

C5(a) Halibut Deck Sorting EFP

The AP recommends the Council move forward on the deck-sorting EFP as soon as possible.

Motion passed 20-0.

Rationale:

- Shows interest of A80 sector commitment to getting halibut back into the water to reduce mortality.
- Learning process and one size doesn't fit all so this increases education for everyone.

C5(b) BSAI Halibut PSC Limits

The AP recommends the Council release the document for public review with the changes noted below (additions underlined, deletions in ~~strike through~~):

Alternative 1. No action.

Alternative 2. Amend the BSAI Groundfish FMP to revise halibut PSC limits as follows (*More than one option can be selected*).

Option 1. ~~Establish seasonal apportionment of halibut PSC in the BSAI trawl limited access sector.~~

Option 1~~2~~. Reduce halibut PSC limit for the BSAI Trawl Limited Access Sector by: a) 10 percent, b) 20 percent, c) 30 percent, d) 40 percent, or e) 50 percent.

Option 2~~3~~. Reduce halibut PSC limit for the Amendment 80 Sector by: a) 10 percent, b) 20 percent, c) 30 percent, d) 40 percent, or e) 50 percent.

Option 3~~4~~. Reduce halibut PSC limit for Pacific cod hook-and-line catcher vessel sector by: a) 10 percent, b) 20 percent, c) 30 percent, d) 40 percent, or e) 50 percent.

Option 4~~5~~. Reduce halibut PSC limit for Pacific cod hook-and-line catcher/processor sector by: a) 10 percent, b) 20 percent, c) 30 percent, d) 40 percent, or e) 50 percent.

Option 5~~6~~. Reduce the CDQ halibut PSQ limit by: a) 10 percent, b) 20 percent, c) 30 percent, d) 40 percent, or e) 50 percent.

Option 6. Reduce halibut PSC limit for other non-trawl (i.e. hook and line catch vessels and catcher processors targeting anything except Pacific cod or sablefish) by: a) 10 percent, b) 20 percent, c) 30 percent, d) 40 percent, or e) 50 percent.

Alternative 3. ~~Implement measures in the Amendment 80 sector to provide opportunities for deck sorting of halibut, or other handling practices that may provide an opportunity to reduce mortality of halibut that cannot be avoided.~~

The AP recommends the analysis include:

- Analysis of impacts on the halibut resource and economic impacts on the directed halibut fishery of U26 halibut PSC.

- Analysis of the effects on communities of halibut PSC/reductions in directed halibut fishery quota.
- Inclusion in the economic analysis of potential changes in fishing behavior in response to PSC limit changes.
- An analysis of benefits to halibut fisheries from reduced bycatch limits and community impacts, include coastwide impacts on commercial, charter, sport and subsistence fisheries, not just Areas 4CDE.

Rationale:

- This motion is intended to address the immediate crisis and immediate need to reduce halibut bycatch in the BSAI groundfish fisheries. It is critical that the timeframe to take final action in June be maintained in order to have any reductions in place for 2016 or and avoid being faced with the same emergency situation next December when the IPHC sets catch limits.
- Removal of Option 1 and inclusion of Option 6 were incorporated per staff recommendation. In addition, Alternative 3 for deck sorting EFP was removed since it was previously addressed by the AP.
- Inclusion of the 50% option for each of the various sectors would result in the 1.285 million pound Area 4CDE allocation being maintained in the future. Had the IPHC not increased the 2015 allocation from the Blue Line, Area 4CDE would have seen an 86% reduction to their FCEY.
- Inclusion of 50% option should not be an additional analytical burden. From the analysis the original 35% cap didn't have an effect upon some sectors so this addition would provide a fuller opportunity to gauge effects of PSC reductions.
- As presented in public comment, the directed halibut fisheries currently have a smaller percentage of O26 catch than they have had from 2011 to 2014, which has resulted in a defacto reallocation of halibut to trawl fleet. This is compounded by the fact that the overall total amount of halibut available to all users has decreased by approximately 46% over that same time period.
- Consideration of National standards 1, 4, 8 & 9 are critical to this action.
- In an effort to maintain the June timeline for final action, the four points highlighted for additions to the analysis pick up the most critical deficiencies as noted by the SSC and are considered to be the highest priority for decision-making purposes.

Amendment to above motion:

The AP further recommends, as a separate action, the Council initiate a discussion paper on the range of potential approaches for comprehensive halibut PSC management in the Bering Sea Groundfish fisheries, including:

1. Halibut PSC limits based on the status of the halibut resource (using projections of total biomass, projected spawning biomass, or other appropriate indices of abundance and productivity), such that all uses are based on the health and sustainability of the resource. This approach would include an examination of indirect scaling to halibut abundance using the Spawning Potential Ratio (SPR) or a catch share approach.
2. Halibut PSC management based on individual vessel accountability or Individual Bycatch Quotas.

Rationale:

- Immediate PSC reductions and long-term abundance-based solutions need to be linked. In this way, PSC reductions are a blunt tool, which, in the current situation would not be a feasible or

effective long-term solution when halibut biomass levels begin to increase and BSAI groundfish fleets could become artificially restrained.

- It is recognized that halibut biomass can vary greatly; therefore, a more refined management tool is necessary in order to accommodate all users of the resource including the directed halibut fleet and BSAI groundfish fisheries. An abundance-based solution would work to more equitably share the burden of stewardship and conservation for the halibut resource at all biomass levels.
- Through a separate discussion paper, development of a longer-term solution is in no way intended to slow down the immediate action of reducing halibut PSC amounts.
- Sector level reductions may not be adequate. Some co-ops or bycatch users did not provide reports to the AP to convey their past and future efforts to reduce halibut mortality.

The amendment passed 20-1; the final motion, as amended, passed 14-7.

Minority Report: *A minority of the AP felt that adding the additional sub-option of a 50% reduction to halibut PSC limits for all sectors while also fast tracking the package is problematic:*

- *The economic analysis is incomplete and doesn't adequately explain the impacts, particularly at the higher end of PSC reductions.*
- *Reductions at the higher end are about a reallocation of halibut.*
- *A balanced approach to halibut PSC reductions is needed, a 50% cut goes beyond what's reasonable and the impacts are simply too great.*

Signed by: Matt Upton, John Gruver, Paddy O'Donnell, Mitch Kilborn, Sinclair Wilt, Kurt Cochran, Jerry Downing

Minority Report: *A minority of the AP supported an amendment to the motion to add the following information to come forward in the analysis: "Add the table on page 131 of the IPHC 2015 "blue book" or annual meeting to chapter 3.1.2 Halibut Fishery Management in the EA. The table shows the spawning biomass, fishing intensity (harvest rate) and exploitable biomass from 1996-2015. A brief qualitative discussion of the IPHC stock assessment changes since 2011 and the impacts on the estimated exploitable and spawning biomass would also be helpful." This is pertinent information that failed to come forward, and would be valuable to the analysis. Signed by: Matt Upton, John Gruver, Paddy O'Donnell.*