

PROPOSAL 21

5 AAC 28.230. Lawful Gear for Prince William Sound Area.

Allow the concurrent use of longline gear and sablefish pot gear in Prince William Sound, as follows:

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(j) Except as provided in **k & l** of this section, in a groundfish fishery, a person may have only one type of legal gear on board the vessel.

(k) In a groundfish fishery, mechanical jigging machines and hand troll gear may be used at the same time. If mechanical jigging machines and hand troll gear are being used under this subsection, only that gear may be on board the vessel.

(l) In the Prince William Sound Sablefish and IFQ Halibut fisheries, longlines and pots may be used at the same time. If longlines and pots are being used under this subsection, only longline and pot gear may be on board the vessel.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? Fishermen in the Prince William Sound Sablefish fishery, as well as sometimes in the IFQ Halibut fishery in PWS, encounter issues with whale depredation. Pots have shown themselves to be an effective method of avoiding whale depredation and many fishermen currently use them for this reason.

This change, or one similar, if adopted by the board would give important flexibility to operators seeking to harvest their quota and reduce costs and save time for those operators as well. Firstly, if a boat encountered whale depredation, they could still have a viable method of harvest on that trip with their pot gear until the quota is filled or the whale depredations conditions improve. Without this change, vessels targeting sablefish and halibut with hooks can try fishing with pots but to do so not only do they have the expense of purchasing and setting up for the gear they also must return to port to switch gear types. This results in significant monetary and time costs to the fishermen and is a deterrent to trying to newer (to most) pot gear.

This change could result in additional benefits with fishermen such as being allowed to “try out” smaller sets of pot gear while longlining to see how it works for their vessel before committing to the substantial expense of buying a new gear type that they may not be familiar with. Pot gear will have additional benefits to the resource beyond avoidance of whale depredation, most notably reduced bycatch. Lastly, having and fishing both gear is currently legal in these fisheries in federal waters.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee? Explain. I discussed a similar and broader proposal with the Whittier AC, of which I am a member, who were in support of it and willing to submit it as an AC. This narrower proposal is modified from what they saw to be more specific to the Sablefish and Halibut fisheries due to my subsequent realization that PWS has separate longline and pot P. cod quotas and therefore the simple change to “groundfish” gear I had presented to them could create confusion

in those fisheries. I also consulted the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Commercial Fish Manager for PWS Groundfish who was very helpful.

PROPOSED BY: Brett Roth

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