



Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Board of Fisheries

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ALASKA BOARD OF FISHERIES
EMERGENCY MEETING – BILL CONNOR SOUTHEAST SABLEFISH PETITION
Teleconference
August 30, 2016

MEETING SUMMARY

Board Members Present

John Jensen, Vice Chair

Al Cain

Israel Payton

Sue Jeffrey

Reed Morisky

Robert Ruffner

Board Members Absent

Orville Huntington

The Board of Fisheries (board) met by teleconference at 10:00am on August 30, 2016, to consider a petition by Bill Connor seeking to amend regulations regarding season dates and gear conversion for commercial longline sablefish harvesters in the Southern Southeast sablefish fishery. Mr. Connor's petition sought to 1.) allow longline harvesters to extend their fishing season after the pot fishery closed, and/or 2.) convert the longline gear to pot gear within their permit category. Mr. Connor indicated killer whale predation on the fishing grounds was significantly increasing, leading to more required harvest of sablefish and bycatch to fulfill the equal share quota, and an increase in costs associated with harvesting.

At the teleconference board members heard from staff with the Department of Law (Law), Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC), and the Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G). Law and CFEC provided input regarding the board and CFEC's authorities. The board could change the season date under 5 AAC 28.110 and had already allowed for pot gear in 5 AAC 28.130. CFEC would be required to initiate the regulatory process to allow Southern Southeast sablefish fishermen to convert their current permits from longline gear to longline and pot gear.

The board heard from ADF&G staff regarding the amount of harvest of sablefish and bycatch in this fishery in recent years, including the 2016 season. The board learned the sablefish fishery was experiencing a declining catch per unit effort or CPUE, but the department did not have conclusive evidence linking it to killer whale predation. Sablefish populations were generally declining statewide.

While the board recognized the killer whale predation was not desirable, it did not find the situation justified an emergency regulation. The board determined it could still act on this situation through



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Summary of Actions

an agenda change request that was before the board for the upcoming work session, and encouraged the CFEC to consider conducting a regulatory review to consider the merits of allowing Southern Southeast longline permits to convert to pot gear.

The board established listening sites in Juneau, Wrangell, Petersburg, and Ketchikan, and streamed the meeting live over the internet.