LONGLINERS set a line with baited hooks spaced several feet apart on the bottom of the ocean to catch halibut and sablefish (black cod). Squid and fish like herring, shad, or hake are used as bait. The longline is anchored at each end, and marked by surface buoys, poles, and flags.

A halibut groundline might cover three miles, have 800 hooks, and take three hours to retrieve. The lines are set in 180—900 feet of water where they remain (or soak) for 6 to 12 hours before hauling.

Sablefish are fished for in deeper water ranging from 600-2400 feet. Lines are hauled after 4 to 6 hours.

Back at port, the catch is delivered to local fish markets or seafood processors who ship the fish out to markets all over the world.

HALIBUT FISHERY MANAGEMENT

In the United States and Canada, the halibut fishery is managed by the International Pacific Halibut Commission. In Oregon, the halibut fishery is open in the summer months during several 10-hour seasons, called “openers.” Fishermen can catch a certain number of pounds based on the size of their vessel. There are also restrictions on where they are allowed to fish. The Pacific halibut fishery is often cited as an example of a well-managed fishery.

Check out the Sablefish Trap sign for information about sablefish fishery management.

PACIFIC HALIBUT, Hippoglossus stenolepsis, are found in coastal waters from Alaska to Northern California. In Alaska, they can grow to almost 9 feet in length and weigh over 400 pounds, but those found off the Oregon coast are younger fish, seldom weighing over 150 pounds.

SABLEFISH, or black cod, are found in the deep coastal waters from Alaska to California. The harvest of sablefish is divided among different gear types including traps, longline and bottom trawl.