United States of America

Report on Groundfish Activities by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game in 2025

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Prepared for the
Canada-United States Groundfish Technical Committee

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1. 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, 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. 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.

2. 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). 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. In 2025 this ROV was shipped to specialists in Rhode Island where it is currently undergoing upgrades to fit the specific needs of this survey.

The Southeast Region also conducted longline and pot surveys in 2025 in the NSEI 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, Anchorage, and Kodiak. Landings monitored include directed fisheries for Pacific cod, rockfish, lingcod, sablefish, and pollock. Halibut landings were monitored and sampled opportunistically with a focus on yelloweye, black, rougheye, shortraker, and quillback rockfish bycatch. 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. Genetics via tissue samples have been sampled in cooperation with other programs and agencies.

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 2025, 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, 2025) provides full accounting of Study Design, Objectives, Methods, and analytical approach employed in sampling the sport fishery in Southeast Alaska during 2025. A related monitoring project (Regional Operational Plan: Southeast Alaska Halibut and Rockfish Sampling) — specific to rockfish and Pacific Halibut and nested within the MHS program was also conducted in 2025. 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 2025:

- SWHS – Operational Plan: Alaska statewide sport fish harvest survey, 2025
- Charter Logbook – Operational Plan: Alaska statewide charter logbook program

Southcentral Region Sport Fish also administered a groundfish port-sampling program in 2025 (McKean and Ford 2025). 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. A multi-decade report detailing the characteristics of the sport harvest of rockfishes in Southcentral Alaska was published with data from this program.

3. 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 2025, yelloweye rockfish were sampled from bycatch harvested from the federal halibut longline fishery as well as the directed demersal shelf rockfish commercial fishery which was reopened in 2025 for a winter and fall fishery. Hagfish were sampled from the small number of landings which occurred; however, black rockfish were not sampled in 2025 due to lack of participation in that fishery. In the Southeast Region a mark-recapture survey is conducted using longlined pots in most years since 2000 but has not occurred in recent years due to budget shortfalls. The mark-recapture results serve as a component of the NSEI stock assessment. Fishers 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.

In 2025, the Central Region completed its fourth biannual black rockfish hydroacoustic survey. The survey has consistently been conducted at Nuka bank in the Cook Inlet District and at the Chiswell Islands in the North Gulf District. A stereo camera was used for the first time in 2025 to collect lengths from video. Rockfish abundance estimates for the areas surveyed will be used to inform and to ground truth a recent age structured stock assessment model. Central Region staff continued to assist with tagged fish return programs from various agencies.

The Westward Region continues to conduct hydroacoustic surveys of black rockfish and dark rockfish in the Afognak, Westside, and Northeast Districts of the Kodiak Management Area in 2025 to access rockfish stocks and generate biomass estimates. In addition, a three year stereo camera survey project conducted in the Northeast District of the Kodiak Management Area to sample lengths from fish enumerated by the hydroacoustic survey was completed and published. These data will be incorporated into an age structured stock assessment model for black rockfish. Pop-up satellite tags (PSATs) were deployed on large female black rockfish for a second year with additional non-invasive mucus sampling to determine the maturity stage of tagged fish. This study will be the first to describe migratory movements of adult female black rockfish, their reproductive condition, 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 worked to integrate artificial intelligence (AI) methods to support data collection. Personnel continued to work with collaborators at NOAA Alaska Fisheries Science Center (AFSC) and University of Alaska Fairbanks to raise and sample walleye pollock and Pacific cod juveniles for reproductive, daily growth, and hormone analyses. Further, ADU personnel continued to provide training and support for PhD and graduate student work on black, quillback, and greenspotted rockfish age and growth research at Oregon State University (OSU), the University of Texas, Humboldt University, and San José State University. This research included finalizing quillback rockfish growth, black rockfish life history, and greenspotted rockfish age research. In collaboration with Committee of Age Reading Experts (CARE) member agencies, ADU staff continued work comparing lingcod otolith and fin ray age estimates and integrating DNA methylation and FT-NIR methods. Also, in collaboration with Mer Consultants, ADU staff developed a rapid otolith measurement platform for collecting routine otolith measurements and estimating otolith based species identification using Google AI integrated applications. Staff are seeking to expand development and deployment of measurement platforms to support other programs. Further, ADU staff are collaborating with Westward Region researchers to investigate

non-lethal methods for estimating maturity using vitellogenin assays and mucus extractions. Preliminary analysis of black rockfish mucus showed varying vitellogenin levels across individuals, promoting further analysis across sex and reproductive stages.

In collaboration with the ADF&G Statewide Rockfish Initiative (SRI) 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 is ongoing. The project Regional Operational Plan (Operational Plan: Reproductive and biological sampling of yelloweye rockfish and black rockfish from Southeast Alaska sport and commercial fisheries.) 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 modernized 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 housed in a GitHub 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 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. A report is *in prep*.

4. Stock Assessments and Management

A. 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 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 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.

B. 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 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 hook 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 in 2025 was adjusted as needed to ensure spatial and temporal sampling of the fishery and to allow for increased bycatch monitoring. The PWS guideline harvest level (GHL) allocation for pot/jig (15%) and longline hook gear (85%) changed to a 50 – 50 split per the Board of Fish (BOF) meeting in December 2024. This new allocation contains a step-up provision for the pot/jig sector that, if harvested, the pot/jig allocation will increase by 5% the next year up to a maximum of 75%.

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, Chignik, and South Alaska Peninsula Areas. Included within the plan are season, gear, and harvest specifications. Harvest and participation information through 2024 is available in the annual management report.

In the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands area, a Pacific cod management plan 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 2025. More information on how this fishery is managed is available in the fishery management plan A state-waters Pacific cod fishery management plan 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 13% of the Bering Sea ABC for Pacific cod in 2025. 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. Harvest and participation information through 2024 is available in the annual management report.

C. Walleye Pollock

The pollock pelagic trawl fishery in PWS is managed by Central Region staff. In 2025 the pollock season opened January 20 with a guideline harvest level (GHL) of 9,078,636 pounds and closed 5:00 p.m. February 15 when the GHL was achieved. Twenty-seven vessels registered for the season. Twelve vessels participated and achieved the GHL with 38 deliveries into Kodiak with an average of 240,370 lb per landing. There is a logbook requirement in this fishery, and this season was the first to offer participants the option of electronic logbooks. E-logbooks will help to streamline data entry and reduce human error.

D. 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 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 2025, the directed DSR fishery opened for a winter and fall fishery. 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; refer to the Advisory Announcement for more specific information on the black rockfish fishery.

In the Central Region, there is no directed fishery for rockfish in PWS. Rockfish in PWS are managed as bycatch only and harvest in all commercial fisheries, both state and federal, that take place in PWS state-waters accrues to the GHL. PWS and CI areas have a rockfish GHL of 150,000 pounds per area. The directed pelagic rockfish fishery in Cook Inlet (CI) is monitored, sampled, and managed to the GHL. The 2025 CI commercial rockfish jig fishery was opened July 1 with restrictions in place to reduce harvest in areas that have overlap with sportfish rockfish harvest. This restriction was due to rising conservation concerns with black and yelloweye rockfish populations.

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. Harvest and participation information through 2024 is available in the annual management report. The North Gulf Coast (Cook Inlet Area) black rockfish assessment was externally peer-reviewed and

published. The PWS yelloweye rockfish assessment has been refined and will be presented to the SRI for consideration in the next regulatory cycle.

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 report to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. This report provides an overview of the sport fisheries for rockfish (and other species of groundfish and shellfish) in Southeast Alaska. Catch and harvest information, descriptions of fisheries management, and a history of management actions involving rockfish fisheries are provided. In 2025, management of the sport fishery for rockfish was done at the assemblage level (2025 Southeast Alaska Sport Fishery Regulations). 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 of 3 per day, 6 in possession and a closure on yelloweye rockfish from January 1–June 30 each year. The North Gulf Coast and Cook Inlet management areas were similarly restricted by emergency order to 2 pelagic rockfish per day, 4 in possession and 1 nonpelagic rockfish per day, 2 in possession with no retention of yelloweye rockfish from May 27 – June 30. The majority of Kodiak Island saltwater was restricted by emergency order to 5 rockfish per day, 10 in possession, of which no more than 2 per day, 4 in possession of a single rockfish species and only 1 per day, 2 in possession of yelloweye rockfish.

E. 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 (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 surveys, mark-recapture abundance estimates, fishery CPUE, and biodata (weight, length, sex, maturity, and otoliths). The NSEI fishery utilizes an AHO 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 began in 2023 and continued through 2025. The SSEI sablefish 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 entry. There has been no change to management in the CI sablefish fishery. The PWS state-waters sablefish fishery regulatory registration deadline and season opening date were changed at the December 2024 BOF meeting. The new deadline for registration is February 20, and the opening date now coincides with the federal IFQ opening date for halibut.

The sole Westward Region sablefish fishery 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. In 2025, the sport fishery for sablefish was managed under a consistent 4-fish bag/possession limit for nonresidents; nonresidents had an 8-fish annual limit and requirement to complete a harvest record (2024 Southeast Alaska Sport Fishery Regulations). The resident sport fishery for sablefish in Southeast Alaska was managed with a 6-fish bag/possession limit, following adoption by the Board of Fisheries in 2025.

F. 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, 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 sex 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, 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. The Cook Inlet fishery takes place in the Cook Inlet and North Gulf Coast Districts with a combined GHL and the PWS fishery is divided into the Inside and Outside Districts with separate GHL's. Both management areas open to lingcod fishing on 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 2025. All commercially harvested lingcod were incidental to other federal and state managed groundfish fisheries. Lingcod regulations for the sport sector were July 1-December 31: Open to lingcod fishing. Two fish per day, 4 in possession, and no size limit.

Stock assessment and management attributes for lingcod in Southeast Alaska, germane to the sport fishery, are 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. In 2025, the sport fishery for lingcod was managed with differential bag/possession limits for residents and nonresidents (size-based slot limits applied to nonresidents only) in 3 areas of Southeast Alaska: Yakutat area, Northern Southeast area, and Southern Southeast area (2025 Southeast Alaska Sport Fishery Regulations).

G. Pacific Halibut and IPHC Activities

The sport halibut fishery is monitored by the division of Sport Fish (Operational plan: Southeast Alaska marine boat sport fishery harvest studies, 2025.; Operational plan: Assessment of Pacific halibut and groundfish sport harvest in Southcentral Alaska, 2025), 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.

5. 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; federal register - EEZ 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).

6. Data Management

In December of 2024 the OceanAK data warehouse and its underlying databases were migrated from local servers in Juneau, Alaska to Oracle Cloud Infrastructure (OCI) data centers in San Jose, California. OceanAK serves as a statewide resource, providing State of Alaska employees with access to consolidated fisheries data, and this migration has already yielded meaningful improvements in performance and reliability. Work to further modernize the system is ongoing, including a transition to Oracle Analytics Cloud (OAC), Oracle's cloud-native analytics platform, which will bring OceanAK's reporting and visualization tools fully in line with its cloud-hosted data infrastructure. In 2025 the ADFG Region 1 programming staff imported and validated a large volume of age data from historical tables, identifying and correcting mismatches as needed. They also worked extensively on a data cleanup using nearly 40 years of historical black rockfish biological samples, logbooks, and fish tickets which allowed for the addition and/or correction of missing fields in those data. The methodology used will serve as a template for updating these data for other species and fisheries. Upgrades to existing groundfish applications were made that allow for better quality control to be conducted during data entry. Additionally, improvements were made to groundfish reports and the public webpages that allow a better resolution of harvest data while protecting confidential information.

The Central Region groundfish management now uploads commercial sampling data directly into OceanAK. The goal is to house sampling data in OceanAK and to relate sampling events to fish ticket and age data. There are challenges to relating the three subject areas (sampling data, fish tickets, and age data) but when it is complete it will be an asset to fisheries managers. The research analyst who previously constructed a new port sampling program for field tablets is developing a new age data application so that age data, like port sampling data, can be directly uploaded to OceanAK in real time. New harvest reports were created for internal distribution for managers and regional management staff. Public harvest reports, available on the ADF&G website, have also been updated and are now available.

The Southeast Marine Harvest Studies (MHS) program has maintained stable data management practices, with no significant changes to its core database, data acquisition processes, or agency workflows. The primary technical effort during this period has been migrating the MHS mobile application from Xamarin to MAUI (Multi-Platform App UI), a modern cross-platform development framework, as well as ongoing updates to ensure the application meets current data reporting requirements. Additionally, the methods used to assess and report biomass in SRI units have been updated, though the underlying code repositories remain unchanged.

Southcentral port sampling data is collected in the field using tablet-based digital forms and uploaded daily through KoBoToolbox, a data hosting platform available at no cost to government organizations. The data undergoes several quality control checks, including screening for impossible or unlikely values, outlier detection for length-weight and length-age relationships, and verification of otolith weight and species identification. Data and supporting scripts are maintained both on an ADF&G server in Homer and in a publicly accessible GitHub repository at https://github.com/ADFG-DSF/GOAB.

The Division of Sport Fish is in secondary stages of creating a database to rescue and retrieve data and house it in a searchable database. Funding has been secured for programmer time. Charter logbook data has been integrated using Microsoft Power Business Intelligence. Integration of other data sources is in progress. The Division also took the charter eLogbook program statewide in 2025. 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 monthly once implemented. The new survey is scheduled to be completed in 2027.

7. Upcoming Work, Emerging Needs, and Challenges

The Southeast Region will continue to conduct 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 will continue the Cook Inlet black rockfish hydroacoustic survey but will no longer conduct the multi species bottom trawl survey in PWS due to funding issues. A more cost-effective tanner crab pot survey is currently in development. Staff are in the process of obtaining a new research vessel, R/V Equinox, and hope it will be operational sometime in 2026 and open opportunities for new surveys.

Personnel at the ADU will continue life history research to evaluate and validate age data and improve understanding of fish populations. Also, personnel will continue to develop automated and AI integrated data collection methods to support processing. Collections of paired maturity data with age structures (e.g., bones and otoliths) 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.

The ADF&G-DSF is supporting a M.S. candidate through the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit. The M.S. thesis involves advancing components of stock assessment for black rockfish in Southeast Alaksa. Initial data collection occurred in 2024, and data analysis and exploration of length and age across time is planned for 2025 and beyond. 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 for pelagic rockfish was conducted in 2021, 2023, and 2025 at Nuka Island and the Chiswell Islands. We are currently determining if we can stably fund this survey again into the future.

8. Other Publications

The Southeast Alaska and Yakutat Finfish and Shellfish Board of Fisheries meeting occurred in Ketchikan January 28–February 9, 2025 (Meeting Information: Alaska Board of Fisheries, Alaska Department of Fish and Game). 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).

2025-2027 Operational Plan: Assessment of Groundfish Harvest in Central Alaska can be found at http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/ROP.CF.2A.2025.08.pdf

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

The 2025 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 2024 can be found at https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/FMR25-20.pdf.

The 2025 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 2024 can be found at https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidPDFs/FMR25-26.pdf.

Other sport fish publications include the Estimation and Projection of Statewide Sport Halibut Harvest and Prince William Sound Sport Fishing Regulation Changes.

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