



# NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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## Action Memo

**File Number: HAL 16-002**

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**Agenda Date** 2/1/2016

**Agenda Number:** C5

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**Dan Hull, Chairman**  
**Chris Oliver, Executive Director**

**SUBJECT:**  
Halibut Deck Sorting EFP - Review

**STAFF CONTACT:** Diana Evans

**ACTION REQUIRED:**  
Review 2015 EFP summary report and 2016 EFP application

**BACKGROUND:**

An exempted fishing permit (EFP) application has been submitted by Mr John Gauvin on behalf of the Alaska Seafood Cooperative (AKSC), the Alaska Groundfish Cooperative (AGC), and co-applicants, to allow on-deck sorting of Pacific halibut on non-pelagic trawl catcher processor vessels, as a means of reducing halibut bycatch mortalities on Amendment 80 vessels. The EFP would allow Amendment 80 vessels 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 would be within the AKSC and the AGC's allocations for groundfish and halibut mortality. The letter to the Council chairman from Dr. Jim Balsiger (NMFS AKR) regarding receipt of this application, the EFP application itself, and AFSC's approval of the experimental design, are posted as attachments under this agenda item. Mr. John Gauvin will be available to present a description of the experiment.

The research to be conducted in this EFP is an extension of previous EFPs conducted by the Amendment 80 sector in 2009, 2012, and 2015. Summary reports of the 2012 and 2015 EFPs are attached to this agenda item, and the 2015 EFP report will also be presented by Mr Gauvin. Substantial reductions in halibut mortality were achieved under the 2015 EFP - a preliminary estimate of halibut savings is 131 mt. The 2016 EFP is designed to simplify and improve on elements that worked in 2015, and address challenges and issues that arose.

In October 2015, the Council had requested that industry work together and with NMFS to resolve implementation issues for 2016, which has successfully resulted in the current 2016 EFP application. The applicant's intention is for deck sorting under the EFP to begin in May 2016, and to continue through the end of 2016.