

1989 CENTRAL REGION GROUND FISH

ANNUAL MANAGEMENT REPORT



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## INTRODUCTION

Groundfish, or bottomfish, refers to all marine finfish excluding halibut, herring, salmonids, and smelt. Federally managed waters, also called the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ; previously called the Fishery Conservation Zone, or FCZ), extend from 3-200 miles offshore from the State of Alaska. Federally managed waters in the Gulf of Alaska are classified into three areas. The Eastern Regulatory Area includes waters east of 147° W long., the Central Regulatory Area includes waters between 147° and 159° W long., and the Western Regulatory Area includes waters between 159° and 170° W long. Management jurisdiction of the State of Alaska generally includes waters extending three miles from shore. Specific descriptions are available in the Alaska Statutes. A booklet solely covering groundfish fishing regulations in State waters was distributed for the first time in July 1989 and consolidated many of the groundfish fishing regulations.

Prior to 1989, the Central Region (Region II) of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Division of Commercial Fisheries, managed groundfish fishing effort in all State waters located north of Cape Douglas (58°52' N lat.) and west of Cape Suckling (143°53' W long.). However, during the 1988 winter meeting of the Alaska Board of Fisheries, State waters between 147° and 159° W long., excluding waters of Shelikof Strait north of 57°30' N lat. and west of 154° W long., and inside waters of Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet, were redesignated as "Area J" of the Central Gulf of Alaska management area and placed under jurisdiction of the Westward Region (Region IV). State waters

east of 147° W long. were redesignated as the Eastern Gulf of Alaska and placed under the jurisdiction of the Southeast Region (Region I). Emergency Orders to manage fishing effort in the Eastern Gulf of Alaska and the Central Gulf of Alaska management areas are now issued by ADF&G offices in Regions I and IV, respectively. However, most vessels fishing within State waters west of Cape Suckling and north of Cape Douglas make trips to and from ports within Region II. Consequently, the Homer ADF&G office has continued to monitor the area registration and groundfish harvest for State waters between Cape Suckling and Cape Douglas. For data summarized in this report, State waters located west of Cape Suckling and north of Cape Douglas will be referred to as State waters of the Central Gulf of Alaska.

Groundfish management areas controlled by Region II include the Cook Inlet Area (waters of Cook Inlet enclosed by a line from Point Adam to Cape Elizabeth to Cape Douglas) and the Prince William Sound Area (waters of Prince William Sound enclosed by lines from Point Whittshed to Point Bentinck, from Cape Hitchinbrook to Zaikof Point, and from Cape Cleare to Cape Puget). Data summaries for this report designate groundfish harvested from Region II State waters as originating from Cook Inlet, Prince William Sound, or the Central Gulf of Alaska (Figure 1).

#### **FISHING SEASONS AFFECTING REGION II FISHERMEN**

Most Region II groundfish fishermen did not fish exclusively in State waters or the EEZ and were affected by both State and

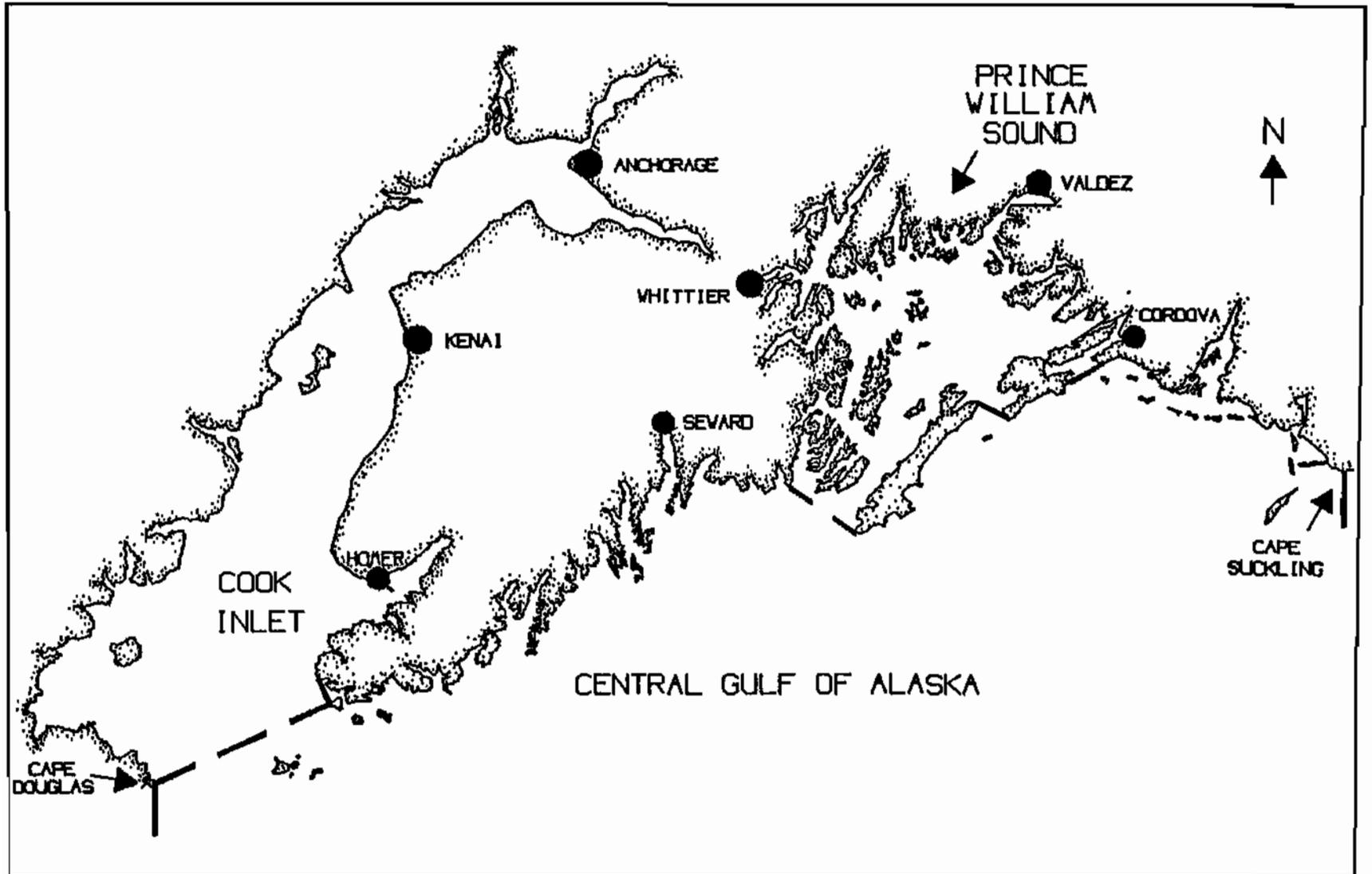


Figure 1. Reporting areas for groundfish harvest from Region II state waters.

Federal openings and closures (Table 1). Most species or species assemblage closures in State waters conformed to closures of directed fishing for the same species or species assemblages in the adjacent EEZ.

With the exception of sablefish, all fisheries in State waters of Region II and in the EEZ adjacent to Region II were opened for directed fishing at 00:01 Alaska standard time, January 1, 1989. Directed longline fishing for sablefish in the Gulf of Alaska EEZ opened on April 1. The sablefish fishery within Prince William Sound was initially scheduled to open April 1, but was delayed until June 12 to avoid gear or product contamination from crude oil released by the March 24, 1989 grounding of the T/V EXXON VALDEZ on Bligh Reef in Prince William Sound. Groundfish fishing in Prince William Sound and in State waters of the Central Gulf of Alaska west of Cape Suckling and north of Cape Douglas was also closed from April 30 to June 12 to avoid crude oil contamination of gear or product.

#### REGION II GROUND FISH DATA ENTRY

##### Fish Tickets Processed in Region II

As part of a cooperative agreement with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), fish ticket records for groundfish harvested from State waters of Region II, from State waters and the EEZ adjacent to Region II, and from processing companies operating within Region II, were entered into the NMFS maintained database from a computer terminal located in the Homer ADF&G

Table 1. Primary openings and closures affecting Region II fishermen in 1989.

DATE	WATERS	FISHERY	GEAR	ACTION
01/01	CENTRAL GULF - FED	SABLEFISH	POT	CLOSED
03/21	SHELIKOF STRAIT-FED	POLLOCK	ALL	CLOSED
03/23	CENTRAL GULF - STATE	POLLOCK	ALL	CLOSED
03/23	PRINCE W. S. - STATE	POLLOCK	ALL	CLOSED
03/23	COOK INLET - STATE	POLLOCK	ALL	CLOSED
04/01	PRINCE W. S. - STATE	SABLEFISH	ALL	DELAYED
04/12	WEST YAKUTAT - FED	SABLEFISH	TRAWL	CLOSED
04/30	PRINCE W. S. - STATE	BOTTOMFISH	ALL	CLOSED
04/30	EASTERN & OUTER - STATE	BOTTOMFISH	ALL	OPENED
06/02	CENTRAL GULF - STATE	SABLEFISH	HOOK-AND-LINE	CLOSED
06/06	CENTRAL GULF - FED	SABLEFISH	TRAWL	CLOSED
06/09	WEST YAKUTAT - FED	SABLEFISH	HOOK-AND-LINE	CLOSED
06/12	PRINCE W. S. - STATE	SABLEFISH	ALL	OPENED
06/12	EASTERN & OUTER - STATE	BOTTOMFISH	ALL	OPENED
06/13	EASTERN GULF - FED	PELAGIC SHELF ROCKFISH	ALL	CLOSED
06/19	EASTERN GULF - FED	OTHER ROCKFISH	ALL	CLOSED
06/29	CENTRAL GULF - FED	SABLEFISH	HOOK-AND-LINE	CLOSED
07/05	CENTRAL GULF - FED	OTHER ROCKFISH	ALL	CLOSED
07/06	CENTRAL GULF - STATE	SABLEFISH	HOOK-AND-LINE	CLOSED
07/10	CENTRAL GULF - STATE	OTHER ROCKFISH	ALL	CLOSED
08/14	PRINCE W. S. - STATE	GROUND FISH	TRAWL	CLOSED
08/25	PRINCE W. S. - PORT WELLS	GROUND FISH	TRAWL	OPENED
09/02	GULF OF ALASKA - FED	GROUND FISH	BOTTOM TRAWL	CLOSED
09/02	GULF OF ALASKA - FED	GROUND FISH	BOTTOM TRAWL	CLOSED
09/02	GULF OF ALASKA - STATE	GROUND FISH	BOTTOM TRAWL	CLOSED
09/02	COOK INLET - STATE	GROUND FISH	BOTTOM TRAWL	CLOSED
09/02	PRINCE W. S. - STATE	GROUND FISH	BOTTOM TRAWL	CLOSED
09/15	CENTRAL/WESTERN GULF - FED	POLLOCK	PELAGIC TRAWL	CLOSED
09/15	CENTRAL/WESTERN GULF- FED	POLLOCK	EXCL BTM TRAWL	OPENED
09/15	CENTRAL/WESTERN GULF- STATE	POLLOCK	EXCL BTM TRAWL	OPENED
09/23	WESTERN GULF - FED	PACIFIC COD	ALL	CLOSED
09/23	WESTERN GULF - STATE	PACIFIC COD	ALL	CLOSED
10/01	CENTRAL/WESTERN GULF- FED	POLLOCK	ALL	CLOSED
10/07	EASTERN GULF - FED	SABLEFISH	HOOK & LINE	CLOSED
10/01	CENTRAL/WESTERN GULF - FED	POLLOCK	ALL	CLOSED
10/01	CENTRAL/WESTERN GULF - STATE	POLLOCK	ALL	CLOSED
10/07	EASTERN GULF - FED	SABLEFISH	HOOK & LINE	CLOSED
11/12	GULF OF ALASKA - FED	FLOUNDER	BOTTOM TRAWL	OPENED

office. Fisheries contributing to the groundfish harvest reported from Region II included the sablefish fishery in Prince William Sound; longline, trawl, and jig fisheries for miscellaneous groundfish in Prince William Sound, Cook Inlet, and State waters of the Gulf of Alaska; and longline and trawl fisheries in the EEZ of the Gulf of Alaska, Bering Sea, and Aleutian Islands Management Areas. Harvest data in this report are expressed in pounds and metric tons (MT) for round weight. Product value was expressed as the average price-per-pound paid to fishermen for dressed weight groundfish product.

Although representing a variety of groundfish fisheries, groundfish fish tickets processed in the ADF&G Homer office reflected the increasing domestication of EEZ fisheries during recent years. Preliminary groundfish harvests reported by Region II based companies totaled 61.8 million pounds (28,010 MT). This represented a 34% increase over the 1988 harvest of 46.4 million pounds (20,870 MT; Schroeder and Morrison, 1989; Table 2). The greatest increase (336%) occurred in "other groundfish" and may have indicated more accurate catch and discard reporting. Increases were also observed in the harvest of flounder species (229%) and Pacific cod (130%), while the harvest of rockfish species and sablefish decreased by 4% and 7%, respectively.

#### Deliveries by Port for Companies within Region II

Companies with offices located within Region II operate fishing vessels in State waters both within and outside of Region II as well as in the EEZ of the Gulf of Alaska, the Bering Sea, and the Aleutian Island management areas. Of the 61.8 million pounds of

**Table 2. Groundfish (round weight in pounds by species group) harvested from State waters and the EEZ and landed to Region II based processors, 1981-1989.**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>PACIFIC COD</b>	<b>FLOUNDERS</b>	<b>ROCKFISH</b>	<b>SABLEFISH</b>	<b>OTHER</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
1981	11,020	72,732	134,444	2,204	88,160	308,560
1982	26,448	132,240	22,040	130,036	70,528	381,292
1983	22,040	28,652	37,468	304,152	136,648	528,960
1984	8,816	11,020	94,772	3,193,596	15,428	3,323,632
1985	68,324	74,936	3,920,916	6,012,512	185,136	10,261,824
1986	189,544	59,508	2,129,064	9,406,672	26,448	11,811,236
1987	2,999,334	881,985	8,028,832	12,004,742	166,578	24,081,471
1988	5,793,211	2,085,354	21,110,677	15,447,243	1,582,905	46,019,390
1989	13,343,056	6,851,114	20,258,691	14,401,718	6,901,238	61,755,817

groundfish harvested in 1989 by Region II companies, 78% (47.9 million pounds, or 21,730 MT) was harvested and/or processed by floating domestic processors (FLD's; catcher-processor or mothership-processor vessels) operating primarily in the EEZ (Table 3). Landings by FLD's were comprised primarily of rockfish (41%), Pacific cod (28%), flounders (14%), and "other groundfish" (14%). Of the landings made to shore-based processors in Region II ports, nearly 11.0 million pounds (4,980 MT), 97% of which were sablefish harvested from the EEZ, were delivered to Seward, 1.7 million pounds (780 MT) to Cordova, and 1.1 million pounds (512 MT) to the other ports. Over 99% of the groundfish harvest reported by companies based in Region II was from the EEZ, primarily in the Central Gulf of Alaska management area. The 639,000 pounds (290 MT) of groundfish harvested from State waters (including State waters outside of Region II) by vessels of Region II-based companies were comprised of sablefish (29%), rockfish (24%), Pacific cod (18%), and "other groundfish" (23%). Pollock comprised a low proportion of the catch from Region II State waters, and was included in the "other groundfish" category. However, pollock did comprise 18% of the catch from all State waters, including those waters outside of Region II.

## CENTRAL REGION GROUND FISH FISHERIES

### Prince William Sound Sablefish Fishery

A special use permit is required for participation in the Prince William Sound sablefish fishery, and 86 fishermen obtained

Table 3. Round weight (pounds) of groundfish harvested during 1989 by companies in Region II ports.

PORT	WATERS <sup>1</sup>	VESSELS	LANDINGS	DEMERSAL ROCKFISH	OTHER ROCKFISH	POLLOCK	SABLEFISH	PACIFIC COD	FLOUNDERS	OTHER GROUND FISH	LINGCOD	TOTAL
<b>CORDOVA</b>												
	STATE	10	11	1,006	5,186	0	15,620	1,189	0	0	3,359	26,360
	EEZ	36	56	11,872	29,262	0	1,658,690	0	0	0	814	1,700,638
	TOTAL	40	67	12,878	34,448	0	1,674,310	1,189	0	0	4,173	1,726,998
<b>FLD</b>												
	STATE	3	8	0	12,706	115,712	837	17,049	33,780	18,331	0	198,415
	EEZ	4	166	0	19,825,897	1,000,721	1,093,628	13,221,350	6,817,278	5,752,310	0	47,711,184
	TOTAL	4	174	0	19,838,603	1,116,433	1,094,465	13,238,399	6,851,058	5,770,641	0	47,909,599
<b>HOMER</b>												
	STATE	10	19	777	3,770	0	1,272	12,974	0	67	613	19,473
	EEZ	28	51	1,748	13,028	0	815,934	4,714	0	0	0	835,424
	TOTAL	37	70	2,525	16,798	0	817,206	17,688	0	67	613	854,897
<b>SEWARD</b>												
	STATE	13	51	22,127	31,627	376	67,794	24,565	0	0	4,334	150,823
	EEZ	166	337	15,025	208,421	0	10,616,130	0	0	0	770	10,840,346
	TOTAL	165	388	37,152	240,048	376	10,683,924	24,565	0	0	5,104	10,991,169
<b>VALDEZ</b>												
	STATE	4	4	116	0	0	0	3,686	0	204	0	4,006
	EEZ	1	2	0	68	0	28,845	0	0	0	0	28,913
	TOTAL	5	6	116	68	0	28,845	3,686	0	204	0	32,919
<b>WHITTIER</b>												
	STATE	26	115	4,537	71,518	1,516	102,968	57,529	56	2,111	0	240,235
	EEZ	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TOTAL	26	115	4,537	71,518	1,516	102,968	57,529	56	2,111	0	240,235
	STATE		208	28,563	124,807	117,604	188,491	116,992	33,836	20,713	8,306	639,312
	EEZ		612	28,645	20,076,676	1,000,721	14,213,227	13,226,064	6,817,278	5,752,310	1,584	61,116,505
	TOTAL		820	57,208	20,201,483	1,118,325	14,401,718	13,343,056	6,851,114	5,773,023	9,890	61,755,817

<sup>1</sup> STATE - Harvest from waters under state jurisdiction, including some state waters outside of Region II.  
 EEZ - Harvest from waters under federal jurisdiction in the Exclusive Economic Zone.

special use permits in 1989 (Table 4). Sablefish catch from inside Prince William Sound was 183,900 pounds (83 MT), round weight. This harvest was distributed among 25 vessels making 95 deliveries. Fishermen continued to enter the PWS sablefish fishery into the last week of December, even though this fishery closed by regulation at 24:00 hours, Alaska Standard Time, on December 31. The total catch of 184,000 round pounds placed the 1989 harvest near the midpoint of the guideline harvest level of 88,000 to 309,000 pounds.

Deliveries from the Prince William Sound sablefish fishery were reported as dressed weight by size class in one pound increments. Fish larger than a predetermined size were often reported as a "size plus" class (e.g., fish six pounds and larger may have been reported as 6+). The threshold used for the "size plus" class ranged from 8 to 13 lbs round weight (5 to 8 lbs dressed weight), and often varied between processors and even between deliveries to the same processor. For size composition summaries, harvest data by size class were converted to round weight, and all fish 8 lbs (round weight) and larger were pooled into a composite 8+ class. This 8+ class was the largest component of the fishery (Figure 2). The most prominent "single-size" class in the 1989 sablefish fishery was six pound fish (30 percent of the weight and 29 percent of the numbers from all deliveries). The lack of one and two pound fish probably reflects limited recruitment into the fishery. The lack of seven pound fish may reflect reporting discrepancies for this size class, selective removal (i.e., through harvest over several years) of this size class from the fishable biomass, or low abundance of a year class.

Table 4. Historical harvest (round weight in pounds, with metric tons in parenthesis) and effort in the Prince William Sound sablefish fishery, 1985-1989.<sup>1</sup>

YEAR	HARVEST (round wt in lbs)	VESSELS	LANDINGS	PRICE (\$/lb)	EX-VESSEL VALUE	PERMITS ISSUED
1985	383,290 (173 MT)	29	108			
1986	189,850 (86 MT)	32	36			88
1987	205,350 (93 MT)	71	120	\$0.66	\$135,530	116
1988	220,230 (99 MT)	54	145	\$0.99	\$218,030	76
1989	184,400 (83 MT)	25	95	\$0.80	\$147,520	86

<sup>1</sup> Preliminary data.

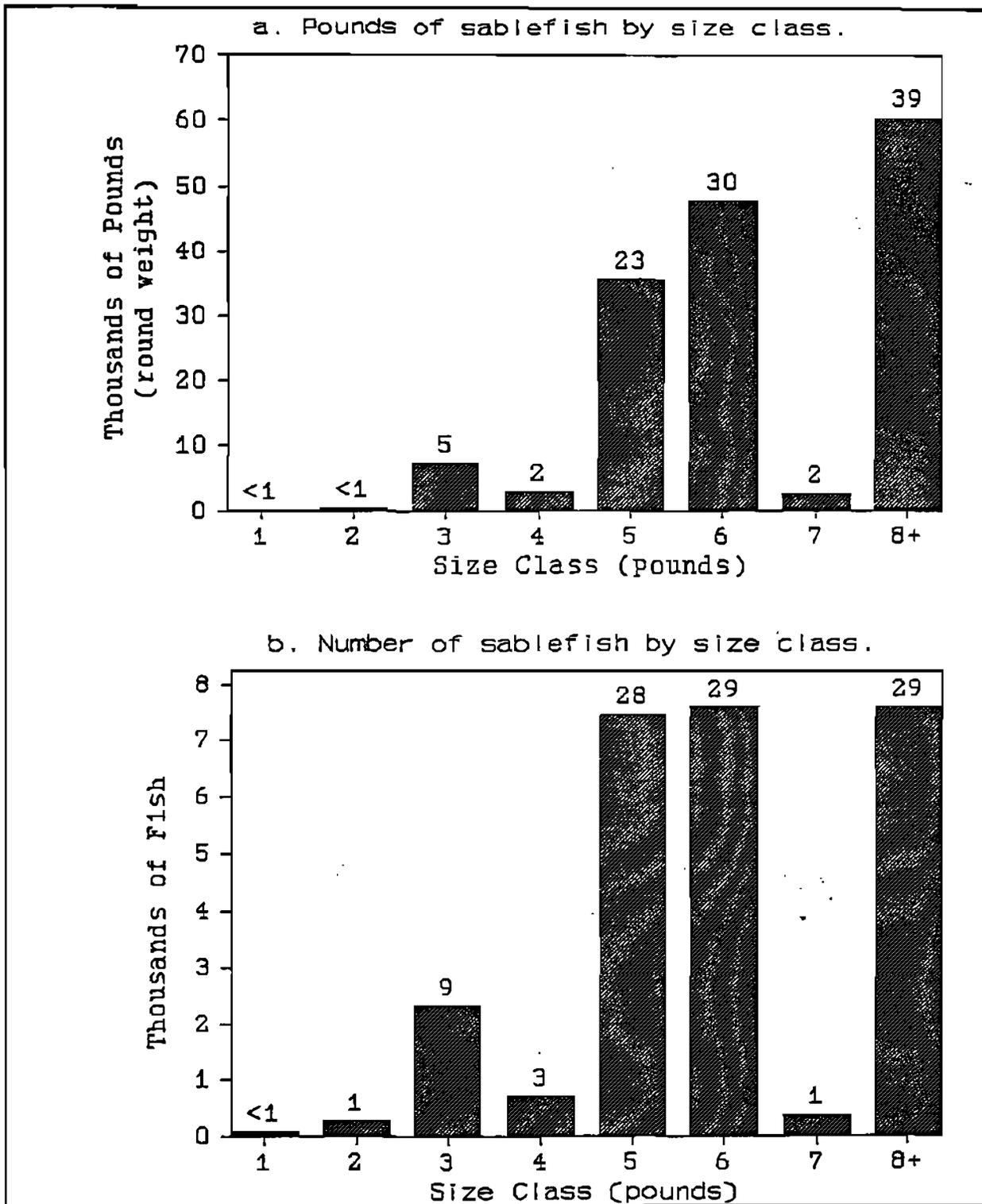


Figure 2. Numerical (a) and biomass (b) composition, in one pound size classes (% composition is shown above the bars), of the 1989 Prince William Sound sablefish harvest.

## Groundfish Area Registration

In addition to other licensing requirements, commercial groundfish fishermen must obtain an area registration prior to operating commercial groundfish gear in State waters (within three miles of shore). Fishermen who obtained groundfish area registrations for the Central Gulf of Alaska (waters located north of Cape Douglas and west of Cape Suckling) prior to the distribution of groundfish regulation books in July were registered for either the Cook Inlet or the Prince William Sound Management Area. After July, fishermen wanting to fish State waters west of 147° W long., north of Cape Douglas, and outside of Cook Inlet and Prince William Sound were registered for Area J.

During 1989, 31 fishermen registered for bottomfish in Prince William Sound, 52 registered for Cook Inlet, and 3 registered for Area J. Groundfish area registrations for Prince William Sound were often obtained in addition to the Prince William Sound sablefish permit. A fisherman possessing a Prince William Sound area registration and a Prince William Sound sablefish permit, as well as a sablefish interim use card (CFEC permit) and a miscellaneous finfish interim use card (CFEC permit), may retain both sablefish and miscellaneous groundfish in excess of the 20% incidental catch limits specified in 20 AAC 05.120.

## Other Groundfish Fisheries in State Waters of Region II

The timing of several groundfish fisheries in Region II was altered by the oil spill of the T/V EXXON VALDEZ in Prince

William Sound. The 1989 harvest of groundfish from Region II State waters was 449,340 pounds (204 MT), of which 326,920 pounds (148 MT) was taken from Prince William Sound, 6,640 (3 MT) from Cook Inlet, and 97,840 pounds (44 MT) from State waters of the Central Gulf of Alaska (Table 5).

Longline was the predominate gear type used by groundfish fishermen operating in Region II State waters, and accounted for 92% of the total Region II harvest in 1989. Jig and hand troll gear accounted for 4% of the harvest, and other gear types (e.g. bottom trawl and pots) accounted for the remaining 4% of the harvest.

#### PRODUCT VALUE

Groundfish harvested from State waters of Region II generated an ex-vessel value of \$325,900 (Table 5). Sablefish accounted for 75% of the total value, while rockfish accounted for 18%.

Price for dressed fish ranged from a high of \$1.25/lb for sablefish to a low of \$0.13/lb for pollock (Table 6). The average price paid for sablefish often included a "bonus" paid by some processors for multiple deliveries by the same vessel. Price for rockfish species ranged from \$0.30-\$0.44/lb.

#### FISHERIES OUTLOOK

Beginning in 1990, catcher vessels (fishermen), catcher

Table 5. Commercial harvest of groundfish from State waters of Region II during 1989.

	VESSELS	LANDINGS	PACIFIC				OTHER	LINGCOD	TOTAL
			ROCKFISH	SABLEFISH	COD	FLATFISH			
COOK INLET	5	6	136	687	5,812	0	0	0	6,635
PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND	39	142	90,527	183,915	65,203	56	3,885	1,280	344,866
CENTRAL GULF OF ALASKA <sup>1</sup>	20	54	50,907	10,585	26,245	0	389	9,709	97,835
TOTAL FROM REGION II	59	202	141,570	195,187	97,260	56	4,274	10,989	449,336
AVERAGE PRICE/LB			\$0.41	\$1.25	\$0.21	\$0.20	\$0.18	\$0.39	
ESTIMATED EX-VESSEL VALUE			\$57,447	\$243,984	\$20,425	\$11	\$766	\$4,286	\$326,918

<sup>1</sup> The Central Gulf of Alaska, as defined here, includes State waters of the Gulf of Alaska located north of Cape Douglas, west of Cape Suckling, and outside of Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet.

Table 6. Price paid by Region II processors for groundfish harvested from State waters during 1989.<sup>1</sup>

<u>FISH GROUP</u>	<u>VESSELS</u>	<u>DELIVERIES</u>	<u>POUNDS (DRESSED)</u>	<u>PRICE PAID (\$/LB)</u>
PACIFIC COD	27	65	90,608	.21
LINGCOD	13	22	7,556	.39
SLOPE ROCKFISH				
ROUGHEYE ROCKFISH	18	46	20,095	.42
UNSPECIFIED	14	31	21,781	.33
DEMERSAL ROCKFISH				
YELLOWEYE ROCKFISH	12	15	12,028	.44
UNSPECIFIED	10	10	7,741	.39
PELAGIC ROCKFISH				
BLACK ROCKFISH	7	21	12,909	.30
UNSPECIFIED	8	13	13,903	.34
THORNYHEAD (IDIOT) ROCKFISH				
	19	56	18,325	.59
UNSPECIFIED ROCKFISH	2	2	208	.31
POLLOCK	6	12	1,726	.13
SABLEFISH	30	103	125,913	1.25
OTHER GROUND FISH	6	10	2,419	.20

<sup>1</sup> Data was determined only from the deliveries where a sale value was provided by the processor, and does not include all the deliveries made to Region II ports.

processors, mothership processors, and shoreside processors involved in harvesting groundfish from the EEZ are required to file logbooks. Catcher vessels must complete a daily log showing data for each haul (e.g., duration of haul and estimated weight of catch by species), and then file quarterly and annual reports with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Reporting requirements for other portions of the industry are similar, except for the deletion of gear-effort data and the inclusion of employee (work-force) data. While some duplication results from different factions of the fishing industry each filing reports (e.g., catcher vessels and processors must each file separate reports of catch and discard by species, albeit that the catcher vessel data is only an estimate), NMFS anticipates that these additional reporting requirements will fill what has been a substantial void in the information required to manage groundfish fisheries in the EEZ.

Additionally, vessels 60 feet or longer (overall length) that harvest or process groundfish in the EEZ will be required to carry observers during a portion of the time spent fishing for groundfish. A shoreside processing facility that receives groundfish may also be required to have observers at the facility during a portion of the time when groundfish are being received. The extent of coverage for both vessels and processing facilities have been specified in the NMFS Observer Plan. Observers will be obtained through NMFS certified contractors, with costs for observers being paid by participating vessels or processing facilities. Public comments on the observer program were accepted through December 21, 1989, and, among other

modifications, resulted in the minimum vessel length requiring observer coverage being changed from 50 to 60 ft.

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