
ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

NEWS RELEASE



Sam Cotten, Commissioner
Jeff Regnart, Director



Contact:
Kristen Green

Phone: (907) 747-6688
Fax: (907) 747-6693

Sitka Area Office
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Sitka, AK 99835
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2015 NORTHERN SOUTHEAST INSIDE (NSEI) SABLEFISH FISHERY ANNUAL HARVEST OBJECTIVE ANNOUNCEMENT

Sitka...The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) announces today that the 2015 NSEI Subdistrict commercial sablefish fishery annual harvest objective (AHO) is 786,748 round pounds. There are 78 valid Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) permits for 2015, therefore the individual equal quota share (EQS) is 10,087 round pounds (a 5% increase from the 2014 EQS of 9,561 round pounds). The AHO is based on the sablefish acceptable biological catch (ABC) with decrements made for sablefish mortality in other fisheries.

NSEI sablefish abundance has historically been estimated with a mark-recapture project. However, no mark-recapture project was conducted in 2014 because the department intends to conduct that work on an every-other-year basis as funding and vessel availability allow. Therefore, the 2013 point estimate of abundance was used to forecast abundance and biomass for the 2015 fishery using updated biological data from the fishery and survey. The harvest rate was also recalculated using updated biological information. As in previous years, an *F*50% biological reference point was used for calculating the 2015 ABC, resulting in a harvest rate of 7.1% (the harvest rate in 2014 was 6.9%). The 2015 ABC (986,481 round pounds) increased 4% relative to the 2014 ABC (952,538 round pounds). The modest increase in the ABC is based primarily on a slight increase in fishery and survey weight-at-age and harvest rate. The ADF&G longline survey and fishery CPUE increased 4% in round pounds per hook and survey CPUE (fish per hook) between 2014 and 2013 was stable (1% decline). However, the lack of strong recruitment in NSEI and the surrounding geographic areas continues to be concern, and the department will continue to closely monitor survey results, biological data, and recruitment and spawning biomass trends.

The NSEI fishery opens by regulation at 8:00 a.m., August 15, 2015 and will close at 12:00 noon November 15, 2015. Permit holders should have received a letter detailing any legal overage or underage incurred during the 2014 fishing season; 2015 personal quota shares (PQS) will be adjusted based on this amount. Permit holders who did not receive that letter should contact Kamala Carroll at (907) 747-6688.

2015 Survey Activities

The most recent sablefish marking survey was completed on June 12, 2015; these results will be used for the 2016 stock assessment. As mentioned above, the department intends to conduct the mark recapture survey in odd years (2017, 2019, etc., contingent on funding). The most recent point estimate of abundance will be used in years when a survey is not conducted.

Three vessels have been chartered for the 2015 ADF&G longline survey, which is scheduled for July 22–29, 2015. Data from the 2015 longline survey will be used to obtain current size, age, and sexual maturity information for the 2016 stock assessment.

Registration and Logbook Requirements

Fishermen must register prior to fishing and are required to keep a logbook during the fishery. Registration forms and logbooks will be available at ADF&G offices in Southeast Alaska. Completed logbook pages must be attached to the ADF&G copy of the fish ticket at the time of delivery. Confidential ADF&G 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 for start and ending positions, hook spacing, amount of gear (number of hooks and skates) used, depth of set, estimated weight of the target species, and the estimated weight of bycatch by species. Indicate for each set if the target species was sablefish or halibut and if there was any lost gear. A permit holder must retain all visibly injured or dead sablefish. Sablefish that are not visibly injured or dead may be released unharmed, and the permit holder must record in the logbook, by set, the number of live sablefish released [5 AAC 28.170(f)]. Record discard reason, e.g., fish are small, PQS has been met.

Tagged Sablefish

Fishermen are requested to watch for tagged sablefish. Please record tag number(s) and attach tags directly in the logbook with the corresponding set information. All tags returned will receive a reward. Tag rewards include an engraved knife or hat and entry into an annual drawing for one \$1,000, two \$500, and four \$250 cash rewards. To qualify for entry in the annual drawing, ADF&G requires the following information: the tag, set location (latitude and longitude), date of capture of the fish, and the name and address of the person recovering the tag.

Fish Ticket Requirements

Landed weights must be recorded on an ADF&G 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 conversion rate. There is a 2% allowance for ice and slime when appropriate. A fish ticket must be completed prior to the resumption of fishing and each permit holder must retain onboard their vessel, copies of all NSEI fish tickets from the current season as well as their updated PQS tracking form. Fishermen are reminded that a completed fish ticket must be submitted to ADF&G before fish are transported out of Alaska.

Sablefish Possession and Landing Requirements

In the NSEI Subdistrict, the holder of a CFEC permit for sablefish may not retain more sablefish from the directed fishery than the annual amount of sablefish EQS specified in 5 AAC 28.170 (f). However, if a permit holder's harvest exceeds the EQS for that year, by not more than 5%, ADF&G shall reduce the permit holder's EQS for the following year by the amount of the overage. If a permit holder's harvest exceeds the permit holder's EQS by more than 5%, the proceeds from the sale of the overage in excess of 5% shall be surrendered to the state and the permit holder may be prosecuted under AS 16.05.723. If a permit holder's harvest is less than the permit holder's EQS established for the year, ADF&G shall increase the permit holder's PQS only for the following year by the amount of the underage that does not exceed 5% of the EQS [5 AAC 28.170 (k)]. For the 2015 fishing season, 5% of the annual EQS is 504 round pounds.

Bycatch Allowances

Allowable bycatch percentage indicates the amount of bycatch that may be legally landed on an NSEI sablefish permit, based on the round weight of sablefish and round weight of bycatch species or species group:

Bycatch Species	Allowable Bycatch Amount
Demersal Shelf Rockfish (DSR)	1%
Shortraker and Rougheye rockfish	7% in aggregate
Other rockfish & thornyheads	15% in aggregate
Lingcod	0%
Pacific Cod	20%
Spiny dogfish	35%
Other groundfish	20%

Full-retention and reporting of rockfish, excluding thornyheads, is required for CFEC permit holders fishing for groundfish in NSEI. All rockfish in excess of allowable bycatch limits shall be reported as bycatch overage on an ADF&G fish ticket and proceeds from the sale of excess rockfish shall be surrendered to the state [5 AAC 28.171(f)]. Pacific cod in excess of bycatch limits described above may be landed on a CFEC miscellaneous finfish (M) permit in areas open to directed Pacific cod fishing. Fishermen with halibut IFQ in regulatory area 2C and a CFEC halibut permit card must retain all halibut over 32 inches in length, up to the amount of their IFQ.

Prohibitions

The operator of a fishing vessel may not take sablefish in the NSEI area with sablefish from another area on board. Also, the operator of a vessel taking sablefish in the NSEI area shall unload those sablefish before taking sablefish in another area [5 AAC 28.170 (a) and (b)].

A vessel, or person onboard a vessel, from which commercial, subsistence, or personal use longline fishing gear was used to take fish in the NSEI or SSEI Subdistricts during the 72-hour period immediately before the start of the commercial sablefish fishery in that subdistrict, or from which that gear will be used during the 24-hour period immediately after the closure of the commercial sablefish fishery in that subdistrict, may not participate in the taking of sablefish in that subdistrict during that open sablefish fishing period. A vessel, or a person onboard a vessel, who has harvested and sold their PQS before the final day of the sablefish season in that subdistrict is exempt from the prohibition on fishing longline gear during the 24-hour period immediately following the closure of the sablefish fishery in that subdistrict. In addition, a vessel or a person on board a vessel, commercial fishing for sablefish in the NSEI Subdistrict may not operate subsistence or personal use longline gear for groundfish from that vessel until all sablefish harvested in the commercial fishery are offloaded from the vessel.

For additional information, visit the Southeast Regional Groundfish Fisheries web site:
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareasoutheast.groundfish>.

News releases web site: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>.

Office	Ketchikan	Petersburg	Wrangell	Sitka	Juneau	Haines	Yakutat
ADF&G	225-5195	772-3801	874-3822	747-6688	465-4250	766-2830	784-3255
AWT	225-5111	772-3983	874-3215	747-3254	465-4000	766-2533	784-3220