

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.

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