

**GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON INCIDENTAL CATCH
 RECOMMENDATION OPTIONS FOR THE SALMON TROLL AND FINAL
 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FIXED GEAR SABLEFISH FISHERIES**

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the historic halibut-to-sablefish landing ratios relative to the 2017 allocation for incidental retention of halibut in the primary fixed gear sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, Washington ([Agenda Item H.2, Attachment 1](#)). Given the higher halibut allocation in 2017 (70,000 pounds), the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) requested the GMT look at recent participation in the primary fixed gear sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, and provide analysis relative to a reasonable ratio of halibut to sablefish, since it has been several years since the allocation has been at the 2017 level.

Current regulations provide for halibut retention starting April 1, 2017 with a landing ratio of 110 pounds dressed weight of halibut for every 1,000 pounds of dressed weight of sablefish landed and up to 2 additional halibut in excess of this ratio, which were based on the 2016 allocation of 49,686 pounds. These landing restrictions and fishery conditions resulted in catch of 29,499 pounds in 2016. Under this agenda item, the Council can adjust the landing ratio for April 1 to October 31, 2017.

Table 1. 2012-2016 Historical Vessel Participation, Landing Restrictions, Primary Sablefish Pounds Available to Vessels, Total Sablefish Landed, and Total Halibut Landed North of Pt. Chehalis, WA.

Year	Number of Vessels	Landing ratio (lbs. halibut per 1,000 lb. sablefish)	Total Available Sablefish based on Tier Permits on Vessels	Total Sablefish Taken N of Pt. Chehalis (lbs.)	Total Halibut Taken (lbs. Net Wt.)
2012	9	50/1,000 + 2 fish	234,192	144,590	4,867
2013	13	75/1,000 + 2 fish	481,387	328,180	14,529
2014	12	75/1,000 + 2 fish	383,170	233,997	12,067
2015	8	75/1,000 + 2 fish	332,832	228,467	9,763
2016	14	110/1,000 + 2 fish	637,459	372,113	29,499

The GAP asked the GMT to examine landing restriction ratios of 140 and 150 lbs. of halibut per 1,000 lbs. sablefish, plus 2 additional fish. Table 2 shows the estimated halibut landings under a range of halibut landing restrictions (i.e., ratios) and effort (i.e., participating vessels). As the number of vessels have varied from 8 to 14 in the last five years (Table 1), the GMT examined a range of effort (10, 15, and 20 vessels) for vessels fishing in the area north of Pt. Chehalis. To calculate the estimated halibut landed, the GMT used the 2016 average tier limits and the average sablefish landed by primary vessels, on trips where halibut was retained north of Pt. Chehalis. In addition, each vessel was assumed to take the average number of trips in 2016. Each trip was assumed to have caught the plus 2 fish allowance, at a 19.6 pound average weight.

Table 2. Estimated Incidental Halibut in the Primary Sablefish Fishery North of Pt. Chehalis.

Number of Vessels	Landing Restrictions (per 1,000 lbs. sablefish + 2)	Estimated Halibut (net wt.) Based on Average Sablefish Tier Available a/	Estimated Halibut (net wt.) Based on Average Sablefish Landed N. of Point Chehalis b/
10	110	51,710	30,861
	140	65,370	38,835
	150	69,923	41,493
15	110	77,565	46,292
	140	98,055	58,253
	150	104,885	62,240
20	110	103,420	61,723
	140	130,740	77,671
	150	139,846	82,986

a/ Based on the average tier composition held by the vessels fishing north of Pt. Chehalis in 2016.

b/ Average based on the sablefish landed by 14 vessels participating in the incidental halibut fishery in 2016 (Table 1).

The projections shown in Table 2 are based on a number of assumptions as described above. Therefore, the Council should take into consideration the uncertainty on the potential effort (vessels and landings) and the associated tier compositions that may occur in 2017 north of Pt. Chehalis. If more vessels participate with higher tier limits and land more sablefish north of Point Chehalis, then the projections may be higher than those based on the average 2016 landings. If vessels shift south to locate sablefish, then the expected halibut landings may be lower than the average estimate in column 4 in Table 2. Historically, the fishery has landed a maximum of 75,000 pounds with a 100 pound ratio (2004), and therefore we would expect halibut landings to be similar to that magnitude unless conditions in the fishery are vastly different (i.e., projections greater than 75,000 are likely implausible). The GMT notes that the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife tracks halibut landings inseason, and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Regional Administrator has the authority to close the fishery if the projected landings are expected to exceed the allocation. Therefore, there should be a low risk to exceeding the allocation.

Inseason Adjustments

It is the GMT's understanding after talking with NMFS West Coast Region staff that this ratio could be adjusted through routine inseason action under a groundfish inseason agenda item at the June or September Council meetings, if the action was noticed in advance. As such, the ratio could be adjusted up or down depending on participation and landings.

PFMC
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