

SABLEFISH GEAR SWITCHING – CHECK-IN AND REFINE THE RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES

Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) discussions on limiting the use of fixed gear to target sablefish in the trawl individual fishing quota (IFQ) fishery (gear switching) began as part of its review of the Trawl Catch Share Program, conducted in 2016 and 2017. As a result of the review, the Council adopted a gear switching control date (September 15, 2017) and subsequently began a process that led to the adoption of a range of alternatives for analysis its September 2021 meeting. That range was then modified at the June and November 2022 meetings. The current alternatives are as follows:

- No Action
- Action Alternative 1: Gear-Specific Quota Shares (Broad Distribution/Vessels)
- Action Alternative 2: Gear-Specific Quota Shares (Narrow Distribution/Permits)
- Action Alternative 3: Gear-Switching Endorsement—Permit Qualifier

A summary and comparison of the alternatives is provided as Agenda Item G.5.a, Attachment 1 and a detailed description and discussion of the alternatives is provided as Agenda Item G.5.a, Attachment 2.

In adopting the range of alternatives for analysis at its November meeting, the Council made substantial modifications to the range previously adopted. Due to the significance of those modifications, a check-in was scheduled for this meeting. Additionally, at the November meeting the Council asked that the scope of actions noticed for this meeting be sufficiently broad to include the addition of new alternatives. In particular, the Council wanted to be able to consider whether or not to add a seasonal approach to the range of alternatives. Under a seasonal approach, each year gear switching would be allowed to continue until it reached a predetermined level at which point it would be prohibited for the remainder of the year.

In preparation for this meeting, the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) was provided a presentation on the alternatives at its March 2023 meeting. That presentation led to the development of a report for the advance briefing book that includes a recommendation to eliminate Alternative 3 and moving some options from Alternative 3 into Alternative 2. Additionally, Council member Anderson has provided a report soliciting perspectives on a new qualification option he is thinking about proposing for addition to Alternative 2.

The Council is scheduled to adopt a preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) at its June 2023 meeting and a final preferred alternative (FPA) at its November 2023 meeting. For the range of alternatives adopted in November 2022, a number of issues were identified that need to be addressed if the Council wants to have a fully specified range of alternatives before it selects its PPA. These issues are summarized in Section 5.0 of Agenda Item G.5.a, Attachment 1 and discussed in detail in Attachment 2.

At past meetings, it has been a challenge to give the needed consideration to both the refinement of details of the alternatives and selection of a PPA at the same meeting. There may be a number of other ways a fully specified PPA could be achieved. For example, rather than completely refining all of the alternatives prior to selecting the PPA, the Council might consider selecting an action alternative PPA in June based on the alternatives as they currently stand. Within the PPA this might leave some preferred options unselected or some provisions initially undefined (e.g., endorsement qualification options or permit accumulation limits in Alternative 3). Then afterward, any remaining issues in the PPA could be resolved before making a final decision between it and the other alternatives (including the No Action alternative). With this approach, there might need to be one additional check-in at a Council meeting prior to the selection of an FPA—in order to complete the specification of the alternative selected as the PPA.

Council Action:

1. Refine range of alternatives.
2. Discuss and provide guidance on the process for reaching a PPA.

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item G.5, Attachment 1: Synopsis of Gear Switching Alternatives, Options, Comparisons, and Issues.
2. Agenda Item G.5, Attachment 2: Range of Gear Switching Alternatives Adopted for Analysis by the Council at its September 2021, June 2022, and November 2022 Meetings.
3. Agenda Item G.5.a, NMFS Report 1: National Marine Fisheries Service Report on Implementation of Revised Gear Switching Alternatives.
4. Agenda Item G.5.a, Council Member Report 1: Council Member Report on Sablefish Gear Switching (Anderson).
5. Agenda Item G.5.a, GAP Report 1.
6. If received, Public Comments are electronic only ([see e-portal](#)).

Agenda Order:

- G.5 Sablefish Gear Switching –Check-in and Refine the Range of Alternatives Jim Seger/Jessi Doerpinghaus
- a. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Consider Refinement to the Range of Alternatives Adopted for Analysis and Provide Guidance on Next Steps

PFMC
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