

Personal Use Groundfish (2 proposals)

PROPOSAL 25

5 AAC 77.XXX. New section.

Establish a personal use sablefish fishery in Prince William Sound, as follows:

Adapt current regulations from the SE personal use sablefish fishery into a new personal use permit program or adapt the existing permit to include PWS.

(Adapted from regulations for the Southeast Personal Use Groundfish Fishery)

Regulations Specific to Personal Use Sablefish Fishery

In the PWS Area, personal use sablefish may be taken as follows:

- A personal use fishing permit issued by the department is required to take sablefish; only one permit will be issued per household per year.
- Permit holder or a household member listed on the permit must have permit in possession when fishing.
- Pot gear may not exceed two pots per permit holder or eight pots per vessel when four or more permit holders are present.
- Personal use sablefish pots may not be longlined and a buoy is required for each pot.
- Pots must comply with escape mechanism requirements in 5 AAC 39.145.
- The personal use annual limit is 50 sablefish per household permit.
- No more than 200 personal use sablefish may be retained on board a vessel when four or more sablefish permit holders are present on board that vessel.
- A permit holder shall record fishing activity on the permit Fishing Report prior to leaving the fishing site.
- A vessel or person on board a vessel commercial fishing for sablefish in the PWS may not operate subsistence or personal use longline gear for bottomfish from that vessel until all commercial sablefish are offloaded from the vessel.

Note: Longline gear was excluded to address potential bycatch issues with sensitive non-pelagic rockfish species such as: shortraker, rougheye and yelloweye rockfishes.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Current personal use finfish regulations for Prince William Sound do not address opportunity for a personal use sablefish fishery similar to that in the Yakutat/SE Alaska areas. Data I was able to find from the ADF&G website indicate a 2023 GHF for PWS sablefish of 269000 lbs. with a harvest of 136000 lbs. This leaves a surplus of 133000 lbs. to support a personal use sablefish fishery in PWS. Sablefish are not split out from other groundfish in the PWS for personal and/or sport utilization. Current regulations for PWS personal and sport groundfish fisheries, for practical reasons, restrict the targeting of sablefish to hand rods and electric reels to reach sablefish in the depths they inhabit of 1000+ feet. With the limited number of hooks and the depth to be fished this becomes a very inefficient means of harvest. Allowing the use of slinky pots would give residents a more efficient means of harvest to access this under utilized resource. Overall harvest for this fishery is likely to be of minimal impact to commercial interests due to the amount and cost of specialized gear required.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. This proposal was not developed in coordination with the local Fish and Game Advisory Committee.

PROPOSED BY: Robert Swanson

(EF-F24-016)

PROPOSAL 26

5 AAC 77.XXX. New Section.

Establish a Prince William Sound groundfish personal use fishery, as follows:

I would like to increase the ability of sport fisherman to target sablefish in Prince William Sound by designating pot fishing as a legal means of targeting this species. This could be under sport fish regulations or a personal use fishery. I would suggest a system like the current shrimp or tanner crab systems, allowing for two pots per person/two pots per vessel, with the same buoy marking requirements as the shrimp and tanner fisheries. Pot dimensions and escape mechanism requirements would have to be determined and include the use of slinky pots. Currently there is no bag limit or season restriction for sablefish in Prince William Sound. Due to the gear requirements of fishing these depths it is likely an increase in participation in this fishery would be limited and not require the introduction of a bag or possession limit. In any case a permit could be required like the shrimp and tanner fisheries, and catch could be limited and recorded on this permit as well. I would suggest it be open year-round as I specifically would like to be able to target these fish in the early spring and late fall when the sound isn't so busy.

Due to the depth required to fish sablefish and the unlikeliness of a deep-water release mechanism working at these depths, it would be best to allow for take of rockfish and octopus in this pot system, pursuant to the current bag limits already in place. The take of octopus is already allowed in the shrimp pot fishery. Incidental rockfish take would likely be minimal. Halibut could be released unharmed if captured.

Here is a possible change to the AAC:

(a)(13-new section) sablefish may be taken as follows:

(A) may be taken from January 1 - December 31; no bag and possession limit; no size limit;

(B) no more than 2 pots per person, with no more than 2 pots per vessel, may be used to take blackcod;

(C) all sablefish pots will follow standards determined by the department and include the use of slinky pots.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? According to current regulations in Prince Willam Sound, rod and reel are the only means sport fishermen have of targeting sablefish. In the sound most mature sablefish are found below 1400 feet water depth, making them very difficult to target with traditional rod and reel, and nearly impossible if the weather conditions are not perfect.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. ADF&G staff were contacted for guidance on how to structure this proposal.

PROPOSED BY: Garrett McLean

(EF-F24-035)
