Species Fact Sheet: Southern rock sole

*MSC certified May 2010

- **Latin Name:** *Lepidopsetta bilineata*
- **Market/vernacular names:** sole, flounder, rock flounder, twolined flounder, white-bellied flounder
- **Location:** Gulf of Alaska (GOA)
- **Fishing Gear:** Bering Sea flatfish gear. This modified gear principally uses sweeps raised off the seafloor by bobbins spaced at 30 meter intervals to herd flatfish into relatively small nets where the fish are captured. Research by NMFS scientists has shown that use of elevated sweeps dramatically reduces effects of fishing on seafloor habitat and associated species such as crab and structure-forming animals called epifauna. This gear will be required for all BSAI flatfish fishing in 2011, and is currently being used voluntarily in the GOA.
- **Season:** January 20 - December 31
- **Catch/TAC:** 2014 catch of shallow water flatfish = 4,747 metric tons / 2015 TAC = 32,027 metric tons. *In the GOA, southern rock sole are managed as part of the shallow water flatfish complex.
- **Products:** H&G (headed and gutted) and whole round
- **Size:** Length up to 58 cm.
- **General Information:** Alaska accounts for majority of the worldwide harvest of rock sole. Southern rock sole is harvested mostly by catcher processors ranging in size from 110 to 295 feet, and by combinations of catcher vessels ranging in size from 60 to 90 feet. Catcher processors harvest multiple species, conduct primary processing aboard the vessel, and freeze their products on board. Catcher vessels exclusively deliver to shoreside processors or other vessels.
- **Management:** In 1976, the U.S. established management for southern rock sole stocks out to 200 miles. Federal fishery management plans, adopted through an open and transparent public process and based on sound science, govern the harvest of southern rock sole. The plans have been amended numerous times to achieve continuous improvement in the performance of the fishery. Fishery managers and scientists follow a precautionary, ecosystem-based approach.
- **Improvements:** Industry participants have worked with NMFS scientists to develop Bering Sea flatfish gear. Research by NMFS scientists has shown that use of this gear, which incorporates elevated sweeps, dramatically reduces effects of fishing on seafloor habitat and associated species such as crab and structure-forming animals called epifauna.