

13 Sablefish: Overharvest and Underharvest of IFQs and TACs

13.1 TACs and Harvests: 1991 to 2011

Table 13-1 provides a comparison of commercial and retained sablefish harvests in each management area with the total allowable catch (TAC) for each year from 1991 through 2011. This table shows the difference, in pounds, between the harvest and TAC and provides the percent of harvested TAC.

The 1991 to 1994 estimated harvests come from a computerized file that contains fish ticket records for catcher vessels and records derived from NMFS's Weekly Production Reports (WPRs) for catcher-processors.⁶² Harvest data for 1995 through 2011 comes from NMFS-RAM catch records. Again, both commercial and retained catch have been included in the harvest totals; therefore, harvest totals are slightly different than those shown in Tables 14-1 and 14-2.⁶³

The TACs and harvests in Table 13-1 do not include the portion of the TAC allocated to trawl operations. Also excluded are the 1995 to 2011 TACs and harvests allocated to the sablefish CDQ fishery in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands.

Table 13-1 indicates that estimated harvests in the 1995 through 2011 IFQ fisheries fell below the TACs in all sablefish management areas. The estimated shortfall ranged from about 0.5% in Southeast in 2011 to 38.5% in 2011 in the Aleutian Islands.

Before implementation of the IFQ program in 1995, "overages," or catches that exceeded the TAC, were common in the Southeast, West Yakutat, and Central Gulf areas. In other areas, large underharvests sometimes occurred, particularly when sablefish fisheries were closed after halibut bycatch limits were reached.

⁶²The harvest estimates in table 13-1 may not agree with sablefish harvest estimates from other data sources. Since 1990, State of Alaska fish tickets do not contain all of the sablefish catch; some Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) catch may be recorded only on NMFS Weekly Production Reports (WPR). The authors used fish ticket records for catcher vessels and WPR records for catcher-processors to construct the 1991-1994 sablefish catch records in table 13-1. In doing so, the authors excluded fish ticket records from catcher processors. The amount of harvest for a catcher-processor in a specific management area varies dramatically between fish ticket data and WPR data. Thus, the method of blending data used here may differ from harvest estimates from other methods of blending fish ticket and WPR data.

⁶³ Under the NMFS IFQ catch reporting system, the entire harvest is required to be offloaded and weighed during the first delivery. If a portion of the catch is "retained" by the IFQ permit holder, it is entered on the catch reporting system as "retained catch." Catch may be retained for personal use or it may be retained to sell to a different processor or customer.

The subsequent sale of retained catch does not result in an additional entry on the NMFS catch reporting system; i.e., the harvest is only recorded once. Nevertheless, the system does not allow a precise breakout of catch that is sold versus catch that is kept for personal use. It is likely that some of the retained catch is subsequently sold and should be included with the commercial harvest.

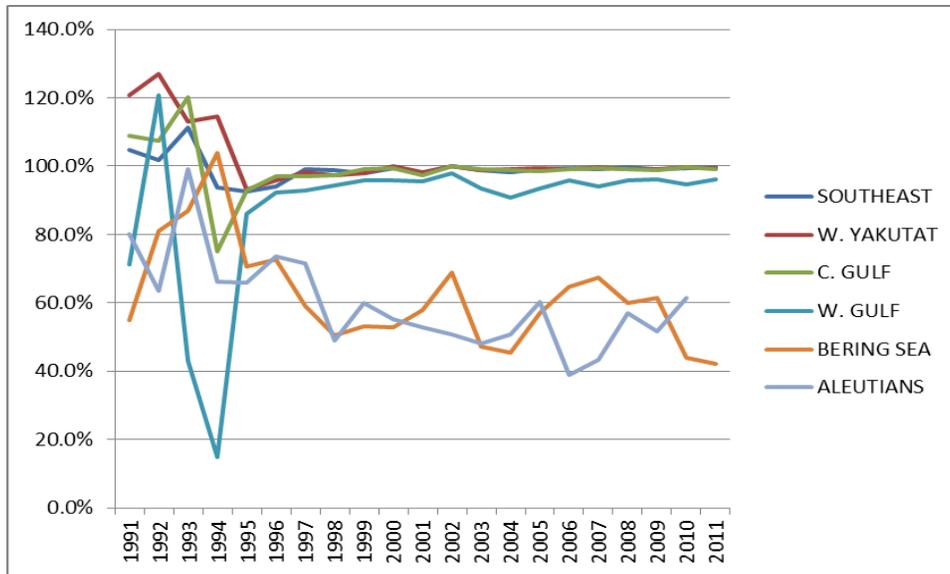


Figure 5, Comparison of sablefish TAC's and Harvest by Management Area, 1991 to 2011

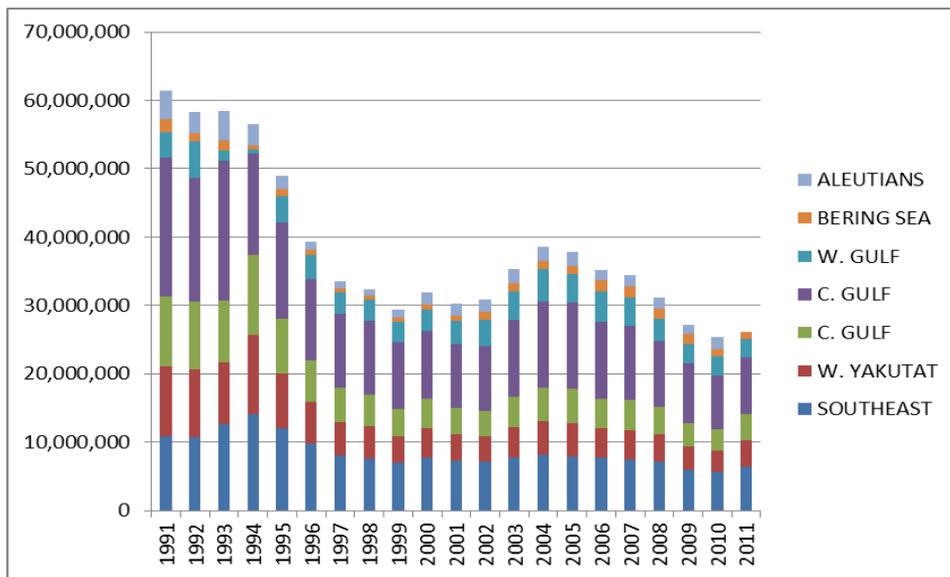


Figure 6. Total sablefish harvest by area and year

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