

GROUND FISH ADVISORY PANEL REPORT ON LIMITED ENTRY FIXED GEAR CATCH SHARE PROGRAM REVIEW

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received an update from Ms. Jessi Doerpinghaus and Dr. Jim Seger, Council staff, on this agenda item, also referred to as the sablefish tier fishery, and had a robust discussion about the program.

To that end, the GAP supports sending the draft [Limited Entry Fixed Gear Permit-Stacking Program Review](#) out for public comment.

Additionally, the GAP supports the following two recommendations for the sablefish tier fishery, recognizing they are moving through the Council process under different management processes.

1. The GAP continues to strongly support the extension of the primary season end date from October 31 to December 31. It is our understanding this is being considered and analyzed under the 2023-2024 biennial specifications process and management measures as a new management measure that could be in place for the 2023 fishery season. If it is not selected as a preliminary preferred alternative in April and final preferred alternative in June, we recommend the Council take this up as a standalone action.
2. The GAP supports considering moving the seaward boundary of the Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) to 75 fathoms coastwide for sablefish tiered fishery participants using pots, acknowledging more analysis will be necessary. This also was a recommendation from the 2014 sablefish tier program review and is currently being considered as a part of the Non-Trawl RCA (NT RCA) action on the Council's agenda.

However, the GAP also understands there are concerns and discussed the potential for gear or sector conflicts, particularly off Washington, where sport fishermen are restricted due to yelloweye rockfish impacts. Additionally, sport fishermen target lingcod, one of the species that also are taken in the sablefish pot fishery. The GAP had a good discussion about potential conflicts and ways to mitigate those, including potentially carving out some areas or hotspots of the NT RCA to avoid conflicts or implementing a seasonal management measure so sablefish fishermen can target the larger sablefish in late summer and early fall. We suggest staff working on the NT RCA action consider these comments while preparing the analysis.

The GAP realizes the focus here is on the tier program review and appreciates the full discussion of the issues so all fishermen and sectors can access their target species.

The GAP suggests the following three items be included as recommendations in the draft document put out for public review. In addition, the GAP suggests considering these high priority items below (in order of priority) in a follow-on package under Agenda Item E.6, Workload and New Management Measure Priorities. The GAP will address the priority of this package in relation to the other possible groundfish items at that time.

1. Amend the tiered sablefish permits that are hook-and-line endorsed to use slinky pots, defined as a sablefish trap that compresses vertically to less than 12 inches of height when it is in a stowed state. This will require some help from law enforcement to further define

a slinky pot. The hook-and-line vessels in other regulatory areas, such as off Alaska, are using their same groundline and haulers, but attaching “slinky pots” in order to avoid toothed whale, shark, and sea lion predation. There is some whale depredation beginning to take place off the lower Pacific Coast. This recommendation would create a much more sustainable fishery.

2. For vessels with stacked sablefish endorsed permits, allow vessels to fish a cumulative landing limit for each permit registered. Currently, vessels with stacked permits are reaching the cumulative landing limits while fishing their tiers, resulting in additional discards. This would allow retention of those regulatory discards. Note, that this would only apply to non-sablefish cumulative landing limits.
3. Currently there is a vessel cap of three sablefish tiered permits. The GAP suggests amending the program to allow a fourth permit per vessel, provided the permit is of second-generation ownership. This should provide for crew who are currently on a vessel capped out at three to buy into the fishery. This could also result in additional consolidation, per vessel, of available permits.

PFMC
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