



Advisory Announcement

For Immediate Release: May 28, 2026

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2026 NORTHERN SOUTHEAST INSIDE (NSEI) SUBDISTRICT SABLEFISH FISHERY ANNUAL HARVEST OBJECTIVE

The 2026 Northern Southeast Inside (NSEI) Subdistrict commercial sablefish fishery annual harvest objective (AHO) is 2,142,882 round pounds. The AHO is based on the sablefish recommended acceptable biological catch (ABC) with decrements made for sablefish mortality in other fisheries. There are 73 valid Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) permits for 2026, the same as 2025. **The individual equal quota share (EQS) is 29,355 round pounds**, a 20% increase from the 2025 EQS of 24,516 round pounds. Permit holders who have any legal overage or underage incurred during the 2025 fishing season will have their 2026 personal quota share (PQS) adjusted accordingly. **The NSEI fishery opens by regulation at 8:00 a.m., August 15, 2026, and will close at 12:00 noon, November 15, 2026.** Permit holders are reminded that they must register for the fishery prior to fishing. **Registrations, PQS forms, and logbooks will be available starting July 6 at ADF&G offices in Southeast Alaska.** Sablefish may be taken in the directed NSEI sablefish fishery by longline and pot gear under a CFEC limited entry C61A permit.

The recommended 2026 ABC is 2,392,501 round lb ($F_{ABC} = 0.054$), a 15% increase from the 2025 ABC. The increase is attributed to the continued growth and maturation of year classes since 2015, highlighted by strong recruitment in 2018 (the 2016 year class), the highest recruitment since 1979. The 2016 year class is over 95% mature and comprises over 25% of the biomass. These data indicate that the large recruitments between 2015 and 2019 were underestimated in past assessments, while the more informed estimation of those recruitments has led to increased estimated spawning biomass in recent assessments. This is common in age-structured assessments as it takes multiple years of cohort observations to understand the true size of a recruitment event. There was no mark-recapture experiment in 2025. Catch per unit effort (CPUE) estimates from the 2025 fishery and survey were higher than in 2024, and both estimates remain above their respective long-term averages. Fishery catch and ex-vessel value remain depressed from historical levels. Catches and ex-vessel values in 2025 increased from 2024 as the recent year classes reached marketable size. Though recent high catch rates of small sablefish across multiple geographic areas signal increasing trends for sablefish stocks, the department maintains a precautionary approach to setting harvest limits. Estimates from the 2025 stock assessment suggest that the sablefish spawning stock biomass remains at suppressed levels compared to the 1980s and 1990s.

The ABC determination process uses a statistical catch-at-age model, first implemented in 2020. The model reduces the reliance on the annual mark-recapture project to estimate recruitment, abundance, and spawning stock biomass of NSEI sablefish by integrating multiple indices of abundance and biological data (e.g., catch by age, mark-recapture abundance estimates, longline survey and fishery CPUE, longline survey length and age compositions). As in previous years, maximum ABC is defined by F_{50} , the fishing mortality rate that reduces spawning biomass to 50% of equilibrium unfished levels. Three vessels will be chartered for the 2026 ADF&G NSEI sablefish survey, scheduled for July 19–26. Data from the survey will be used to obtain size, age, and maturity information for the 2027 stock assessment.

Area Description

The NSEI Subdistrict (Figure 1) consists of all waters of Frederick Sound, Stephens Passage, Lynn Canal, Icy Strait, Glacier Bay, Chatham Strait, and contiguous bays and inlets bordered by a line from Beacon Point to Wood Point, from Point Camden to Salt Point Light, the Cape Decision Light to a point west of Gish Bay at 55°54.53' N lat, 134°12.50' W long to the southernmost tip of Helm Point to the westernmost tip of Hazy Island to the Cape Ommaney Light, north of 57°30' N lat in Peril Strait, from the westernmost tip of Column Point to the northernmost tip of Soapstone Point and from the southernmost tip of Cape Spencer through Yakobi Rock to Yakobi Island [5 AAC 28.105 (a)(2)].

Legal Gear

Sablefish may be taken in the directed NSEI sablefish fishery under the limited entry C61A permit only by longline and pot gear [5 AAC 28.130 (a) and 5 AAC 28.130 (f)]. 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)].

Collapsible groundfish pots (“slinky pots”) must contain two escape openings in the mesh with each 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 on opposite sides of the pot. If the escape opening is placed on the tunnel side, the opening must be in an area that does not include the pot door and within six inches of the edge of the pot [5 AAC 39.145 (5)]. All sablefish pots must have at least two circular escape rings, with a minimum inside diameter of 3.5 inches, 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.

Sablefish permit holders operating longlined pot gear in the directed NSEI sablefish fishery must have an attached buoy at each end of a groundfish pot longline marked with the permanent ADF&G vessel plate number of the vessel operating the groundfish longlined pot gear and the buoy must have the letters “LP” to designate the gear as longlined groundfish pot gear. The numbers and letters must be marked in the top one-half of the buoy in numbers and letters that are at least four inches high, one-half inch wide, and in a color that contrasts with the color of the buoy [5 AAC 28.050 (b)].

Registration and Logbook Requirements

Fishers must register prior to fishing [5 AAC 28.106 (b)] and are required to keep a logbook during the fishery [5 AAC 28.175 (a–g)]. 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. Completed logbook pages must be attached to the ADF&G copy of the fish ticket at the time of delivery. Fish tickets must be submitted to ADF&G within 7 days of landing. Confidential ADF&G envelopes for logbook pages may be requested when registering.

Logbooks must include the target species of the trip, port of landing, the date the vessel left port and the date the vessel landed, crew size, bait used, and gear specifications. For each set, the logbook must include the set’s target species, 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, skates, or pots) used, the amount of gear lost or impacted by depredation, the depth of set, estimated number or weight of the target species, estimated number or weight of bycatch by species retained and released at sea, the tag number of any tagged fish captured, and other information as specified in regulation [5 AAC 28.175 (b)]. A permit holder must retain all visibly injured or dead sablefish. Sablefish that are not visibly injured or dead may be released unharmed. The permit holder must record in the logbook, by set, the number or weight of live sablefish released [5 AAC 28.170 (f)]. Permit holders must record the discard reason (e.g., fish are small) and whether their personal quota share was met.

Tagged Sablefish

Fishers are requested to document tagged sablefish. Please record tag number(s) and attach tags directly onto 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, knife, or t-shirt; reward varies by year). Tags returned with valid recovery information (person’s name, the physical tag, date of capture, latitude and longitude) are entered into an annual random drawing for a cash prize.

Fish Ticket Requirements (5 AAC 39.130)

Landed weights must be recorded on an ADF&G fish ticket at the time of delivery. If a fisher delivers fish in the round, the total round weight delivered must be recorded on the fish ticket. If a fisher 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 for unrinsed whole sablefish. Fish tickets must be completed prior to resuming fishing and each permit holder must retain copies of their fish tickets from the current season as well as their PQS tracking form on board the vessel. Fish tickets must be submitted to ADF&G within 7 days of landing.

Fishers are reminded that a completed fish ticket must be submitted to ADF&G before fish are transported out of Alaska. Alaska vessels entering Canadian waters or ports must abide by the requirements in the annual Fishery Notice from Fisheries Oceans Canada (DFO) to obtain licenses or make hail notifications. The Fishery Notice is updated and renewed each calendar year in January, and can be searched at <https://notices.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fns-sap/index-eng.cfm> or by searching “DFO Fishery Notice” in any search engine. Once on the DFO Fishery Notice website, enter “foreign fishing vessels” in the keyword search.

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 by the department [5 AAC 28.170 (f)]. 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. 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 2026 NSEI fishing season, 5% of the annual EQS is 1,468 round pounds.**

Bycatch Allowances for the NSEI Sablefish Fishery

Percentages below indicate the amount of bycatch that may be sold on a NSEI sablefish permit and are based on the round weight of sablefish and bycatch species or species group on board the vessel:

Bycatch 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 must retain, weigh, and report all rockfish taken, including thornyhead rockfish. 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 28.171 (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 forfeited to the state.

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 the directed fishery 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. Fishers 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. More information on calculating groundfish bycatch can be found on the groundfish harvest webpage at:

<https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareasoutheast.groundfish#harvest>

Sablefish Live Market

The holder of a CFEC or interim use permit for sablefish 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)].

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-b)]. A vessel or a person on board a vessel may not participate in a commercial sablefish fishery in the NSEI or the Southern Southeast Inside (SSEI) Subdistrict if the vessel or a person on board the vessel operates commercial, subsistence, sport, or personal use halibut or groundfish fishing gear during the 72-hour period immediately before an opening of the commercial sablefish fishery in that subdistrict [5 AAC 28.180 (a)].

A vessel or CFEC permit holder on board a vessel that participates in a commercial sablefish fishery in NSEI or SSEI may not operate subsistence, sport, or personal use halibut or groundfish fishing gear during a commercial sablefish opening or during the 72 hours immediately following the closure of a commercial sablefish fishery in that subdistrict unless the vessel or CFEC permit holder is not registered for the commercial sablefish fishery in that subdistrict; or the vessel or CFEC permit holder has harvested their total EQS pounds and at least 72 hours have passed since the commercially harvested sablefish were offloaded from the vessel; commercial fishing gear used in the commercial fishery by the vessel or the CFEC permit holder on board a vessel has been removed from the water for at least 72 hours; and at least 72 hours have passed since the vessel owner, or the owner's agent, has contacted a local representative of the department and requested that the department cancel the vessel's commercial sablefish registration, and the department has canceled the vessel's commercial sablefish registration [5 AAC 28.180 (b)].

For additional information, visit: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareasoutheast.groundfish>.

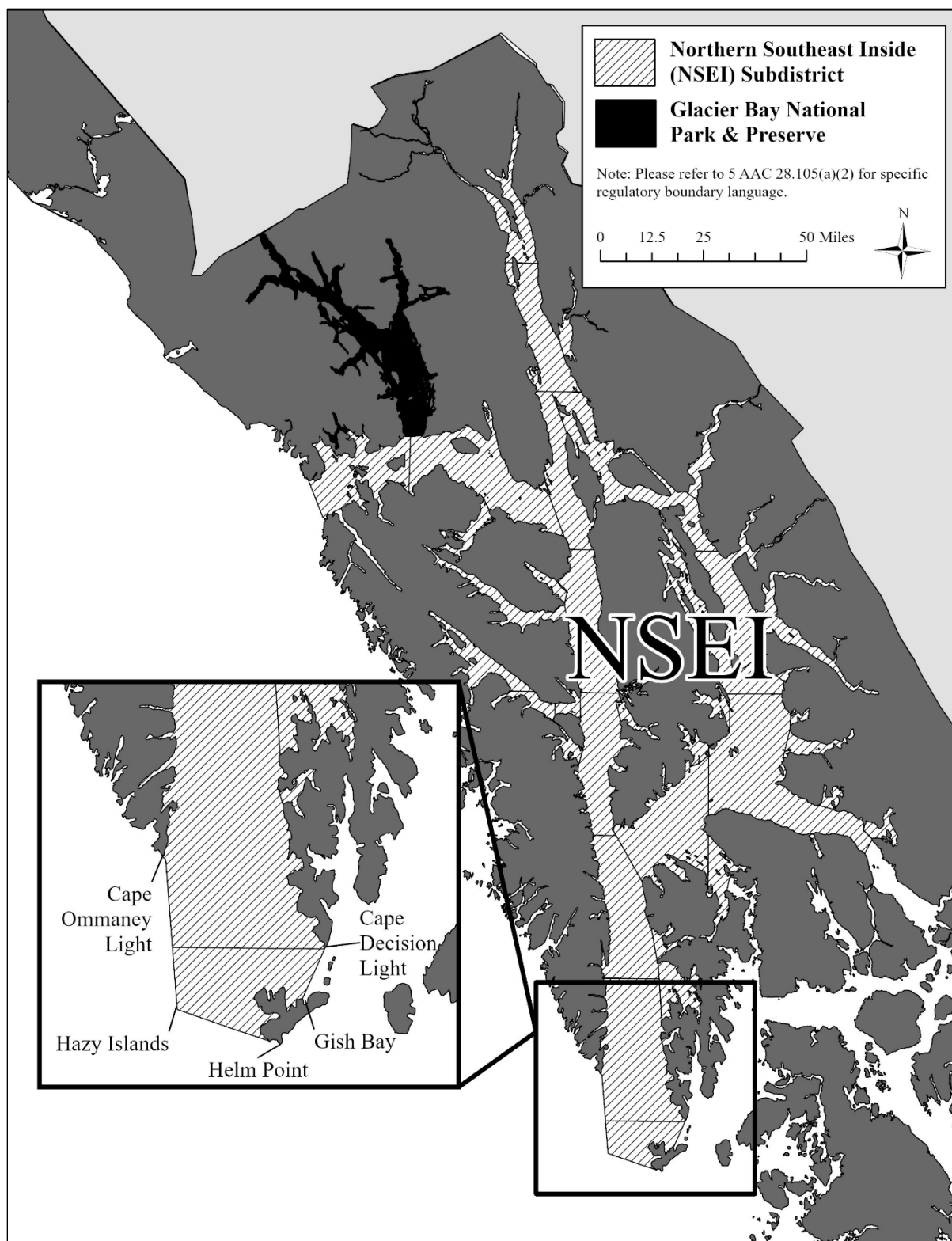


Figure 1.—Northern Southeast Inside (NSEI) Subdistrict. This map is for general information purposes only. For specific area descriptions refer to 5 AAC 28.105 (a)(2).

Advisory Announcement website: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>.

Office	Ketchikan	Petersburg	Wrangell	Sitka	Juneau	Haines	Yakutat
ADF&G	225-5195	772-3801		747-6688	465-4250	766-2830	784-3255
AWT	225-5111	772-3983	874-3215	747-3254	465-4000	766-2533	784-3255
Groundfish Hotline				747-4882			