

AK Bering Sea Sablefish Pot Fishery

Fishing gear type: Pot

Current category: Category II*

Basis for current classification on the LOF: The total annual mortality and serious injury to humpback whales (Central North Pacific and Western North Pacific stocks) in this fishery is greater than 1% and less than 50% of each stock's Potential Biological Removal (PBR) level.

Current list of marine mammal species/stocks injured/killed (a ⁽¹⁾ indicates those stocks driving the fishery's classification): Humpback whale, Central North Pacific ⁽¹⁾; Humpback whale, Western North Pacific ⁽¹⁾.

Estimated number of current participants: 6

Take Reduction Teams/Plans that affect this fishery: None.

Year added to the LOF: 1996

Category when originally listed: Category III

Basis for original classification on the LOF: This fishery was listed as Category III based on the total known serious injury and mortality level for harbor seal (Gulf of Alaska) was less than 10% of the stock's PBR. However, observer coverage levels were low and available data suggested that the level of serious injury and mortality might be more than 10% of the stock's PBR if observer information were available.

Estimated number of participants when originally listed: 226

Past names, if any: AK Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska finfish pot (until 2004).

Gear description/method for fishing: This fishery uses pot gear.

Target species: Sablefish.

Spatial/temporal distribution of effort: Fishing effort in this fishery takes place in the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone of the Eastern Bering Sea and the portion of the North Pacific Ocean adjacent to the Aleutian Islands, which is west of 170°W. long. up to the U.S.-Russian Convention Line of 1867.

Levels of observer coverage each year[†]: Observer coverage is calculated by the percentage of observed biomass (percentage of tons caught which were observed). Observer coverage in groundfish fisheries is assigned according to vessel length: vessels greater than 125 ft (30.5 m) have 10% coverage; vessels 60-125 ft (18.3-30.5 m) have 30% coverage; and vessels less than 60 ft (18.3 m) are not observed. Observer coverage in groundfish fisheries varies by statistical area and the pooled percent coverage for all areas is provided in the SARs and is represented here. Pooled observer coverage for all areas from 1998-2005 were 42.1%, 44.1%, 62.6%, 38.7%, 40.6%, 21.4%, -72.5%, and 44.3%, respectively.

Management and regulations: This fishery is federally managed under the BSAI FMP and is operated under Individual Fishing Quotas. Management measures for the BSAI groundfish fisheries constrain fishing both

*The fishery is classified based on mortalities and serious injuries of a marine mammal stock greater than 1% and less than 50% (Category II) of the stock's Potential Biological Removal (PBR) level.

[†] Observer coverage levels include the latest information reported in the most current final Stock Assessment Reports (SAR).

temporally and spatially. This fishery is federally managed under the BSAI FMP. The authorized gear, fishing season, criteria for determining fishing seasons, and area restrictions by gear type are defined in the regulations implementing the BSAI FMP (50 CFR 679).

History of Changes on the LOF

2006 LOF: Added a superscript “1” in Table 1 after humpback whale (Central North Pacific) and humpback whale (Western North Pacific), indicating that these stocks are driving the classification of the fishery.

2005 LOF: Elevated to Category II based on interactions with humpback whales (Central and Western North Pacific stocks). Estimated serious injury and mortality of humpback whales (Central North Pacific stock) was 0.2 animals/year, or 2.7% of PBR (PBR=7.4); and estimated serious injury and mortality of humpback whales (Western North Pacific stock) was 0.2 animals/year, or 28.57% of PBR (PBR=0.7).

2004 LOF:

- The “AK Bering Sea sablefish pot” fishery was split from the Category III “AK Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska Finfish Pot” fishery. NMFS recognized that the large fishery groups in AK included in the LOF up through 2004 were not homogenous; instead these represented a diverse group of fisheries with different interactions with marine mammals. The larger fishery was delineated into more discrete fisheries according to area, gear and target species to reflect fisheries as managed under the BSAI Fishery Management Plan (FMP). The newly delineated fishery was listed as a Category III until the completion of analyses of serious injury and mortality in the new fishery, with an estimated 6 participants.
- The list of marine mammal species/stocks incidentally killed/injured in the larger fishery was also delineated to correspond to the more discrete fisheries listed for the first time in 2004. The list of species/stocks incidentally killed/injured in the “AK BSAI Pollock trawl” fishery included: humpback whale (Central North Pacific) and humpback whale (Western North Pacific).

Changes on the LOF when the “AK Bering Sea sablefish pot” fishery was included in the larger “AK Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska Finfish Pot” fishery

2003 LOF: Estimated number of participants updated from 257 to 314.

2001 LOF: Estimated number of participants updated from 274 to 257.

1999 LOF: Estimated number of participants updated from 486 to 274.

1998 LOF:

- Added harbor seal (Bering Sea) to the list of species/stocks killed/injured in this fishery based on two mortalities, one each in 1992 and 1995.
- Estimated number of participants updated from 226 to 486.