

§ 679.24 Gear Limitations

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Regulations pertaining to vessel and gear markings are set forth in this section and as prescribed in the annual management measures published in the *Federal Register* pursuant to § 300.62 of chapter III of this title.

(a) Marking of hook-and-line, longline pot, and pot-and-line gear.

(1) All hook-and-line, longline pot, and pot-and-line marker buoys carried on board or used by any vessel regulated under this part shall be marked with the following:

(i) The vessel's name; and

(ii) The vessel's Federal fisheries permit number; or

(iii) The vessel's ADF&G vessel registration number.

(2) Markings shall be in characters at least 4 inches (10.16 cm) in height and 0.5 inch (1.27 cm) in width in a contrasting color visible above the water line and shall be maintained so the markings are clearly visible.

(b) Gear restrictions

(1) Longline pot gear.

Any person using longline pot gear must treat any catch of groundfish as a prohibited species, except:

(i) In the Aleutian Islands subarea.

(ii) While directed fishing for sablefish in the Bering Sea subarea, except as provided in paragraph (c)(4)(ii) of this section.

(2) [reserved]

(3) Trawl footrope.

No person trawling in any GOA area limited to pelagic trawling under § 679.22 may allow the footrope of that trawl to be in contact with the seabed for more than 10 percent of the period of any tow.

(4) BSAI pollock nonpelagic trawl prohibition.

No person may use nonpelagic trawl gear to engage in directed fishing for non-CDQ pollock in the BSAI.

(c) Gear restrictions for sablefish

(1) Gear allocations.

Gear allocations of sablefish TAC are set out under § 679.20.

(2) Eastern GOA regulatory area

(i) General.

(A) No person may use any gear other than hook-and-line and trawl gear when fishing for sablefish in the Eastern GOA regulatory area.

(B) No person may use any gear other than hook-and-line gear to engage in directed fishing for sablefish.

(ii) Sablefish as prohibited species

(A) Trawl gear. When operators of vessels using trawl gear have harvested 5 percent of the TAC for sablefish in the Eastern GOA regulatory area during any year, further trawl catches of sablefish must be treated as prohibited species as provided by § 679.21(b).

(B) Other gear. Operators of vessels using gear types other than those specified in paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section in the Eastern GOA regulatory area must treat any catch of sablefish as a prohibited species as provided by § 679.21(b).

(3) Central and Western GOA regulatory areas; sablefish as prohibited species.

Operators of vessels using gear types other than hook-and-line and trawl gear in the Central and Western GOA regulatory areas must treat any catch of sablefish in these areas as a prohibited species as provided by § 679.21(b).

(4) BSAI.

(i) Operators of vessels using gear types other than hook-and-line, longline pot, pot-and-line, or trawl gear

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in the BSAI must treat sablefish as a prohibited species as provided by § 679.21(b).

(ii) Longline pot gear is prohibited in directed fishing for sablefish from 0001 hrs, A.l.t., on June 1 until 1200 hrs, A.l.t., on June 30.

(d) Trawl gear test areas

(1) General.

For purposes of allowing pelagic and nonpelagic trawl fishermen to test trawl fishing gear, NMFS may establish, after consulting with the Council, locations for the testing of trawl fishing gear in areas that would otherwise be closed to trawling.

(2) Trawl gear testing.

For the purposes of this section, "trawl gear testing" means deploying trawl gear in areas designated in this paragraph (d) and in Figure 7 to this part under the following conditions.

(i) The codend shall be unzipped while trawl gear testing.

(ii) Groundfish shall not be possessed on board when trawl gear testing.

(iii) Observers aboard vessels during the time spent trawl gear testing shall not fulfill observer requirements at subpart E of this part.

(3) Criteria.

The establishment of test areas must comply with the following criteria:

(i) Depth and bottom type must be suitable for testing the particular gear type.

(ii) The areas must be outside State waters.

(iii) The areas must be in locations not normally closed to fishing with that gear type.

(iv) The areas must be in locations that are not usually fished heavily by that gear type.

(v) The areas must not be within a designated Steller sea lion protection area at any time of the year.

(4) Test areas.

Trawl gear testing is allowed in the following areas (Figure 7 to this part) bounded by straight lines connecting the coordinates in the order listed, at all times:

(i) Kodiak Test Area.

57°37' N. lat., 152°02' W. long.
57°37' N. lat., 151°25' W. long.
57°23' N. lat., 151°25' W. long.
57°23' N. lat., 152°02' W. long.
57°37' N. lat., 152°02' W. long.

(ii) Sand Point Test Area.

54°50' N. lat., 161°00' W. long.
54°50' N. lat., 160°30' W. long.
54°35' N. lat., 160°30' W. long.
54°35' N. lat., 161°00' W. long.
54°50' N. lat., 161°00' W. long.

(iii) Bering Sea Test Area.

55°00' N. lat., 167°00' W. long.
55°00' N. lat., 166°00' W. long.
54°40' N. lat., 166°00' W. long.
54°40' N. lat., 167°00' W. long.
55°00' N. lat., 167°00' W. long.

(e) Seabird avoidance program for vessels fishing with hook-and-line gear.

(1) Applicability.

The operator of a vessel **that is longer than 26 ft (7.9 m) LOA fishing with hook-and-line gear** must comply with the seabird avoidance **requirements as specified in paragraphs (e)(2) through (e)(4)** of this section while fishing for:

(i) IFQ halibut or CDQ halibut,

(ii) IFQ sablefish, and

(iii) Groundfish in the EEZ off Alaska.

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(2) **Seabird Avoidance Requirements.**

The operator of a vessel described in paragraph (e)(1) of this section must:

(i) **Gear onboard.** Have onboard the vessel the seabird avoidance gear as specified in paragraph (e)(4) of this section;

(ii) **Gear inspection.** Upon request by an authorized officer or observer, make the seabird avoidance gear available for inspection;

(iii) **Gear use.** Use seabird avoidance gear as specified in paragraph (e)(4) of this section that meets performance and material standards as specified in paragraph (e)(5) of this section, while hook-and-line gear is being deployed.

(iv) **Sink baited hooks.** Use hooks that when baited, sink as soon as they are put in the water.

(v) **Offal discharge.**

(A) If offal is discharged while gear is being set or hauled, **discharge offal in a manner** that distracts seabirds from baited hooks, to the extent practicable. The discharge site on board a vessel must be either aft of the hauling station or on the opposite side of the vessel from the hauling station.

(B) **Remove hooks from any offal that is discharged.**

(C) **Eliminate directed discharge through chutes or pipes of residual bait or offal from the stern of the vessel while setting gear. This does not include baits falling off the hook or offal discharges from other locations that parallel the gear and subsequently drift into the wake zone well aft of the vessel.**

(D) **For vessels not deploying gear from the stern, eliminate directed discharge of residual bait or offal over sinking hook-and-line gear while gear is being deployed.**

(vi) **Safe release of seabirds.** Make every reasonable effort to ensure birds brought on board alive are released alive and that, wherever possible, hooks are removed without jeopardizing the life of the birds.

(3) **Seabird Avoidance Plan.**

A Seabird Avoidance Plan must:

(i) **Be written, current, and onboard the vessel.**

(ii) **Contain the following information:**

(A) **Vessel name.**

(B) **Master's name.**

(C) **Type of bird avoidance measures utilized.**

(D) **Positions and responsibilities of crew for deploying, adjusting, and monitoring performance of deployed gear.**

(E) **Instructions and/or diagrams outlining the sequence of actions required to deploy and retrieve the gear to meet specified performance standards.**

(F) **Procedures for strategic discharge of offal, if any.**

(G) **The NMFS "Seabird Avoidance Plan" form, completed and signed by vessel operator. Vessel operator's signature shall indicate the operator has read the plan, reviewed it with the vessel crew, made it available to the crew, and has instructed the vessel crew to read it.**

(iii) **Be made available for inspection upon request by an authorized officer or observer.**

(4) **Seabird avoidance gear requirements.**

(See also Table 20 to this part.) The operator of a vessel identified in paragraph (e)(1) of this section must comply with the following requirements:

(i) **While fishing with hook-and-line gear, including snap gear, in NMFS Reporting Area 649 (Prince William Sound), 659 (Eastern GOA Regulatory Area, Southeast Inside District), or state waters of Cook Inlet:**

(A) **A minimum of 1 buoy bag line as specified in paragraph (e)(5)(i) of this section must be used by vessels greater than 26 ft (7.9 m) LOA and less than or equal to 55 ft (16.8 m) LOA without masts, poles, or rigging.**

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(B) A minimum of 1 buoy bag line as specified in paragraph (e)(5)(i) of this section must be used by vessels greater than 26 ft (7.9 m) LOA and less than or equal to 32 ft (9.8 m) LOA with masts, poles, or rigging.

(C) A minimum of a single streamer line as specified in paragraph (e)(5)(ii)(B) of this section must be used by vessels greater than 32 ft (9.8 m) LOA and less than or equal to 55 ft (16.8 m) LOA with masts, poles, or rigging.

(D) A minimum of a single streamer line of a standard as specified in paragraph (e)(5)(ii) of this section must be used by vessels greater than 55 ft (16.8 m) LOA.

(ii) While fishing with hook-and-line gear other than snap gear in Federal waters (EEZ) not including NMFS Area 659, or in state waters not specified in paragraph (e)(4)(i):

(A) A minimum of 1 buoy bag line as specified in paragraph (e)(5)(i) of this section and one other device as specified in paragraph (e)(6) of this section must be used by vessels greater than 26 ft (7.9 m) LOA and less than or equal to 55 ft (16.8 m) LOA without masts, poles, or rigging.

(B) A minimum of a single streamer line as specified in paragraph (e)(5)(ii)(B) of this section and one other device as specified in paragraph (e)(6) of this section must be used by vessels greater than 26 ft (7.9 m) LOA and less than or equal to 55 ft (16.8 m) LOA with masts, poles, or rigging.

(C) A minimum of paired streamer lines of a standard as specified in paragraph (e)(5)(iii) of this section must be used by vessels greater than 55 ft (16.8 m) LOA.

(iii) While fishing with snap gear in the EEZ (not including Area 659) or state waters not specified in paragraph (e)(4)(i):

(A) A minimum of 1 buoy bag line as specified in paragraph (e)(5)(i) of this section and one other device as specified in paragraph (e)(6) of this section must be used by vessels greater than 26 ft (7.9 m)

LOA and less than or equal to 55 ft (16.8 m) LOA without masts, poles, or rigging.

(B) A minimum of a single streamer line as specified in paragraph (e)(5)(iv)(B) of this section and one other device as specified in paragraph (e)(6) of this section must be used by vessels greater than 26 ft (7.9 m) LOA and less than or equal to 55 ft (16.8 m) LOA with masts, poles, or rigging.

(C) A minimum of a single streamer line of a standard as specified in paragraph (e)(5)(iv) of this section and one other device as specified in paragraph (e)(6) of this section must be used by vessels greater than 55 ft (16.8 m) LOA with masts, poles, or rigging.

(iv) While fishing with hook-and-line gear other than snap gear for IFQ halibut, CDQ halibut, or IFQ sablefish, in waters shoreward of the EEZ, requirements as specified in paragraphs (e)(4)(ii) and (e)(8) must be used.

(5) Seabird avoidance gear performance and material standards:

(i) Buoy bag line weather exception. In winds exceeding 45 knots (storm or Beaufort 9 conditions), the use of a buoy bag line is discretionary.

(ii) Single streamer standard.

(A) A single streamer line must:

(1) Be a minimum of 300 feet (91.4 m) in length;

(2) Have streamers spaced every 16.4 ft (5 m);

(3) Be deployed before the first hook is set in such a way that streamers are in the air for a minimum of 131.2 ft (40 m) aft of the stern and within 6.6 ft (2 m) horizontally of the point where the main groundline enters the water.

(4) Have individual streamers that hang attached to the mainline to 9.8 in (0.25 m) above the waterline in the absence of wind.

(5) Have streamers constructed of material that is brightly colored, Uv-protected plastic tubing or

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3/8 inch polyester line or material of an equivalent density.

(B) Weather exception: In winds exceeding 45 knots (storm or Beaufort 9 conditions), the use of a single streamer line is discretionary.

(iii) Paired streamer standard:

(A) At least one streamer line must be deployed before the first hook is set and two streamer lines must be fully deployed within 90 seconds.

(B) Weather exceptions: In conditions of wind speeds exceeding 30 knots (near gale or Beaufort 7 conditions), but less than or equal to 45 knots, a single streamer must be deployed from the windward side of the vessel. In winds exceeding 45 knots (storm or Beaufort 9 conditions), the use of streamer lines is discretionary.

(C) Streamer lines must:

(1) Be deployed in such a way that streamers are in the air for a minimum of 131.2 ft (40 m) aft of the stern for vessels under 100 ft (30.5 m) and 196.9 ft (60 m) aft of the stern for vessels 100 ft (30.5 m) or over;

(2) Be a minimum of 300 feet (91.4 m) in length;

(3) Have streamers spaced every 16.4 ft (5 m);

(4) For vessels deploying hook-and-line gear from the stern, the streamer lines must be deployed from the stern, one on each side of the main groundline.

(5) For vessels deploying gear from the side, the streamer lines must be deployed from the stern, one over the main groundline and the other on one side of the main groundline.

(6) Have individual streamers that hang attached to the mainline to 9.8 in (0.25 m) above the waterline in the absence of wind.

(7) Have streamers constructed of material that is brightly colored, Uvprotected plastic tubing or 3/8

inch polyester line or material of an equivalent density.

(iv) Snap gear streamer standard:

(A) For vessels using snap gear, a single streamer line must:

(1) Be deployed before the first hook is set in such a way that streamers are in the air for 65.6 ft (20 m) aft of the stern and within 6.6 ft (2 m) horizontally of the point where the main groundline enters the water.

(2) Have a minimum length of 147.6 ft (45 m).

(B) Weather exception: In winds exceeding 45 knots (storm or Beaufort 9 conditions), the use of a single streamer line is discretionary.

(6) Other seabird avoidance devices and methods.

As required at paragraphs (e)(4)(ii)(A) and (B) and (e)(4)(iii) of this section, include the following:

(i) Add weights to groundline.

(ii) Use a buoy bag line or single streamer line, of standards as appropriate and as specified in paragraph (e)(5) of this section.

(iii) To distract birds away from the setting of baited hooks, discharge fish, fish parts (i.e. offal) or spent bait.

(7) Other methods.

The following measures or methods must be accompanied by the applicable seabird avoidance gear requirements as specified in paragraph (e)(4) of this section:

(i) Night-setting,

(ii) Line shooter, or

(iii) Lining tube.

(8) Seabird avoidance exemption.

Notwithstanding any other paragraph in this part, operators of vessels 32 ft (9.8 m) LOA or less

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using hook-and-line gear in IPHC Area 4E in waters shoreward of the EEZ are exempt from seabird avoidance regulations.