

SABLEFISH GEAR SWITCHING – INITIAL PRELIMINARY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) discussions on limiting the use of non-trawl 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, finalized in 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 development a range of alternatives across a number of Council meetings starting in September 2021 and most recently at the April 2023 meeting. During this process, the Council considered alternatives that would limit gear switched catch for northern sablefish via a different methods, including converting northern sablefish quota share (QS) to gear-specific QS—any-gear QS (gear-switching eligible) and trawl-only QS; converting the annually issued northern sablefish quota pounds (QP) to gear-specific QP; requiring limited entry trawl permit gear switching endorsements for any significant amount of gear switching; and a seasonal limitation on retention of northern sablefish while gear switching. At its April 2023 meeting, the Council decided to remove one version of a gear-specific QS alternative from the range and to discontinue work on a gear-switching endorsement approach. The current alternatives are as follows:

- No Action
- Action Alternative 1: Gear-Specific QS
- Action Alternative 2: Gear-Specific QPs
- Action Alternative 3: Seasonal Management of Gear Switching

A summary and comparison of the alternatives is provided as Agenda Item H.2, Attachment 1 and a detailed description and discussion of the alternatives is provided as Agenda Item H.2, Attachment 2. The last section of Attachment 2 also includes all passed motions pertaining to specification of the range of alternatives. Analysis is provided in Agenda Item H.2, Attachment 3.

While the individual action alternatives may need further refinement before a preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) is selected, the range and current provides information needed for the Council to determine its *initial* PPA (iPPA). Selection of an iPPA at this meeting has been scheduled because 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. Once that iPPA is identified, a determination can be made as to the best way to complete the refinements needed to fully specify the iPPA. After those refinements and analysis are completed, the Council would select its PPA. Once a PPA is selected, it would be sent out with the analysis for public comment, after which the Council would select its FPA. Currently, the PPA decision is scheduled for November 2023 and the FPA decision for March 2024.

The process for moving from the iPPA to the PPA will depend on the number and significance of the outstanding issues remaining to be resolved before the analysis can be completed. While the outstanding issues will not be emphasized at this meeting, the Council could provide guidance on any of those it feels ready to address. Processes for resolving outstanding issues are covered in the last section of Agenda Item H.2, Attachment 1.

Council Action:

1. **Select an iPPA.**
2. **Provide other guidance on the alternatives, as needed.**
3. **Discuss and provide guidance on the process and timeline for selecting the PPA, as needed.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item H.2, Attachment 1: Synopsis of Gear Switching Alternatives, Options, Comparisons, and Issues.
2. Agenda Item H.2, Attachment 2: Range of Gear Switching Alternatives Adopted for Analysis by the Council at its September 2021, June 2022, November 2022, and April 2023 Meetings.
3. Agenda Item H.2, Attachment 3 (***Electronic Only***): Analysis to Inform Selection of Initial Preliminary Preferred Alternative for Sablefish Gear Switching.
4. If received, Public Comments are electronic only ([see e-portal](#)).

Agenda Order:

H.2 Sablefish Gear Switching – Initial Preliminary Preferred Alternative

Jim Seger/Jessi Doerpinghaus

(Part 1 – H.2.a and H.2.b on Friday, then continue Sunday with H.2.c)

- a. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
- b. Public Comment
- c. **Council Action:** Adopt an Initial Preliminary Preferred Alternative and Provide Other Guidance, as Appropriate

H.2 Sablefish Gear Switching – Initial Preliminary Preferred Alternative

Jim Seger/Jessi Doerpinghaus

(Part 2 - Continued from Friday)

- c. **Council Action:** Adopt an Initial Preliminary Preferred Alternative and Provide Other Guidance, as Appropriate

PFMC
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