

## HALIBUT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

April 4, 2016

Anchorage, Alaska

Members present: Dan Hull (Chair), Simon Kinneen, Craig Cross, Bob Alverson, Jeff Kauffman, Jim Balsiger, Chris Oliver (staff)

Other staff and public: Bruce Leaman, Jim Armstrong, Diana Stram, Jim Ianelli, Diana Evans, Glenn Merrill, Matt Robinson, Mike Szymanski, Nicole Kimball, Mike Clark (phone), John Lepore (phone), Jon Pollard (phone), Karla Bush, Chris Woodley, David Witherell, Peggy Parker, Steve Martell, Tom Gemmell, Chad See, Mateo Paz-Soldan, Jan Jacobs, Julie Bonney, Austin Estabrooks, Angel Drobnika, Marcus Hartley, Karl Haflinger, Mary Beth Tooley, Kotaro Ono, Arne Fuglvog, Rachel Baker, Paul MacGregor, Heather McCarty, John Gauvin

1. Committee purpose – The Committee discussed and generally agreed with the basic language as proposed in the meeting agenda as a working draft, in that the Council has identified a need to better align US halibut management interests within the Council process, as identified in the Framework strategic planning document. The Council also identified a need to improve communication and coordination of management and research activities with the IPHC, so that each body can support the other in fulfilling its respective mission. The purpose of the Committee can best be described as pursuing those two areas of work or discussion, to inform both the full Council and the IPHC. Currently, there is no formal process to develop U.S. positions at the IPHC, as is common in other RFMOs. While the Committee is not tasked to develop such a formal process, and Committee discussions are not intended to be in any way directive to US IPHC Commissioners, they can help articulate Council perspectives which are informative to the US Commissioners (and could be informative to the IPHC and Council as well).
2. Communications issues – The Committee discussed the ongoing need to achieve a ‘common vernacular’, which is an issue identified in the Framework document (for example, what is the ‘blueline’ relative to how we express OFLs/ABCs for our groundfish species). While we have made progress in that regard, this will be an ongoing process within the context of our Framework and our communications with the IPHC. Regarding review of scientific information, the Committee supports SSC review of significant ‘analyses’, or other information, whenever possible (examples include Dr. Martell’s paper on abundance-based PSC limits) particularly as they relate to the Council’s management authorities and responsibilities under MSA. This will require some judgement calls on the part of the Council Chair and Executive Director, as to what rises to the level of such review, also giving consideration to necessary timing considerations. Regarding the potential Joint Protocol Committee, the Council’s concept of such a Committee may be different than what is implied by the IPHC letter; i.e., if it is primarily for identifying issues and setting the agenda for a larger discussion between the full Council and Commission, we are likely better off with just meeting periodically as a Committee of the whole (both full bodies). Agendas for such meetings can be developed jointly by the IPHC and Council Directors/Chairs, as events and developments within each body warrant.

3. Halibut DMRs - The Committee received a presentation from Jim Armstrong on development of the revised discard mortality rates (DMRs), which the Council will review under agenda item C-7. Staff clarified that currently approved DMRs are in place through 2017, in the event revised DMRs are not fully developed, reviewed, and approved in time for 2017 implementation. Public input would be important this fall during the annual specifications process (which includes Plan Team, SSC, AP, and Council review), following further analysis by the working group. The Committee highlighted a number of questions and considerations for the analysts, including the need for an adequate, representative number of viability samples for each sector, and looks forward to the next iteration of the document.
4. Abundance based PSC limits: The Committee received a report from WorkingGroup members Diana Stram and Jim Ianelli outlining their work to date and potential paths forward. Their presentation attempted to focus on Council considerations which will be necessary to make expeditious progress on this issue, presuming a continued desire to move forward. The Committee discussion noted significant progress on bycatch reduction efforts recently, and expressed some caution against moving to a new system until we see how 2016 transpires, including bycatch levels achieved, DMR resolution, deck sorting success, etc. (noting that it will take a couple years to bring this analysis to final action). Overall however, there was consensus that an index approach makes logical/biological sense generally, and the Committee supports further exploration of this approach.
5. IPHC suggestion on “balancing objectives of the two bodies through govt to govt discussions” - Committee members discussed this aspect of the letter, noting that what the IPHC letter seems to be implying does not appear to be a realistic scenario from the Council perspective, since it is long-standing US position that the Council sets allocations in US waters, including bycatch. In addition, any govt to govt discussions presuppose that a U.S. position is developed through internal U.S. discussions that include the NPFMC. We have existing communication channels to achieve input from the IPHC on Council initiatives (eg, DMR revisions, abundance-based PSC limits, Gulf of Alaska bycatch management initiative); but recognize that could be enhanced, and in some cases requires coordination of management processes. The Committee notes that several of the priority issues identified in the Framework are being advanced/analyzed currently by the Council, with coordination and participation by IPHC staff.
6. Next meeting of the Committee – the Committee has not scheduled a future meeting at this time, but will likely meet this fall given timing of the annual specifications process (and potential DMR revisions), the annual IPHC meeting cycle, and other documents potentially coming to the Council (abundance-based PSC limits for example).