



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

605 W. 4th Ave. Suite 306
Anchorage, AK 99501
(907) 271-2809
Fax (907) 271-2817

Action Memo

File Number: HAL 17-031

Agenda Date 10/2/2017

Agenda Number: D1

Dan Hull, Chairman
David Witherell, Executive Director

SUBJECT:

Halibut Deck Sorting EFP and Halibut Genetics Sampling EFP - Review

STAFF CONTACT: Diana Evans

ACTION REQUIRED:

- 1) Review Halibut Deck Sorting EFP
- 2) Review the Halibut Genetic Sampling EFP

BACKGROUND:

1) Review Halibut Deck Sorting EFP

Since 2015, the Council has reviewed and supported several exempted fishing permit (EFP) applications to allow on-deck sorting of Pacific halibut on non-pelagic trawl catcher processor vessels, as a means of reducing halibut bycatch mortalities. The current EFP was granted to the Alaska Seafood Cooperative and co-applicants, and expires at the end of 2017. Under the EFP, vessels are allowed to sort halibut removed from a codend on the deck, rather than routing halibut over the flow scale and below deck, and release those fish back into the water after sampling halibut for length and condition, using IPHC halibut mortality assessment methods. All groundfish and halibut harvested must be within existing allocations for groundfish and halibut mortality.

At this meeting, the Council is scheduled to review an EFP application to extend deck sorting of halibut on Amendment 80 and other trawl catcher processor vessels through 2018 and 2019. The EFP is designed to continue to test methods that reduce halibut mortality in flatfish fisheries by reducing the amount of halibut handling and time out of water. The EFP study will inform the development of an analysis to implement deck sorting in regulation, on which NMFS has begun work.

The applicant, Mr. John Gauvin, will be at the meeting to describe the project, and will also provide a brief report on the scope of the EFP in 2017 to date, and the estimated halibut savings it has conferred. The EFP application has been attached to this agenda item, along with a letter from NMFS initiating Council consultation, a memorandum of approval from the AFSC regarding the experimental design, and the NEPA Categorical Exclusion that supports this proposal.

2) Review Halibut Genetic Sampling EFP

The Council is also scheduled to review an EFP application from Dr. Timothy Loher on behalf of the International Pacific Halibut Commission, to collect biological samples from halibut in the Aleutian Islands Pacific cod hook and line fishery. The EFP would allow the operator of a single hook and line vessel operating in the western Aleutian Islands winter cod fishery in 2018 to collect and provide biological samples for genetic

Agenda Date10/2/2017

Agenda Number:D1

analysis. The purpose of the experiment is to confirm or reject results of a previous genetic stock structure study which indicated that Pacific halibut in the western Aleutian Islands are genetically distinct from the remainder of the eastern Pacific population. The EFP would exempt the participating vessel from the requirement to return all prohibited species to the sea immediately with a minimum of injury.

As Dr. Loher is unable to attend the meeting, NMFS staff will be available to present the EFP application to the Council. The EFP application has been attached to this agenda item, along with a letter from NMFS initiating Council consultation, a memorandum of approval from the AFSC regarding the experimental