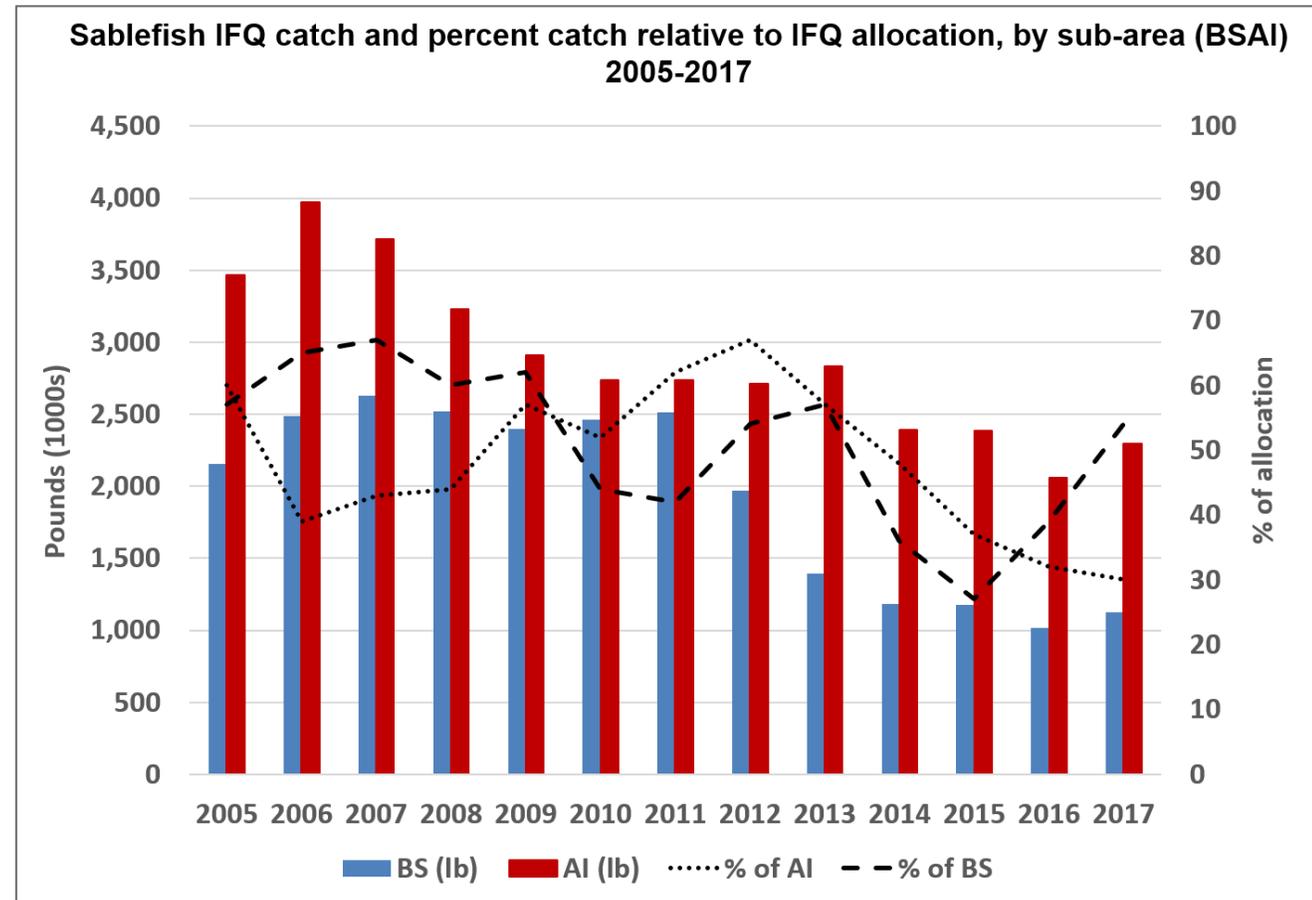


Figure 27. Source: <http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/ram/ifqreports.htm>

# Halibut – Section 3.5, p37

**Table 5. Average halibut bycatch (round mt, not mortality) and ratio of halibut to groundfish in BSAI fixed gear fisheries 2013-2016**

Target	Area	POT		
		Halibut Bycatch Wt.	Groundfish Basis Wt.	Ratio
Sablefish	BS	5	172	0.028
	AI	2	65	0.028
BSAI Sablefish average		3	119	0.028

## Alternative 2

- No significant increase in overall harvest of halibut (fully prosecuted fishery)
- Decrease in depredation-caused mortality on HAL gear with shift to pot gear
- Reduction in wastage from pot fishery regulatory discards
- DMRs for pots lower than HAL
- Size selectivity: pot gear may catch smaller halibut on average
- Changes in fishery footprint
  - Access to areas where HAL gear was not effective due to whale depredation
- Elements adopted & fleet behavior → magnitude of changes

# Incidental Catch – Section 3.7, p62

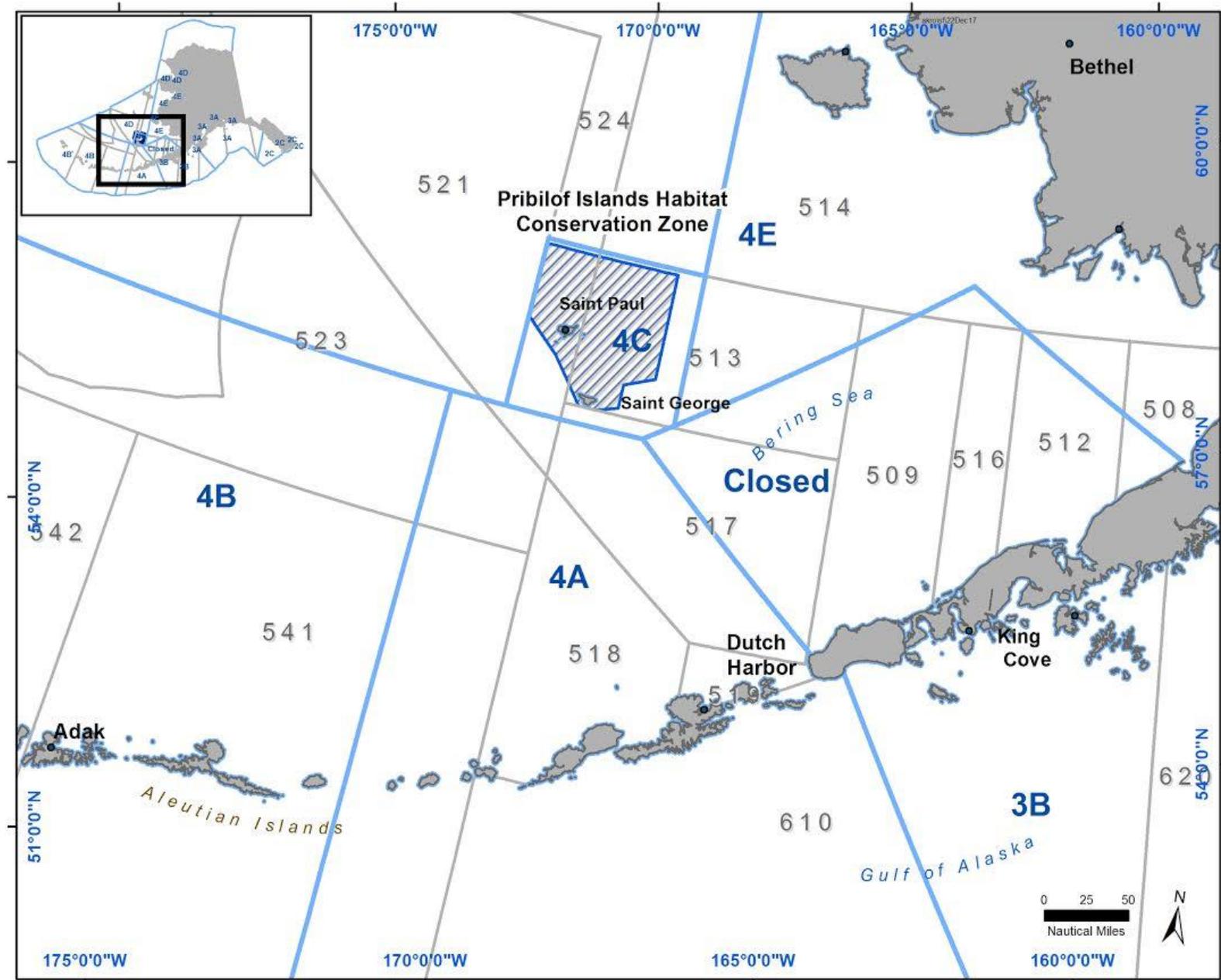
- Shift in effort from HAL to pots → shift in bycatch in terms of:
  - Magnitude
  - Size selectivity
  - Species composition
- Halibut incidental to sablefish pots:
  - *De minimis* impact on bycatch
  - Possible overall increase in crab and flatfish bycatch
- Bycatch in “halibut pots” unknown, may be similar to that of Pacific cod pots?

# Seabirds – Section 3.9, p82

- HAL gear generally has more interactions with seabirds than pots
  - Pot gear = 2% of all seabird bycatch in groundfish and halibut fisheries
  - Sablefish & halibut HAL  $\approx$  13%
  - Small potential to minimize gear interactions if there is a shift from HAL to pot gear.

# PIBKC

Section 3.6  
Page 48



## **Description of the fisheries**

## **Analysis of impacts: Alt 1**

## **Analysis of impacts: Alt 2**

- Socio-economic impacts to harvesters
- Possible new entrants/ affected entities
- Impacts on other halibut user groups
- Impacts to processors and communities
- Elements under Alt 2
- Enforcement perspective

# Description of the Fisheries (p89-110)

- Management of the IFQ and CDQ Programs
- Descriptive stats in the sablefish IFQ/ CDQ fishery TAC, how much is caught, the number/ characteristics of the participants, their diversification, QS overlap
- One table on the BSAI state and federal Pacific cod participants, to show the number and size of vessels
- Updated information on the 2017 sablefish pot fishery in the GOA
- Similar descriptive stats on the halibut IFQ/ CDQ fishery TAC, how much is caught, the number/ characteristics of the participants, their diversification, QS overlap
- Background on communities – especially those related to the BSAI halibut fisheries because that is the primarily thing that may change here

# Alt 1: No action – Section 4.6 (p110)

- Pot gear would not be authorized as a legal gear type to harvest halibut in the BSAI.
- Legal and sublegal-sized halibut discarded in the sablefish pot fishery in the BSAI would continue to constitute wastage (i.e. discards required by regulations).
- Whale depredation would be expected to persist in the HAL halibut fishery (particularly in certain areas)
- When using HAL gear, vessels fishing for sablefish IFQ or CDQ in the BSAI can (and must) continue to retain legal-size halibut, if they have remaining halibut IFQ.
- No *required retention* of halibut IFQ or CDQ with pot gear

# Alt 2: Allow retention of halibut in sablefish pot gear – Section 4.7 (p111)

## Socio-economic impacts to harvesters:

- Increasing flexibility for IFQ and CDQ participants in the BSAI
- Minimize variable costs
- Chance to fish their quota opportunistically
- Different impacts if incidental versus targeted effort
- Possible negative impacts in some circumstances - would create not only the opportunity to retain halibut in pot gear, but also the requirement if someone on board has available quota

# Possible “new entrant”

1) BSAI sablefish IFQ/ CDQ holders that have previously fished with pot gear (Table 19, p99)

Sector	Year	Pot gear		HAL gear	
		BSAI sablefish (IFQ)	BSAI sablefish (CDQ)	BSAI sablefish (IFQ)	BSAI sablefish (CDQ)
CP	2011	2		10	3
	2012	1	1	12	1
	2013			7	3
	2014			8	2
	2015			7	
	2016			8	3
CV	2011	7	3	52	7
	2012	4	2	42	5
	2013	4	3	38	4
	2014	4	2	36	6
	2015	3	2	38	3
	2016	4	2	36	9
Total unique vessels		11	6	97	26
Total unique vessels between IFQ and CDQ		11		102	

# Sablefish pot vessels in the BSAI

Diversification (Table 22, p102)

Year	Count of vessels in the BSAI sablefish IFQ fishery using pot fishery	Of the vessel that fished BSAI sablefish IFQ with pot gear, number of vessels that also fished BSAI...					
		Sablefish with pot gear (CDQ)	Sablefish with HAL gear (IFQ)	Sablefish with HAL gear (CDQ)	Halibut with HAL gear (IFQ)	Halibut with HAL gear (CDQ)	<u>Pcod</u> with pot gear
2011	9	3	3	0	4	3	3
2012	5	3	3	0	3	1	2
2013	4	3	0	0	0	1	1
2014	4	2	0	0	1	0	1
2015	3	2	0	0	2	1	0
2016	4	2	1	0	4	0	1

Source: ADF&G/CFEC Fish Tickets, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive\_FT

# Possible “new entrant”

2) Area 4 halibut IFQ/CDQ holders that have previously fished with HAL gear (Table 26, p107)

Year	LOA category	HAL gear	
		BSAI halibut (IFQ)	BSAI halibut (CDQ)
2011	<50ft	42	228
	≥ 50ft and < 60ft	40	8
	≥ 60ft	41	19
2012	<50ft	38	228
	≥ 50ft and < 60ft	36	10
	≥ 60ft	33	16
2013	<50ft	33	236
	≥ 50ft and < 60ft	35	8
	≥ 60ft	31	19
2014	<50ft	39	89
	≥ 50ft and < 60ft	27	6
	≥ 60ft	28	18
2015	<50ft	34	56
	≥ 50ft and < 60ft	29	9
	≥ 60ft	26	18
2016	<50ft	31	57
	≥ 50ft and < 60ft	30	8
	≥ 60ft	25	13

Source: ADF&G/CFEC Fish Tickets, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive\_FT

# Possible “new entrant”

## 3) Operators of BSAI Pacific cod pot vessels (Table 21, page 101)

Year	LOA category	Pot gear	HAL gear
2011	<50ft		3
	≥ 50ft and < 60ft	15	7
	≥ 60ft	37	30
2012	<50ft	2	6
	≥ 50ft and < 60ft	18	4
	≥ 60ft	34	29
2013	<50ft	2	10
	≥ 50ft and < 60ft	23	5
	≥ 60ft	34	29
2014	<50ft		5
	≥ 50ft and < 60ft	20	3
	≥ 60ft	35	28
2015	<50ft	1	4
	≥ 50ft and < 60ft	21	3
	≥ 60ft	27	28
2016	<50ft	1	1
	≥ 50ft and < 60ft	27	1
	≥ 60ft	28	28

Source: ADF&G/CFEC Fish Tickets, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive\_FT

# Possible “new entrant”

4) Operators of GOA sablefish IFQ vessels that have recently fished with pot gear (Table 24, p10-3)

Area	# of vessels	sablefish (mt)
610	6	225.9
620	17	396.1
630	3	40.4
640	10	92.2
650	10	137.2
Total	22	891.7

Source: NMFS Catch Accounting, sourced through AKFIN

# Possible “new entrant”

## 5) Other new entrants

- Sablefish HAL vessels in the BSAI; (Table 20, p100)

Year	LOA category	Pot gear		HAL gear	
		BSAI sablefish (IFQ)	BSAI sablefish (CDQ)	BSAI sablefish (IFQ)	BSAI sablefish (CDQ)
2011	<50ft			10	
	≥ 50ft and < 60ft			28	4
	≥ 60ft	9	3	24	6
2012	<50ft			7	
	≥ 50ft and < 60ft			20	4
	≥ 60ft	5	3	27	2
2013	<50ft			6	
	≥ 50ft and < 60ft			20	3
	≥ 60ft	4	3	19	4
2014	<50ft			10	1
	≥ 50ft and < 60ft			16	4
	≥ 60ft	4	2	18	3
2015	<50ft			7	
	≥ 50ft and < 60ft	1	1	20	3
	≥ 60ft	2	1	18	
2016	<50ft			8	3
	≥ 50ft and < 60ft			18	5
	≥ 60ft	4	2	18	4

Source: ADF&G/CFEC Fish Tickets, data compiled by AKFIN in Comprehensive\_FT

# Alt 2: Allow retention of halibut in sablefish pot gear

## Impact on other halibut user groups

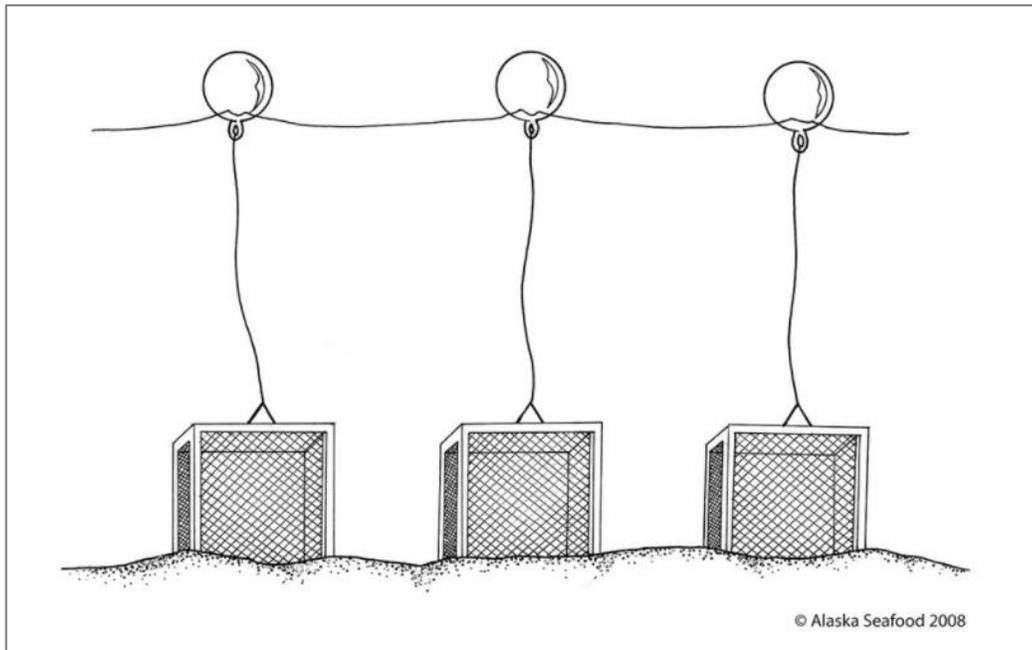
- If retention is incidental-only halibut, *de minimis* change
- If we see more than an inconsequential amount of halibut in pot gear there could be an impact to halibut user with a direct allocation as the wastage decreases.
- Could account for unobserved mortality due to whale depredation

## Impact on processors and communities

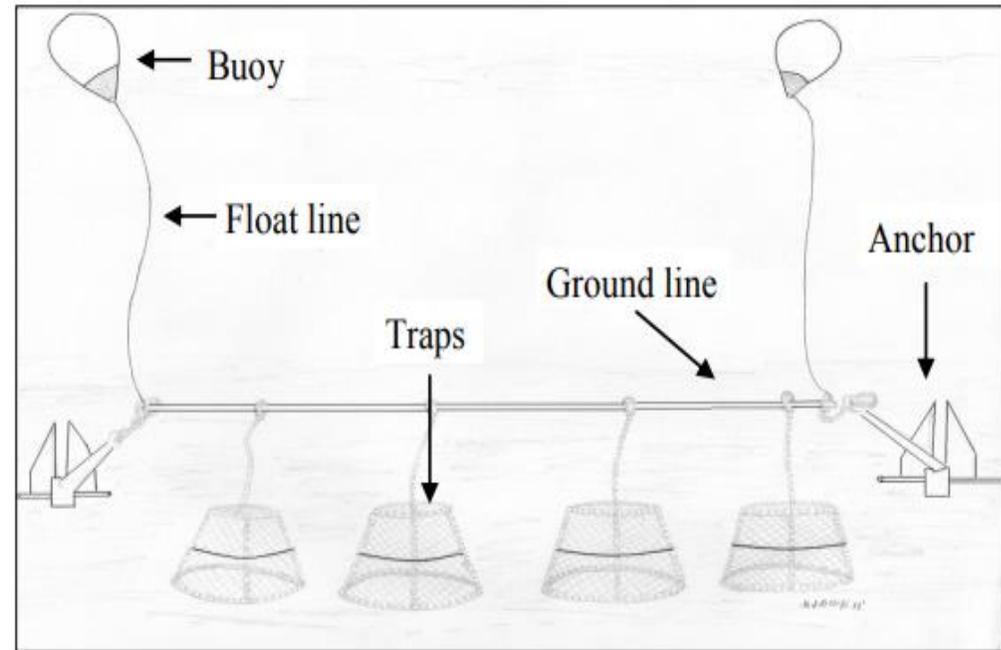
- No big changes in sablefish harvest or delivery
- No changes in the overall amount of Area 4 halibut landed
- May be some changes in the distribution of Area 4 halibut landings

# Element 1:

- Both single and longline pots



Source: ASMI, harvesting gear types



Source: <http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov>

## Element 2:

- Gear retrieval
- Option 1: No gear tending requirement (status quo)
- Option 2: A vessel with unfished sablefish IFQ onboard cannot leave gear on the grounds for more than (sub-options, 5-10 days)

### GOA gear retrieval rules for comparison

GOA Area	Sector	Pot gear retrieval rules
SEO	CV	Remove gear <b>when the vessel leaves the fishing grounds to make a landing</b>
SEO	CP	Redeploy or remove gear from the fishing grounds within <b>five days</b> after deploying the gear
WY and CGOA	CV or CP	Redeploy or remove gear from the fishing grounds within <b>five days</b> after deploying the gear
WGOA	CV or CP	Redeploy or remove gear from the fishing grounds within seven days after deploying the gear

## Element 3:

- Exemption from 9x9-inch tunnel opening

*Prototype semi-nesting sablefish pots with a stowable trigger for stacking*



Source: National Fisherman, Neptune Marine photo

## Element 4:

- Require VMS and logbooks

→ VMS is required by vessels participating in certain fisheries.

- Vessels that fish IFQ sablefish are required to have an operating VMS on board
- So are vessels with an FFP fishing in the Aleutian Islands

→ Daily Fishing Logbooks are required based on catcher vessel LOA or required if a CP

- CPs must all complete a logbook
- Required on catcher vessels 60 ft or greater LOA using fixed gear to harvest sablefish or halibut IFQ

# Enforcement recommendations

- **Alt 2:** Allow (and require) the retention of legal-size halibut, for consistency with GOA regulations.
- **Element 1:** No OLE recommendation on single versus longline pots
- **Element 2:** OLE recommends the BSAI remains consistent with Western Gulf regulations by adopting the requirement that a vessel operator must redeploy or remove all [longline] pot gear that is assigned to the vessel and deployed to fish IFQ sablefish within seven days of deploying the gear.
- **Element 3:** OLE recommends keeping the existing 9-inch maximum tunnel opening requirement for all areas for consistency.
- **Element 4:** OLE recommends that if the state adopts these halibut retention in pots in the AI sablefish fishery, a VMS requirement be adopted as well. OLE recommends requiring the use of Daily Fishing Logbook for consistency with GOA requirements

**Primary interest in keeping rules simple and consistent.**  
People are looking for flexibility. But people also get frustrated with complicated regs that switch from area to area.