This document describes sampling activities and summarizes results from the 2020 British

Columbia Sablefish research and assessment survey. The survey was comprised of stratified

random sets (StRS) at five depth-stratified areas. A portion of the survey (traditional inlet sets)

were removed to shorten the survey in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Biological sampling

for sablefish included collection of length, weight, sex, maturity and age structures. Sablefish

were randomly sampled from every third trap on all sets, up to a maximum sample size of 60

sablefish. The tag and release study conducted annually since 1991 was continued in 2020.

Sablefish were selected randomly for tag and release from every third trap up to a maximum of

125 fish.

A total of 48,092 sablefish were caught in 2020, of which 3,691 were used for biological samples

and 8,200 were tagged and released. Catch per unit effort (CPUE) is an important product

from this survey as it is used to infer population trends. In most recent years, survey data from

stratified random sets showed increasing trends in CPUE in both mean weight and numbers of

fish per trap. At the 2020 StRS sites, the stratified mean survey abundance was 35 kg/trap, down

-17% from 2019 and -13% from the 2018-2019 average.