



National Marine Fisheries Service
Northwest Region

N E W S

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**LIMITED ENTRY, THREE-TIER SABLEFISH CUMULATIVE LIMIT SEASON OFF
WASHINGTON, OREGON AND CALIFORNIA ANNOUNCED
ALL GROUND FISH FIXED GEAR OUT OF WATER 48 HOURS BEFORE**

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announces the 2000 limited entry, tiered cumulative limit, fixed gear fishery (or "regular season") for sablefish off Washington, Oregon, and California, north of 36° N. lat. This fishery will **begin at noon on August 6 and end at noon on August 15**. Only limited entry permit holders with sablefish endorsements may participate in the regular season.

A participant in the regular sablefish season may catch no more than the amount associated with the tier assigned to his permit. Tiered limits are: 81,000 lb for Tier 1; 37,000 lb for Tier 2, and 21,000 lb for Tier 3. No vessel may catch more than one cumulative limit. In addition to the overall tiered cumulative limits for the regular season, there is a trip limit for sablefish smaller than 22 inches total length, which may comprise no more than 1,500 lb or 3 percent of all legal sablefish 22 inches or larger, whichever is greater. This limit applies per vessel per trip. All limits are stated in *round weight*.

For enforcement purposes, there is a pre-season closure for all fixed gear north of 36° N. lat. during the 48-hours before the start of the regular season, between noon August 4 and noon August 6. All fixed gear (open access or limited entry) used to take and retain groundfish must be out of the water during the pre-season closure. Also, sablefish taken with fixed gear may not be retained or landed during the pre-season closure, even if caught before noon on August 4. Shrimp, prawn or crab pot vessels may set their gear during the 48-hour closure only if groundfish are not retained or landed from noon August 4 through noon August 6.

Immediately after the end of the regular season, there will be a 30-hour post-season closure, during which time no sablefish may be taken with fixed gear (limited entry or open access). During the 30-hour post-season closure, which ends at 1800 hrs on August 16, sablefish taken and retained during the regular season may be possessed and landed. Gear that was set during the regular season may remain in the water during the post-season closure;

however, gear used to take and retain groundfish may not be set or retrieved during this period. If a vessel offloads more than 300 lb of sablefish taken and retained during the regular season, then that **offloading must begin before 1800 hrs August 16**, and be completed before the vessel returns to sea, or else the 300 lb daily trip limit will apply to fish remaining on board after 1800 hrs August 16.

During the regular season, there is no limited entry, daily trip limit fishery north of 36° N. lat., and limited entry fixed gear vessels without sablefish endorsements may not harvest any sablefish. After the end of the post-season enforcement closure, at 1800 hrs on August 16, daily trip limits currently in effect will resume. These limits are 300 lb per day, and 3,300 lb cumulative per two-month period, north of 36° N. lat. The regular season does not apply to the open access fishery coastwide, or to the limited entry fishery south of 36° N. lat. However, the pre- and post-season closures north of 36° N. lat. do apply to the open access fishery.

About 3 weeks after the end of the regular season, if an adequate amount of the fixed gear sablefish allocation remains, there may be a "mop-up" fishery for limited entry permit holders with sablefish endorsements. Any mop-up fishery will be announced in the *Federal Register*. The mop-up fishery would be followed by resumption of the daily trip limit fishery.

These federal regulations apply 3-200 nautical miles offshore Washington, Oregon, and California. These actions were recommended by the Pacific Fishery Management Council in consultation with the States of Washington, Oregon, and California, which are taking similar actions in State waters (0-3 nautical miles offshore). All weights are in round weight or round-weight equivalents. For dressed sablefish, a product recovery rate of 1.6 is used by the States of Washington, Oregon, and California.

For more information, contact: NMFS NW Region at 206-526-6140 (<http://www.nwr.noaa.gov>, click on "Pacific Coast Groundfish") or, NMFS SW Region at 562-980-4000; Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife at 360-249-4628; Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife at 541-867-4741; or the California Department of Fish and Game at 415-688-6361.

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