

Division of Commercial Fisheries
Sam Rabung, Director

Sitka Area Office
304 Lake Street, Room 103
Sitka, AK 99835



Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Doug Vincent-Lang, Commissioner

PO Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526
www.adfg.alaska.gov

Advisory Announcement

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CONTACT: Rhea Ehresmann
Region I Groundfish Project Leader
rhea.ehresmann@alaska.gov
(907) 747-6688

2023 SOUTHERN SOUTHEAST INSIDE SUBDISTRICT SABLEFISH FISHERY

The 2023 Southern Southeast Inside (SSEI) Subdistrict sablefish commercial annual harvest objective (AHO) is 643,360 round pounds, the same as the 2022 AHO. **Equal quota share (EQS) for each of the 22 permit holders will be 29,244 round pounds.** The number of permits for this fishery did not change for the 2023 season. Each permit holder's 2023 EQS will be adjusted based on any legal overages or underages from 2022 and a personal quota share (PQS) will be assigned.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) evaluates stock status and establishes the SSEI AHO using commercial fishery and survey catch per unit effort (CPUE) data, fishery and survey biological data (age, weight, length, and maturity), and stock status trends of sablefish populations in surrounding geographic areas. Indirect indices of abundance (fishery and survey CPUE data and biological data) are reviewed to determine the AHO for a given year because no directly measured abundance estimates exist for this stock. Results from the analyses of fishery and survey CPUE data showed a decline for sablefish in SSEI, including a 19% decrease in the longline survey CPUE from 2021 to 2022 and a 29% decrease in the pot fishery CPUE. Comparisons of the longline fishery CPUE are confidential due to fewer than 3 vessels fishing longline gear in 2022. Previous tagging studies suggest that sablefish in SSEI have a 30% chance of moving out of SSEI waters after 1 year of occupancy, generally moving into waters of the eastern Gulf of Alaska (GOA) and British Columbia, Canada (BC). However, the lack of older/larger fish in SSEI, particularly the older fecund females, cannot be fully explained by movement and migration given historical patterns in the age data. One positive indicator is the continued strong recruitment from the 2014, 2016, 2017, and 2018 age classes in SSEI as well as in other sablefish fisheries in neighboring geographic areas. Subsequently, no change from the 2022 to the 2023 AHO will continue to provide fishery stability and sustainability through conservative management action.

The SSEI sablefish fishery will open 8:00 a.m., Thursday, June 1, 2023, for both longline and pot fisheries. The SSEI sablefish fishery will close for both longline and pot fisheries at 12:00 noon, Wednesday, November 15, 2023.

Legal Gear

Sablefish may be taken in the directed SSEI sablefish fishery only by longline and pot gear. CFEC limited entry C61C permits can use both longline and pot gear while C91C permits are restricted to the use of pot gear only. Groundfish pot gear requires individual tunnel eye openings with perimeters 36 inches or less and a sidewall containing an escapement opening equal to or exceeding 18 inches in length that must be laced, sewn, or secured together by a single length of untreated, 100-percent cotton twine, no larger than 30 thread of which may be knotted at each end only and must be parallel to and within six inches of the bottom of the pot [5 AAC 39.145 (1)]. **Pots must have at least two circular escape rings, with a minimum inside diameter of three and three-fourths of an inch, installed on opposing vertical or sloping walls of the pot [5 AAC 28.130 (f)].** King and Tanner crab pots as described in 5 AAC 34.050 (2) and 5 AAC 35.050 (2) may not be used to take groundfish.

Registration and Logbook Requirements

Fishermen must register prior to fishing [5 AAC 28.106 (b)] and keep a logbook during the fishery. Registration forms and logbooks will be available at ADF&G offices in Southeast Alaska by May 15, 2023. Completed logbook pages must be attached to the ADF&G copy of the fish ticket at the time of delivery. Confidential envelopes for logbook pages may be requested when registering. Logbooks must include, by set, the date and time gear is set and retrieved, specific location of harvest by latitude and longitude in degrees and decimal minutes for start and ending positions, hook and pot spacing, amount of gear (number of hooks or pots), depth of set, estimated weight of the target and bycatch species retained or

discarded. Indicate for each set if the target species was sablefish or halibut and if there was any lost gear [5 AAC 28.175 (a)]. Permit holders will receive a PQS tracking form at the time of registration. This form is used to record the total round weight landed for each delivery. Each permit holder must, upon request, provide the buyer with the total round weight of sablefish the permit holder has landed to date. The department requests that a copy of the completed PQS tracking form is included with the final fish ticket of the season for that permit.

Tagged Sablefish

Fishermen are requested to document tagged sablefish. Please record tag number(s) and attach tags directly to the logbook with the corresponding set information. All persons who return an ADF&G sablefish tag will receive a tag reward (e.g., a hat or t-shirt). Tag returns with valid recovery information (date of recovery, latitude, and longitude) are entered into an annual random drawing for a cash prize.

Fish Ticket Requirements

Landed weights must be recorded on a fish ticket at the time of delivery. If a fisherman delivers fish in the round, the total round weight delivered must be recorded on the fish ticket. If a fisherman delivers dressed fish, the fish ticket must include the total landed dressed weight as well as the round weight equivalent, determined by using the standard 0.63 recovery rate. There is a 2% percent allowance for ice and slime when unrinsed whole iced sablefish are weighed. A fish ticket must be completed prior to the resumption of fishing and each permit holder must retain onboard their vessel, copies of all SSEI sablefish tickets from the current season as well as their updated PQS tracking form. When delivering fish out of state, a completed fish ticket must be submitted to ADF&G prior to transporting fish out of Alaska.

Possession and Landing Requirements

The holder of a CFEC permit or interim use permit for sablefish may not retain more sablefish in the directed fishery than the annual amount of sablefish EQS specified by the department [5 AAC 28.170 (g)]. However, if a permit holder’s harvest exceeds the permit holder’s EQS for that year, by not more than five percent, the department shall reduce the permit holder’s EQS for the following year by the amount of the overage [5 AAC 28.170 (j)]. If a permit holder’s harvest exceeds the permit holder’s equal quota share by more than five percent, the proceeds from the sale of the overage in excess of five percent shall be surrendered to the state and the permit holder may be prosecuted under AS 16.05.723. A permit holder may not knowingly exceed a quota share or exceed the EQS in an amount greater than five percent as such actions may be prosecuted under AS 16.05.722 or AS 16.05.723 [5 AAC 28.170 (j)]. If a permit holder’s harvest is less than the permit holder’s EQS for that year, the department shall increase the permit holder’s EQS only for the following year by the amount of the underage that does not exceed five percent of the EQS [5 AAC 28.170 (k)]. **For the 2023 SSEI sablefish fishery, five percent of the annual EQS equals 1,462 round pounds.**

Sablefish Live Market

A permit holder may possess live sablefish for delivery as live product except that, upon request of a local representative of the department or law enforcement, a permit holder must present sablefish for inspection and allow biological samples to be taken [5 AAC 28.170 (l)].

Bycatch Allowances for the SSEI Sablefish Fishery

Percentage indicates amount of bycatch that may be sold on a SSEI sablefish permit and is based on the round weight of sablefish and bycatch species or species group on board the vessel:

Species	Longline Gear	Pot Gear
All rockfish, including thornyheads	15% in aggregate, of which up to 1% may be DSR	
Lingcod	0%	0%
Pacific cod	20%	20%
Spiny dogfish	35%	20%
Other groundfish	20%	20%

CFEC permit holders fishing for groundfish or halibut in SSEI must retain, weigh, and report all rockfish taken, including thornyhead rockfish [5 AAC 28.171 (a)]. The allowable bycatch percentage by species or species group is based on the round weight of sablefish and round weight of bycatch on board the vessel [5 AAC 28.130 (d)(3) and 5 AAC 28.171

(a). The demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) assemblage includes yelloweye, quillback, canary, copper, tiger, China, and rosethorn rockfish [5 AAC 39.975 (34)]. All rockfish retained in excess of allowable bycatch limits shall be reported as bycatch overage on an ADF&G fish ticket. All proceeds from the sale of excess rockfish bycatch shall be surrendered to the state. Excess rockfish retained due to full retention requirements may be retained for personal use; however, the pounds must be documented as overage on the fish ticket.

A CFEC permit holder fishing for groundfish must retain all Pacific cod when the directed fishery for Pacific cod is open and up to the maximum retainable bycatch amount (20%) of Pacific cod when a directed fishery for Pacific cod is closed [5 AAC 28.070 (e)]. Pacific cod taken in excess of the bycatch limit in areas open to directed fishing for Pacific cod may be landed on a CFEC miscellaneous saltwater finfish permit designated for the gear that was used.

Prohibitions

A vessel or a person on board a vessel from which commercial, subsistence, or personal use longline fishing gear was used to take fish in the SSEI area during the 72-hour period immediately before the start of the commercial SSEI sablefish fishery, or from which that gear will be used during the 24-hour period immediately after the closure of the SSEI sablefish fishery, may not participate in the taking of sablefish in SSEI during that open sablefish fishing period [5 AAC 28.180 (a)]. The operator of a fishing vessel may not take sablefish in SSEI while sablefish from another area are on board the vessel. Also, the operator of a vessel taking sablefish in SSEI shall unload and submit a completed fish ticket to the department before taking sablefish in another area [5 AAC 28.170 (a) and (b)].

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