



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 15-022

Agenda Date 4/6/2015

Agenda Number: C7

Dan Hull, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director

SUBJECT:

Area 4A Halibut Retention in Sablefish Pots - Discussion Paper

ESTIMATED TIME:

2 hours

ACTION REQUIRED:

Review expanded discussion paper on management measures for retention of 4A halibut in BSAI sablefish pots.

BACKGROUND:

Based on an industry-submitted proposal, the IPHC has considered allowing for the legal retention of Area 4A halibut in pot gear used to target BSAI sablefish IFQ or CDQ, provided the participants hold sufficient 4A halibut IFQ to account for this catch. Currently, all halibut caught in pot gear off Alaska is considered to be Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) and is required to be discarded. The purpose of allowing retention of halibut in pots fishing for sablefish would be to more efficiently use the halibut resource, particularly in areas that may have high whale depredation. While the IPHC has the authority to define legal gear for the commercial take of halibut, the Council is responsible for recommending groundfish management measures, including those pertaining to sablefish IFQ, to the Secretary of Commerce. Therefore, coordination between the IPHC, the Council, and NMFS has been, and will continue to be, key in this action.

The IPHC is interested in endorsing an action that will permit only the incidental take of halibut in pot gear. It is not seeking to encourage the targeting of halibut with pot gear and it would like to discourage any increase in halibut catch that could occur as a result of this action. Likewise, the Council has stated its interest in considering management measures that it may adopt in order to ensure that the halibut IFQ retained during the harvest of sablefish IFQ/CDQ with pot gear remain at incidental catch levels. The IPHC also recommended two other management measures for the Council's continued consideration 1) requiring marking of pot gear buoys with radar reflectors, and 2) require the removal of pot gear once a participant has completing fishing for the season.

The objective of this document is to aid the Council in the identification of a purpose and need statement and alternative management measures that the Council may establish in conjunction with the IPHC choosing to allow the retention of incidentally caught halibut in pot gear in overlapping area of BSAI and Area 4A. The traditionally tool the Council would use to limit a non-target fishery includes setting a maximum retainable amount (MRA) of an incidental catch species as a weight ratio of a basis species' weight.

Agenda Date4/6/2015

Agenda Number:C7

This discussion paper is expanded in analysis to aid discussion and solicit feedback on additional information needed to establish a Preferred Alternative (PA) should the Council wish to move forward with this issue. A PA established by the Council could then be considered by the IPHC in their January annual meeting.