

**GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON SCOPING OF CATCH SHARING
 PLAN CHANGES AND INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION (IPHC)
 DATA REQUEST REPORT**

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received reports from Ms. Kelly Ames, Council staff; Mr. Stephen Keith, Dr. Ray Webster and Ms. Jamie Goen of the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC); and Ms. Heather Reed, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and offers the following comments and suggestions.

IPHC Report and Catch Sharing Plan Changes

As stated in our September 2015 statement, [Agenda Item I.1.a, Supplemental GAP Report, September 2015](#), the GAP generally supports maintaining the allocations as described in the catch sharing plan (CSP). However, the GAP is open to consideration of CSP modifications that may improve achievement of fishery management objectives. Potential proposals to modify halibut sport fisheries in Washington and California were discussed relative to problems with providing stable seasons given high catch rates and restrictive allowable catches.

With respect to the California sport fishery, the GAP supports analysis of an adjustment to sharing of the states’ sport fishery portions of the 2A total allowable catch (TAC). Specifically, the GAP requests the Council direct staff to provide an evaluation of the implications to management of these sport fisheries that may result from increasing the California sport share by two percent (from 4 percent to 6 percent) of the 2A non-tribal TAC and correspondingly decreasing the Washington and Oregon sport fishery shares by 1 percent each. If this analysis is completed and available for review at the September Council meeting, the GAP would be better informed to consider potential adjustments to the CSP at that time.

The analysis for new non-treaty fishery shares would be (commercial share would not change):

Status Quo		GAP Alternative	
WA Sport	35.6%	WA Sport	34.6%
OR Sport	29.7%	OR Sport	28.7%
CA Sport	4.0%	CA Sport	6.0%
Commercial	30.7%	Commercial	30.7%

The IPHC surveys of 2013 and 2014 in California have illustrated an increased abundance; however, the GAP does not suggest the CSP be based solely upon abundance. The IPHC clearly states that survey results are patchy and variable near the edges of the population ranges and abundance-based decisions would be unreliable.

WDFW Report on Managing Sport Halibut Fisheries in Washington

With respect to the Washington sport halibut fishery, the GAP reviewed the supplemental WDFW report ([Agenda Item G.1.b](#), Supplemental WDFW report) that included potential alternatives for

changes to sport halibut seasons in Washington for 2018 intended for public review. We appreciate that WDFW is trying to find solutions to short seasons for sport fishermen and for more efficient use of the resource without making changes to the CSP.

The GAP supports moving forward with these options for public review.

Public Comment/Allocation of Incidental Halibut to Sport Fishery

Mr. Dave Croonquist, a Washington stakeholder who, along with other Washington sport fishermen, provided public comment to the Council relative to changing the allocation of halibut from the incidental sablefish fishery to the sport fishery in Washington, presented his proposal to the GAP. The GAP appreciates his input but at this time does not support the proposal. The WDFW supplemental report also provides rationale for not supporting this change.

Some GAP members had difficulty supporting the proposal that could limit the commercial fishery and provide only the potential of one more day of sport fishing to Washington fishermen. Further, it would violate a carefully negotiated agreement between the IPHC and the commercial sector for years. Tribal representatives in the GAP also voiced concerns about their relationships with non-treaty commercial longliners near Neah Bay – this proposal would affect those longliners and therefore, the tribes also do not support this proposal.

IPHC Report on Changes to the Commercial Derby Fishery

The commercial fishery in area 2A – a series of 1-day/10-hour openings – has been a concern among the commercial fleet for some time. Like the IPHC, commercial fishermen are concerned about the safety issues.

The GAP understands the IPHC is not proposing any specific changes at this time but is looking for ideas. The GAP identifies the following as potential options for consideration at some point:

1. **Retain status quo (the derby fishery).** As evidenced by some public comment relative to this issue, some fishermen have indicated they depend on this fishery.
2. **A quota/catch share-type fishery.**
3. **Instead of a 10-hour opening (derby season), replace it with a 30-day season.** If this moves forward, an analysis of both a 30-day and a 20-day season would provide some comparisons to illustrate the potential allocation or trip limits for each permit. Leave all the existing parameters, such as permit allocations, but allow fishermen 30 days to catch their fish. Alternatively, this may entail transitioning to a trip-limit type system.

Currently, each permit is allocated a number of pounds according to the length of the vessel. This would continue, but the GAP understands the permit allocations may be lower – much lower – than they are now to account for potential overages. The current assumption on which the permit allocations are based is that not all the assigned halibut will get caught. A 30-day opening would likely change those assumptions and therefore decrease the per-

permit assignments of halibut pounds. Further, the season may close early if the overall commercial quota is attained.

4. **Assign the commercial halibut quota to incidental catch in the sablefish fishery.** This issue has been proposed in the Council process in the past but hasn't been considered a high priority. Analysis for all sectors – open access, fixed gear and the tier fishery – should be included.

The GAP supports exploration of these ideas, as the Council has time, with the expectation that such changes would yield better management of the resource, increase safety and create better market opportunities.

PFMC
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