

SABLEFISH POT GEAR MARKING - FEASIBILITY REPORT

On October 26, 2020, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) finalized a biological opinion titled “[Continuing Operation of the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery, Reinitiation of Consultation – Humpback whale](#).” The biological opinion requires that the Council consider the findings of a feasibility report for potential changes to pot gear marking regulations for Pacific Coast groundfish fisheries under the groundfish fishery management plan.

On behalf of NMFS, Oregon Sea Grant held a virtual workshop on November 16, 2022, to engage with and solicit input from the commercial fishing industry on feasible and practical improvements to gear marking in the sablefish pot gear fishery off the U.S. West Coast to improve National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s ability to identify the source fishery of large whale entanglements. A secondary goal was to gather ideas and input on potential measures that could reduce whale entanglement risk. A summary report for the workshop and comments submitted by the public in response to the summary report are provided in Agenda Item F.3.a, NMFS Reports 1 and 2, respectively.

In response to the workshop report, NMFS provided a summary and recommendations for further consideration towards the goals of improving gear identification in entanglements and reducing the risk of entanglement as well as the potential for expanding the scope of Council-managed fisheries for which these measures would apply (NMFS Report 3).

The Council is scheduled to discuss the workshop report and provide guidance on next steps. The Council should consider further scoping of this agenda item by March 2024, the scope of potential changes, and entanglement reduction methods.

Council Action:

Council discussion and guidance on next steps, as appropriate.

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item F.3.a, NMFS Report 1: Improving Gear Marking in the U.S. West Coast Sablefish Pot Fleet, Workshop Summary Report.
2. Agenda Item F.3.a, NMFS Report 2: Comments Submitted in Response to Workshop Summary Report.
3. Agenda Item F.3.a, NMFS Report 3: Sablefish Pot Gear Marking Feasibility Report.
4. If received, Public Comments are electronic only ([see e-portal](#)).

Agenda Order:

- F.3 Sablefish Pot Gear Marking - Feasibility Report Brett Wiedoff
- a. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Council Discussion and Guidance on Next Steps, as Appropriate