

North Pacific Council
D-2 GOA Pot Gear for Sablefish Motion

December 15, 2013

Council staff initiate an analysis for a regulatory amendment to allow the use of pot gear in the Gulf of Alaska Sablefish IFQ fishery.

Draft Purpose and Need

Interactions with sperm whales in the Central and Eastern Gulf, 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 have 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 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 gear in the GOA Sablefish IFQ fishery

Element 1. Pot limits

Option 1. No limits

Option 2. Limit the number of pots that can be fished up to 400 pots.

Element 2. Gear retrieval

Option 1. Allow pot gear to be left on the fishing grounds.

Option 2. Require vessels to remove their pot gear when making a landing.

Suboption 2a. Provide an exemption for vessels less than 60', 50', or 40'.

Suboption 2b. Allow exemptions for the gear removal requirement for safety issues.

Option 3. Require the location of pots left on the grounds or lost on the grounds to be submitted when landings are made.

Element 3. Gear specifications.

Option 1. No gear specifications.

Option 2. Require pots to be used in a longline configuration.

Option 3. Require the use of neutrally buoyant groundline.

Option 4. Require both ends of the pot longline set to be marked.

Element 4. Retention of incidentally caught halibut.

Option 1. Allow the retention of halibut caught incidentally in sablefish pots, provided the sablefish IFQ holder also holds sufficient halibut IFQ.