

PROPOSAL 223

5 AAC 01.720. Lawful gear and gear specifications; and 5 AAC 77.674. Personal use bottomfish fishery.

Establish and clarify gear specifications of a groundfish pot for the subsistence and personal use sablefish fisheries, as follows:

5 AAC 01.720 (5) is amended to read:

(5) in the Northern Southeast Inside Subdistrict and Southern Southeast Inside Subdistrict, a sablefish permit holder's pot gear must have at least two circular escape rings with a minimum inside diameter of three and three-fourths inches installed on opposing vertical or sloping walls and must have individual tunnel eye openings with perimeters 36 inches or less.

5 AAC 77.674 (6) (E) is amended to read:

(E) a permit holder's pot gear

(i) may not exceed two pots per permit holder or eight pots per vessel when four or more permit holders are present; [AND]

(ii) may not be longlined; **and** [.]

(iii) must have at least two circular escape rings with a minimum inside diameter of three and three-fourths inches installed on opposing vertical or sloping walls and must have individual tunnel eye openings with perimeters 36 inches or less.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The current regulatory language loosely defines legal pot gear for the subsistence and personal use sablefish fisheries. Incorporating an escape ring size of three and three-fourths inches into subsistence and personal use pot gear would significantly reduce the catch of small, immature sablefish and would maintain the catch of larger and more mature sablefish. Requiring individual tunnel eye openings with perimeters 36 inches or less would reduce halibut and sleeper shark bycatch. These requirements would protect immature sablefish from discard mortality and would help secure the future viability of the fishery.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

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