

Halibut DMR Internal Working Group

Meeting Summary

On September 1, 2015, the Halibut DMR Internal Working Group (WG) met via conference call to discuss methods involved in calculating halibut DMRs for NPFMC-managed groundfish fisheries. The need for the discussion was brought about by a change in work responsibilities given the retirement of Gregg Williams who has provided halibut DMR estimates for the past two decades. A draft discussion paper, developed by Council staff, identified initial questions and concerns associated with DMR calculations and is attached under separate cover.

Participants in the call included Bruce Leaman (IPHC), Gregg Williams (IPHC-ret), Ian Stewart (IPHC), Mary Furuness (AKRO), Chris Rilling (AFSC-FMA), Farron Wallace (AFSC-FMA, SSC), Jennifer Cahalan (PSFMC/AFSC-FMA), Liz Chilton (AFSC-FMA), Diana Evans (Council staff), Mike Fey (PSMFC/AKFIN), and Jim Armstrong (Council Staff).

Halibut DMR estimates used for in-season management of groundfish fisheries have historically been kept constant for three-year periods; we are currently approaching the end of the 2013-2015 period. Gregg Williams, recently retired and on contract with IPHC, calculated updated DMR estimates and these will be shared with the Groundfish Plan Teams at their September meeting. **The WG recommends that these estimates be used for the specification of halibut DMRs in 2016. Nevertheless, the WG also believes that the transitional period provides an opportunity to develop alternative estimation methods which, if supported by the Council, could be applied in the year 2017 and forward.** Additionally, the WG believes that will be important to describe any new approach to the calculations in a transparent and transferable package.

The WG discussed a number of concerns central to both current and any new calculation methods. For example, it will be important to describe how the IPHC process currently assigns target fisheries from observer data, and how that relates to the assignment of target fisheries under the catch accounting system. Mike Fey attempted to replicate Williams' methods using the methodology described in the time series of IPHC RARA documents, and was largely successful; fine-scale adjustments will be worked out as the group moves forward. Additionally, the specification of DMR sampling units (vessel for non-CDQ, haul for CDQ under current methods) may need to be resolved with the observer program bycatch sampling (haul) and viability subsampling targets (20 fish/day).

Some aspects of modifying halibut DMR estimation methods and documentation are best considered through the Council process, in a discussion paper prepared for Council and public review. Some issues that might be included are itemized below:

- Lumping/splitting target fisheries based on adequacy of observer sampling
- Objective criteria for lumping/splitting out CP vs CV vessels, or CDQ fisheries
- Length of input time series (currently 10 year avg)
- Reconciling haul-based vs. trip-based estimation protocols with underlying sample designs

The September Groundfish Plan Team meeting will serve as the setting for presentation of the IPHC's recently updated estimates under current methods. Jim Armstrong will also update the Plan Teams on the

recommendations and proposals of the WG. The PT report and preliminary recommendations on 2016 DMRs will be given at the October Council meeting. The October Council meeting could serve as the setting for the Council to provide feedback on the WG's recommendation for a discussion paper outlining methods and application of any alternative calculation approaches for use in 2017.