**United States of America**

**Report on Groundfish Activities by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game in 2024**

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Prepared for the

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# Executive Summary

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) manages commercial groundfish fisheries, excluding Pacific halibut, within state waters and up to three nautical miles offshore. A provision in the federal Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery Management Plan grants Alaska limited authority over demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) in certain federal waters. The state also manages black, blue (deacon), dark rockfish, and lingcod in both state and federal waters. Some state-managed groundfish fisheries operate in parallel with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) regulations, adopting federal seasons and gear restrictions. Alaska is divided into three maritime regions for commercial fisheries management: Southeast, Central, and Westward, covering extensive territorial waters.

ADF&G manages all sport groundfish fisheries within the internal waters of the state, in coastal waters out to three miles offshore, and throughout the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), except for the sport halibut fishery which is managed by the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Since 1998, state regulations for marine sport fisheries have extended into the EEZ under the Magnuson-Stevens Act. Management efforts focus on halibut, rockfish, lingcod, and sablefish, with data collected through an annual mail survey and a mandatory charter logbook program. Due to limited stock assessments, a conservative regulatory framework is used, specifying bag limits, seasons, and fishing methods and means. There are two maritime regions for marine sport fishery management in Alaska: Southeast and Southcentral. Major changes to sport fish leadership include Israel Payton as the new Director, Phil Joy as the new Fisheries Scientist for groundfish, and Adam St. Saviour as the new statewide Groundfish Coordinator. Regulations and policies have been changed over the last year through the Board of Fisheries process for many groundfish fisheries. The information provided in this report is from the state-managed groundfish fisheries only.

# Surveys and Monitoring

*Surveys and monitoring for commercial fisheries*

In Southeast Region, stock assessments for DSR are conducted using line transect surveys and the average weight of yelloweye rockfish, which is the dominant species in the DSR assemblage in terms of both harvest numbers and weight. In May of 2024, a pilot survey was conducted in the Northern Southeast Inside (NSEI) Subdistrict using a newly purchased remotely operated vehicle (ROV). The primary objectives for the 2024 ROV survey were to collect video footage to ground truth and document the presence and habitat of yelloweye rockfish, as predicted by a preliminary habitat suitability model (HSM). The survey also aimed to test whether substrate type is related to the HSM and to develop necessary proficiencies for navigating and piloting the ROV for future stock assessment surveys. A total of 13 sea trial dives were attempted, with only two completing the full 1-km transects. However, due to significant challenges with the ROV, including operational deficiencies, incomplete equipment, and inadequate training, it was determined that the ROV was unsuitable for the survey design as currently built. As a result, no video footage was produced to ground truth the HSM for data analysis but additional efforts are being taken to utilize the ROV for future rockfish research.

The Southeast Region also conducted longline and pot surveys in 2024 in the [NSEI](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/ROP.CF.1J.2025.04.pdf) and Southern Southeast Inside (SSEI) Subdistricts to assess sablefish abundance and biological characteristics. These surveys collected catch per unit effort (CPUE) data, biological samples, and species identifications, with a new objective comparing fish caught by slinky pots and traditional longline hooks. The surveys, conducted with chartered vessels, were funded in part by selling the fish landed. Population monitoring through is conducted throughout the year in the commercial directed and bycatch fisheries for lingcod, sablefish, Pacific cod, DSR, black rockfish, and other groundfish such as hagfish in state waters using fish tickets, logbook reporting, and biological data collected through port sampling. In federal waters, monitoring is conducted for lingcod, DSR, and black rockfish using fish tickets, logbook reporting, and biological data collected through port sampling.

The Central Region has continued to monitor all landings from the Cook Inlet (CI) and Prince William Sound Areas (PWS) in the ports of Homer, Seward, Whittier, Kenai, and Kodiak. Landings monitored include directed fisheries for Pacific cod, rockfish, lingcod, and pollock. Halibut deliveries were monitored and sampled opportunistically with a focus of yelloweye, black, rougheye, shortraker, and quillback rockfish. Vessels are interviewed to collect pertinent information (when a logbook is not required) about the trip, and the target species and bycatch are sampled for length, weight, sex, maturity, and otoliths are collected. A multi species bottom-trawl survey was conducted in the Southwest tanner crab district of PWS. It spanned 17 days during August of 2024 and was the second time surveying theses waters. All groundfish encountered were speciated, counted, and weighed. Sex, length, and weight data, along with otoliths, were collected from rockfish, Pacific cod, pollock, and sablefish. Length, weight, and sex were collected from all skate species.

The Westward Region continued port sampling from commercial fishery landings of Pacific cod and rockfish species. Permit holders were interviewed for information on effort, location, and bycatch. Length, weight, gonadal maturity, and otolith samples were collected. Otoliths are aged in the ADF&G Kodiak office postseason. Rockfish sampling concentrated on black and dark rockfish with opportunistic sampling of other miscellaneous Sebastes species. Logbooks are required for directed black rockfish trips. Additionally, logbooks were collected and edited for the Aleutian Islands state-waters sablefish fishery.

*Surveys and monitoring for sport fisheries*

During 2024, the division of Sport Fish (ADF&G-DSF) conducted regional and area/port-specific surveys and monitoring of salmon and groundfish stocks as part of the Southeast Alaska Marine Harvest Studies (MHS) program. The project Regional Operational Plan ([Operational Plan: Southeast Alaska marine boat sport fishery harvest studies](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/ROP.SF.1J.2024.02.pdf)) provides full accounting of Study Design, Objectives, Methods, and analytical approach employed in sampling the sport fishery in Southeast Alaska during 2024. A related monitoring project ([Regional Operational Plan: Southeast Alaska Halibut and Rockfish Sampling](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/ROP.SF.1J.2024.04.pdf)) — specific to rockfish and Pacific Halibut and nested within the MHS program was also conducted in 2024. Two other surveys and monitoring programs are conducted annually in Southeast Alaska by ADF&G-DSF: the Statewide Harvest Survey (SWHS) and the charter logbook program. Both programs provide sport fishery catch, harvest, release and effort data related to groundfish species. Regional Operational Plans for these programs capture full accounting of Study Design, Objectives, Methods, and analytical approach employed in sampling the sport fishery in Alaska during 2024:

* SWHS – [Operational Plan: Alaska statewide sport fish harvest survey](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/ROP.SF.4A.2024.02.pdf)
* Charter Logbook – [Operational Plan: Alaska statewide charter logbook program](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/ROP.SF.4A.2015.02.pdf)

Southcentral Region Sport Fish also administered a groundfish port-sampling program in 2024 [(Schuster and Ford 2022)](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/ROP.SF.2A.2022.24.pdf). This program monitors age, size, and sex characteristics of Pacific halibut, several rockfish species, lingcod, and a few other species landed by sport anglers at the major ports in Southcentral Alaska. Data is used to produce removal estimates, for stock assessments, and it is shared with International Pacific Halibut Commission, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, the Alaska Board of Fisheries, and the public.

# Research

*Research for commercial fisheries*

Commercial landings of sablefish, Pacific cod, lingcod, and yelloweye rockfish in the Southeast Region are sampled for length, weight, age, sex, and stage of maturity, except for lingcod and yelloweye rockfish, for which maturity is not regularly assessed. In 2024, yelloweye rockfish were sampled from bycatch harvested from the federal halibut longline fishery, as the directed demersal shelf rockfish commercial fishery was closed (Table 14.1 in [Stern et al. 2024](https://www.npfmc.org/wp-content/PDFdocuments/SAFE/2024/GOAdsr.pdf)). Hagfish and black rockfish were not sampled in 2024 due to lack of participation in either fishery. In the Southeast Region a [mark-recapture survey](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/ROP.CF.1J.2022.10.pdf) is conducted using longlined pots in most years since 2000. The mark-recapture results serve as a component of the [NSEI stock assessment](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/RIR.1J.2022.19.pdf). Fishermen are requested to watch for tagged sablefish, record tag number(s), and attach tags directly in the logbook with the corresponding set information. Tags and subsequent location data are also recovered by processors and observers annually as ongoing research for sablefish movement.

The Central Region staff helped obtain genetic samples for a rougheye/blackspotted (REBS) rockfish genetic speciation study. Samples were collected from the inside waters of PWS.

The Westward Region continues to conduct [hydroacoustic surveys](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/FDS23-31.pdf) of black rockfish and dark rockfish in the Afognak, Eastside, and Northeast Districts of the Kodiak Management Area in 2024 to access rockfish stocks and generate biomass estimates. In addition, a [stereo camera survey](https://alaska.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/IO_bac41d60-2b06-4026-a6d0-74712eb981a0/) was conducted in the Northeast District of the Kodiak Management Area to sample lengths from fish enumerated by the hydroacoustic survey. These data will be incorporated into an age structured stock assessment model for black rockfish. A pilot study was developed to determine the best methods for long term attachment of pop-up satellite tags (PSATs) on large female black rockfish through a laboratory and field study. This study was the first step towards describing migratory movements of adult females and the role of movement in the disproportionate sex selectivity seen in the fisheries.

The Age Determination Unit (ADU) conducted life history research to improve age data and understanding of populations including chemical reconstructions, demography estimates, biochronologies, structure comparisons for age estimation, and species identification using structure measurements. Personnel worked with collaborators at NOAA Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) and University of Alaska Fairbanks through the Little Port Walter facility to raise and sample walleye pollock and Pacific cod juveniles for reproductive, daily growth, and hormone analyses. Further, ADU personnel provide training and support for PhD and graduate student work on black, quillback, and greenspotted rockfish age and growth research at Humboldt University, Oregon State University (OSU), the University of Texas, and San José State University. This research included a quillback rockfish chronology, black rockfish life history research, and greenspotted rockfish age evaluation. In collaboration with Committee of Age Reading Experts (CARE) agencies and OSU, ADU staff continued work comparing lingcod otolith and fin ray age estimates and integrating DNA methylation and FT-NIR methods. Staff also completed initial work on shortraker rockfish chronology, bomb radiocarbon evaluation, and cryptic species misidentification and published thesis work through the University of Alaska Fairbanks ([[McNeel 2024](https://www.proquest.com/openview/12b95a6eb161911a691252bf106c44ac/1?cbl=18750&diss=y&pq-origsite=gscholar)](https://www.proquest.com/openview/12b95a6eb161911a691252bf106c44ac/1?cbl=18750&diss=y&pq-origsite=gscholar)). Staff are also collaborating with research groups to develop rapid otolith measurement platforms for collecting routine data used in age, somatic, and species data quality control.

In collaboration with the [ADF&G Statewide Rockfish Initiative (SRI)](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishingRockfish.initiative) group, a maturity project is underway in Southeast Alaska to gain more information on life history parameter estimates for both yelloweye and black rockfish. This project was initiated in 2019 and continued through 2024. The project Regional Operational Plan ([Operational Plan: Reproductive and biological sampling of yelloweye rockfish and black rockfish from Southeast Alaska sport and commercial fisheries.](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/ROP.SF.1J.2022.01.pdf)) provides full accounting of study design, objectives, methods, and analytical approach employed in sampling black and yelloweye rockfish for maturity and fecundity harvested in sport and commercial fisheries in Southeast Alaska.

*Research for sport fisheries*

The sport fish groundfish scientist and statewide groundfish coordinator have been modernizing the catch accounting that is used to produce harvest estimates for NMFS and the IPHC. This has involved moving from a SAS and excel based system to an R based system to be housed in a git hub repository to reduce errors, increase efficiency and meet reproducibility standards. The groundfish scientist has also been working on updating and improving the sport fish harvest and release history of rockfish in state waters. The current methods only go back to 1999 when modern surveys and logbooks were in effect, but do not extend back to 1977 when the statewide harvest survey was first implemented. The new methods use Bayesian methods to make hindcasting inferences and produce estimates of rockfish harvests and releases back to 1977. The new methods leverage charter logbook data, statewide harvest survey data and port sampling data to understand how harvest probabilities and species composition has changed over time and to make reasonable inferences about how to hindcast those relationships. The new methods also correct some faulty assumptions used in the initial reconstruction.

# Stock Assessments and Management

1. Hagfish

The directed fishery for hagfish in the Southeast Region primarily targets the black hagfish in the SSEI management area. A [2016-2017 research project](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/ROP.CF.1J.2018.02.pdf) in the early years of the commercial fishery established some presence/absence data within the management area. This fishery has a total annual guideline harvest level (GHL) of 77.1 mt. The directed hagfish fishery in the Southeast Region requires a commissioner’s permit. Gear is restricted to 3,000 gallons in volume using any combination of gear types included Korean style traps, buckets, and barrels per vessel. In 2018, six [hagfish management areas](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/fishing/PDFs/commercial/southeast/ssei_2018_hagfish_memo.pdf) were created within the SSEI management area. Currently in the Westward, Central, and Southeast Regions hagfish are allowed up to 20% as bycatch in aggregate with other groundfish during directed fisheries for groundfish. No stock assessment programs were conducted for hagfish.

1. Pacific cod

The directed fishery for Pacific cod in the Southeast Region is open from January 1 through December 31, unless closed by emergency order. Most participation in the fishery occurs in the winter months (October through April) to target spawning aggregations. Gear for the harvest of Pacific cod is limited to longline, dinglebar troll, hand troll, mechanical jigs, and pot gear in Southeast Alaska, where longline gear is the primary gear used in the fishery. There are no stock assessment surveys for Pacific cod in internal state waters in Southeast Alaska. The guideline harvest range (GHR) is based on [average historic harvest](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/FMR24-31.pdf) levels rather than on a biomass-based acceptable biological catch (ABC) estimate. The GHR is set at 750,000–1,250,000 round lb for NSEI and SSEI subdistricts combined, which applies to directed fishery harvest as well as Pacific cod taken incidentally in the commercial halibut, sablefish, and demersal shelf rockfish fisheries. The department monitors Pacific cod harvest by geographic area which includes Frederick Sound, Icy Strait, Lynn Canal, Stephens Passage, and Chatham Strait to prevent localized depletion and overharvest of spawning aggregations.

In the Central Region, the directed state-waters fisheries for Pacific cod open 24 hours after the federal fisheries close, except for the PWS Pacific cod longline fishery, which opens seven days after the federal closure or with the IFQ season, whichever is later. Length frequencies obtained from sampling are provided to NOAA for analysis. Otolith collection was reduced in 2024 to allow for increased bycatch monitoring.

In the Gulf of Alaska (GOA), annual GHLs for state-managed Pacific cod fisheries are based on the estimate of the ABC of Pacific cod as established by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC). Current GHLs are set at 25% of the Central Gulf of Alaska (CGOA) ABC, apportioned between the Kodiak, Chignik, and Cook Inlet Areas, 25% of the Eastern Gulf ABC for the Prince William Sound Area, and 30% of the Western Gulf of Alaska (WGOA) Pacific cod ABC for the South Alaska Peninsula Area. In the Westward Region, fishery management plans are published annually for state-managed Pacific cod fisheries for [Kodiak](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/RIR.4K.2023.15.pdf), [Chignik](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/RIR.4K.2023.16.pdf), and [South Alaska Peninsula Areas](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/RIR.4K.2023.14.pdf). Included within the plan are season, gear, and harvest specifications. Harvest and participation information through 2023 is available in the [annual management report](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/FMR24-23.pdf).

In the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands area, a Pacific cod [management plan](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/RIR.4K.2023.11.pdf) for an exclusive Aleutian Islands Subdistrict, west of 170° W longitude, state-waters fishery has been adopted. Included within the plan are season, gear, and harvest specifications. The fishery GHL was set by regulation at 35% of the Aleutian Islands ABC for Pacific cod in 2024. More information on how this fishery is managed can be found at. A state-waters Pacific cod fishery [management plan](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/RIR.4K.2023.12.pdf) has also been adopted in waters of the Bering Sea near Dutch Harbor. The Dutch Harbor Subdistrict Pacific cod season is open to vessels 58 feet or less overall length (OAL) using pot gear, with a limit of 60 pots. The fishery GHL was set at 12% of the Bering Sea ABC for Pacific cod in 2024. The season opens seven days after the federal Bering Sea–Aleutian Islands pot/longline sector’s season closure and may close and re-open as needed to coordinate with federal fishery openings. Additionally, there is a Pacific cod season open to vessels 58 feet or less OAL using jig gear. The fishery GHL is set at 100,000 pounds which is subtracted from the overall Bering Sea ABC for Pacific cod. The season opens May 1.

1. Walleye Pollock

The pollock pelagic trawl fishery in PWS is managed by the Central Region staff. In 2024 the GHL was not achieved due to two of the three sections being closed by emergency order. The Hinchinbrook section was closed because the bycatch cap for squid was reached and the Bainbridge section closed because the salmon section cap was reached. Pollock otolith collection was reduced to increase sampling opportunity on bycatch species and to monitor offloads for salmon bycatch. This fishery is managed intensively through daily check ins with the vessels to ensure the section and overall bycatch caps and GHL are not exceeded.

1. Rockfish

In the Southeast Region, management of DSR (including yelloweye, quillback, China, copper, rosethorn, canary, and tiger rockfish) utilizes total allowable catch (TAC), GHR, seasons, gear restrictions, total trips, and bycatch limits. Total harvest limits are determined by a [biannual stock assessment](https://apps-afsc.fisheries.noaa.gov/Plan_Team/2023/GOAdsr.pdf) for Southeast Outside areas and a 25 mt annual limit for internal waters. There is no stock assessment data available for DSR in the NSEI and SSEI management areas. In 2024, the directed DSR fishery [remained closed](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dcfnewsrelease/1553824428.pdf) in all waters due to stock health concerns. Management of the commercial black rockfish fishery in the Southeast Region is based upon a combination of GHLs and gear restrictions. The directed commercial harvest is restricted to dinglebar troll, hand troll and mechanical jigging gear. Directed fishery GHLs are set by management area with a total GHL of 147 mt for the Eastern Gulf of Alaska (EGOA). Halibut and groundfish fishers are required to retain and report all rockfish caught. There is currently no stock assessment for black rockfish. See the 2024 [Advisory Announcement](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dcfnewsrelease/1554074703.pdf) for more specific information on the black rockfish fishery.

In the Central Region, there is no directed fishery for rockfish in PWS. It is managed as a bycatch only fishery. The GHL was exceeded in 2022 and 2023. In 2023 the Board of Fish (BOF) granted the department emergency authority to close fishing areas to gear types. This authority was not implemented but it was adopted into regulation at a BOF meeting in 2024. This is an essential tool that the department now has if rockfish bycatch increases and the GHL is projected to be exceeded. The directed pelagic rockfish fishery in Cook Inlet (CI) continues to be monitored and managed to the GHL.

In the Kodiak, Chignik, and South Alaska Peninsula Area, the department has management authority for black and dark rockfish from shore to the 200 nautical mile boundary of the EEZ and establishes guideline harvest levels and bycatch limits annually. The South Alaska Peninsula (SAP) Area is divided into the Eastern and Western Districts. The Western District fishery is managed by Dutch Harbor staff and the Eastern District is managed by Kodiak staff. In the Kodiak Area, black rockfish GHLs are established for seven districts. In the Chignik Area, an areawide GHL is established for black rockfish with district-level harvest caps. In the South Alaska Peninsula Eastern District, a GHL is established annually. Little directed harvest occurs in the Chignik Area and South Alaska Peninsula Area Eastern District. Directed fisheries are commonly prosecuted in the Kodiak Area and regulations are outlined in a fishery [management plan](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/RIR.4K.2020.16.pdf). Harvest and participation information through 2023 is available in the annual [management report](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/FMR24-23.pdf). The North Gulf Coast (Cook Inlet Area) black rockfish assessment currently being finalized for peer review and a PWS yelloweye assessment draft is written and reviewed and next steps of the assessment are underway.

The Aleutian Islands black rockfish fishery includes state waters of the Aleutian Islands District of the Bering Sea-Aleutian Islands (BSAI) and the Western District of the SAP Peninsula Area. The Aleutian Islands GHL for black rockfish was 41 mt allocated across three sections. No vessels made directed black rockfish landings in the Aleutian Islands Area; all harvest was incidental retention. There are no directed fisheries for dark rockfish in the Kodiak, Chignik, South Alaska Peninsula, or BSAI Areas and bycatch limits are established annually.

Rockfish sport fisheries in Southeast Alaska are managed under 3 assemblages—pelagic, DSR, and slope.  Stock assessment and management attributes for rockfish in Southeast Alaska germane to the sport fishery are summarized in the [Overview of the sport fisheries for groundfish and shellfish in Southeast Alaska](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/fisheriesboard/pdfs/2024-2025/se/RC3_Tab2_SP24-20_12-30-24.pdf) report to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. This report provides an overview of the sport fisheries for groundfish in Southeast Alaska. Catch and harvest information, descriptions of fisheries management, and a history of management actions involving rockfish fisheries are provided. Rockfish sport fisheries in Southcentral Alaska were modified at the Prince William Sound meeting in December 2024, including a reduction to the rockfish bag limit and a closure on yelloweye rockfish from January 1–June 30 each year.

1. Sablefish

Sablefish management regulations in the Southeast Region, including annual harvest objectives (AHO), fishing seasons, and gear specifications, are defined separately for the NSEI and SSEI sablefish fisheries. Both management areas are restricted to inside waters as a state sablefish fishery. The NSEI season is open from August 15 through November 15 and is limited to longline and pot gear under CFEC permit C61A. Pot gear has subsequent limitations with a minimum escape ring size. The department determines the [acceptable biological catch](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/RIR.1J.2025.03.pdf) (ABC) and then calculates the subsequent AHO. The ABC process uses an integrated statistical catch-at-age-model (first started in 2020). The model estimates recruitment, abundance, and spawning stock biomass by combining information from catch data, the longline pot comparison surveys, mark-recapture abundance estimates, fishery CPUE, and biodata (weight, length, sex, maturity, and otoliths). The NSEI fishery utilizes an [AHO](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dcfnewsrelease/1581267685.pdf) to allocate individual equal quota shares (EQS) for fishery management. This number is adjusted annually based on the previous year’s legal underage or overage resulting in a personal quota share (PQS). The NSEI stock assessment is based upon an annual research survey conducted in late summer. The department uses mark-recapture methods with external tags and fin clips to estimate abundance and exploitation rates for sablefish in the NSEI subdistrict. Due to the growing popularity of pot gear, [longline pot comparison surveys](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/ROP.CF.1J.2025.04.pdf) began in 2023. [The SSEI sablefish](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/applications/dcfnewsrelease/1571032940.pdf) fishery is open from June 1 through November 15 and is limited to longline and pot gear. Unlike NSEI, the department does not currently estimate the absolute abundance of SSEI sablefish. Instead, the SSEI sablefish population is managed based on relative abundance trends from survey and fishery CPUE data, as well as with survey and fishery biological data that are used to describe the age and size structure of the population and detect recruitment events.

There are two state-waters sablefish fisheries in the Central Region. The CI fishery is an open access fishery while the PWS fishery is limited access. There has been no change to management in either area, although the CI area has seen little to no participation over the past few years, possibly due to the 3,000 pound trip limit, price per pound, and smaller size of CI state-waters sablefish.

The sole Westward Region [sablefish fishery](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/FMR24-16.pdf) occurs in the Aleutian Islands. The GHL for the Aleutian Islands is set at 5% of the combined Bering Sea Aleutian Islands sablefish ABC. The fishery opens concurrently with the federal IFQ season and is open to longline, pot, jig and hand troll gear types. Vessels participating in the fishery are required to register and fill out logbooks.

Stock assessment and management attributes for sablefish in Southeast Alaska germane to the sport fishery is summarized in a recent publication to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. This report provides an overview of the sport fisheries for groundfish in Southeast Alaska. Catch and harvest information, descriptions of fisheries management, and a history of management actions involving sablefish fisheries are provided. See [Overview of the sport fisheries for groundfish and shellfish in Southeast Alaska: A report to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/fisheriesboard/pdfs/2024-2025/se/RC3_Tab2_SP24-20_12-30-24.pdf)

1. Lingcod

In the Southeast Region, there is no formal stock assessment for lingcod. Instead, management of commercial lingcod is based upon a combination of GHR/[allocations](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareasoutheast.lingcod_fishery_update), season, and gear restrictions. Key regulations include a winter closure from December 1 to May 15 for all users (except longliners) to protect nest-guarding male lingcod. The directed lingcod fishery is limited to specific gear types, including mechanical jigging machines, dinglebar troll, and hand troll gear. Lingcod bycatch in other fisheries is restricted to hook and line gear only; pots, trawls, and other net gears are prohibited. During the directed fishery, fishers are requested to keep a portion of their lingcod with the head on and proof of gender to facilitate biological sampling of the commercial catch. Additionally, vessel registration and logbooks are required. Lingcod are managed at the upper end of the GHR in each designated [Lingcod Management Area](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareasoutheast.lingcod_management_map), which includes NSEI, Southern Southeast Internal Waters (SSEIW) and Southern Southeast Outer Coast (SSEOC) Sectors, Icy Bay Subdistrict (IBS), and the East Yakutat (EYKT), Northern Southeast Outside (NSEO), and Central Southeast Outside (CSEO) Sections.

There are three directed lingcod fisheries in the Central Region. Cook Inlet has one which opens July 1 and PWS has two, the inside district and outside district fisheries, which also open July 1. There is no assessment of lingcod in either area, and staff manage the fisheries to the available static GHL.

In the Westward Region, no directed lingcod effort occurred during 2024. All lingcod were harvested incidental to other federal and state managed groundfish fisheries.

Stock assessment and management attributes for lingcod in Southeast Alaska germane to the sport fishery is summarized in a recent publication to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. This report provides an overview of the sport fisheries for groundfish in Southeast Alaska. Catch and harvest information, descriptions of fisheries management, and a history of management actions involving lingcod fisheries are provided.  See [Overview of the sport fisheries for groundfish and shellfish in Southeast Alaska: A report to the Alaska Board of Fisheries.](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/fisheriesboard/pdfs/2024-2025/se/RC3_Tab2_SP24-20_12-30-24.pdf)

1. Pacific Halibut and IPHC Activities

The sport halibut fishery is monitored by the division of Sport Fish ([Regional Operational Plan: Southeast Alaska marine boat sport fishery harvest studies, 2024](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/ROP.SF.1J.2024.02.pdf); [Schuster and Ford 2022)](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/ROP.SF.2A.2022.24.pdf), but management of halibut falls under federal jurisdiction. Data on sport fishery effort and harvest are collected through port sampling in Southeast and Southcentral Alaska, and additionally through the SWHS and saltwater charter logbook programs. Estimates of harvest and release mortality are provided annually to IPHC for use in the annual stock assessment, and to the NPFMC. Management measure analyses are produced annually for the NPFMC to determine charter and halibut regulations. Estimates of sport harvest and associated analyses are posted on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council’s web page at [http://www.npfmc.org](http://www.npfmc.org/).

# Reserves

Southeast Alaska is host to a single marine reserve—the Edgecumbe Pinnacles Marine Reserve ([Southeast Alaska Edgecumbe Pinnacles Marine Reserve, Alaska Department of Fish and Game](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareasoutheast.pinnacles_research); [federal register - EEZ Pinnacles Marine Reserve](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2000/11/09/00-28676/fisheries-of-the-exclusive-economic-zone-off-alaska-sitka-pinnacles-marine-reserve)), which is located in federal waters near Sitka. This marine reserve includes provisions to prohibit harvest and removal for select species of groundfish but otherwise may not have all regulatory mechanisms restricting other types of access, harvest, and transit. While there are no designated marine reserves in Southcentral Alaska, there are several Stellar sea lion rookeries that are closed to commercial fishing within 3 nautical miles. These include Sugarloaf Island, outer Pye Island, Fish Island (Patton Bay), and Seal Rocks (Hinchenbrook Entrance).

# Data Management

In December of 2024 the OceanAK database (ZPROD) was moved from a local server in Juneau, Alaska to an Oracle cloud data center in San Jose, California. As the OceanAK database is used statewide this move has resulted in faster access, better security, and greater reliability. Additionally, the database version was upgraded from Oracle 18c to Oracle 19c. Oracle version 19c is a long-term release (LTR) and as such has an improved flexibility and stability over “innovation releases” such as version 18c.

The Central Region groundfish management team began construction of a new Access database in hopes of providing a seamless transfer of all historic and current Central Region commercial sampling data into OceanAK. The goal is to have sampling data in OceanAK and have the data relate to fish ticket and age data. There are challenges to having three subject areas (sampling data, fish tickets, and age data) relate to each other but when it is complete it will be an asset to fisheries managers. The research analyst began constructing a new port sampling program for field tablets because the program staff have been using, Data Plus Professional, is obsolete.

Southeast Marine Harvest Studies program database, data acquisition, and workflows used by the agency have not significantly changed. Software and data management challenges for the project have been incurred by migrating the cross-platform framework from Xamarin to MAUI (Multi-Platform App UI) and the ongoing need to update the MHS application to collect current data reporting requirements. Code repositories have not changed; however, the methods used to assess and report biomass in SRI units have.

Southcentral port sampling data is collected with tablets using an HTML-based XLS Form and uploaded daily to an Excel database using KoBoToolbox, a data hosting platform that offers HTML data form design at no cost to government organizations. There are several data QC checks that include frequency listings for impossible or unlikely data, outlier detection for length-weight and length-age relationships, and otolith weight-species ID relationships. Data and scripts to clean and query data are stored at an ADF&G server in Homer and a GitHub repository located at <https://github.com/ADFG-DSF/GOAB>.

The division of sport fish is in the initial stages of creating a database to rescue and retrieve data and house it in a searchable database. Funding has been identified to provide 6 months of programmer time and 3 months of biologist time to begin this process while further funding opportunities are sought. The division is also taking the charter eLogbook program statewide after initially being adopted in Southeast waters. Lastly, the division is in the process of modernizing the statewide harvest survey that is used to estimate angler participation, harvest and catch for all species across the state. The new design will switch from a mail-out paper format to a web-based platform with the hopes of improving response rates and reducing recall and other biases present in the current survey. Additionally, the new survey should produce more timely estimates on a monthly basis once implemented. The new survey is scheduled to be rolled out in 2027.

# Upcoming Work, Emerging Needs, and Challenges

The Southeast Region will continue to sablefish surveys, ROV surveys, and mark recapture studies, as funding allows. Funding limitations have been the most significant challenge for the project as personnel costs, supplies, etc. have increased while grant funding has been stagnant or decreasing. As a result, several surveys have been postponed or suspended until adequate funding is secured. The region continues to work toward stock assessments and maturity research for black rockfish and yelloweye rockfish.

The Central Region staff will continue to conduct the multi species bottom trawl survey in PWS for as long as funding allows. Staff are in the process of obtaining a new research vessel, R/V Equinox, and hope it will be operational sometime in 2025 and open a door to new surveys.

Personnel at the ADU will continue life history research to evaluate and validate age data and improve understanding of fish populations. Collections of rockfish with paired ovary data will be targeted for hormone reconstructions to validate methods. Further, personnel will work with collaborators to publish black rockfish and thornyhead rockfish age validation using bomb radiocarbon analysis. Personnel will continue to develop AI measuring tools to efficiently collection data.

The ADF&G-DSF is supporting a Ph.D. candidate through the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit. The Ph.D. thesis involves advancing and developing stock assessment for black rockfish in Southeast Alaksa. Initial data collection occurred in 2024, and data analysis and development of stock assessment models is planned for 2025 and beyond. The above sections highlight work that has begun but that will be completed in the next one to two years. Additional challenges going forward are to complete and finalize rockfish assessments that have been in development for the past several years, including getting peer reviews and incorporating the assessments into management and the Alaska Board of Fish process. This is of extreme importance as charter harvests of rockfish continue to climb in the face of ongoing halibut and salmon restrictions.

A Department-owned ROV has aged out of service and is no longer able to provide fishery-independent information on DSR rockfish and lingcod. These data would likely significantly improve our stock assessments. A request for Congressionally Delegated spending has been submitted to Senator Lisa Murkowski’s office to replace this unit and to fund survey work.

A hydroacoustic index survey was conducted in 2021 and 2023 at Nuka Island and the Chiswell Islands. We are currently determining if we can fund this survey again in 2025.

# Other Publications

The Southeast Alaska and Yakutat Finfish and Shellfish meeting occurred in Ketchikan Alaska, January 28–February 9, 2025 ([Meeting Information: Alaska Board of Fisheries, Alaska Department of Fish and Game](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fisheriesboard.meetinginfo&date=01-28-2025&meeting=ketchikan)). The ADF&G Southeast Region (DCF and DSF) prepared multiple publications for this important meeting of stakeholders and management authorities that have relevance to assessment and management of various groundfish stocks and fisheries, including a significant overview of rockfish ([Rockfish Assessment and Status in Southeast Alaska](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/fisheriesboard/pdfs/2024-2025/se/rc3_19.pdf)).

The 2024 management report for commercial groundfish fisheries in the Southeast Region can be found at <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/FMR24-31.pdf>.

The 2024 annual management report for commercial groundfish fisheries in the Bering Sea-Aleutian Islands Management Area has not been published yet, but fishery harvest summaries through 2023 can be found at <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/FMR25-03.pdf>.

The 2024 annual management report for commercial groundfish fisheries in the Kodiak, Chignik, and South Alaska Peninsula Areas has not been published yet, but fishery harvest summaries through 2023 can be found at <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/FMR24-23.pdf>.

Other sport fish publications include the [Estimation and Projection of Statewide Sport Halibut Harvest](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/ROP.SF.4A.2020.04.pdf) and [Prince William Sound Sport Fishing Regulation Changes.](https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/EONR/index.cfm?ADFG=region.NR&Year=2025&NRID=3788)

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