

ELECTRONIC MONITORING - PRELIMINARY PACIFIC HALIBUT DISCARD MORTALITY RATES AND THIRD-PARTY REVIEW

At the April 2017 Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting, the Council confirmed and revised its final preferred alternatives for an electronic monitoring (EM) program for the non-whiting midwater trawl and bottom trawl fisheries. During that meeting, the Council requested further analysis of potential options for using discard mortality rates (DMR) of less than 90 percent for halibut when they are discarded under EM in the bottom trawl fishery. The Council is scheduled to review the following options and corresponding DMR rates:

- 1) Explore potential fleet-wide and vessel-specific rates using data from observed EM and Non-EM trips, and examine rates by depth;
- 2) Examine current data collected by Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) to assess the possibility of creating an EM DMR and how that rate compares to fleet-wide and vessel-specific rates.

Regarding Item 1, the West Coast Observer program (WCGOP) provided EM discard mortality rates observed in the 2015-2016 fishery under Agenda Item E.1.b, NMFS NWFSC Report 2: Estimated Discard and Catch of Groundfish Species in the 2016 US West Coast Fisheries (See Section 10.5 and Table 62 & 63 for DMRs and discussion). Sample size of EM bottom trawl trips that encountered halibut with an observer on board were low (3 vessel, 12 trips, and 27 hauls). Therefore, the Northwest Fisheries Science Center Observer Program cautions against using the estimated DMRs for management purposes. Regarding Item 2, the PSMFC conducted a study with the WCGOP to evaluate whether halibut viability can be predicted from variables that could be collected with an EM system. The results of this study are provided under Agenda Item E.6, Attachment 1.

The information and options for EM DMRs will be reviewed by the Groundfish Electronic Monitoring Policy Advisory and Technical Advisory Committees (via webinar on September 6), the Groundfish Management Team, and the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel and will provide recommendations to the Council during the September 2017 meeting. If one or more of these options move forward, then draft EM DMR methodologies would be examined by the Council's advisory bodies including the Scientific and Statistical Committee at the November 2017 meeting. The Council's intent is to finalize halibut DMR(s) for the bottom trawl fishery at the November 2017 meeting, and to implement National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)-approved DMR(s) under the EM program's final rule.

In addition, during the April 2017 Council meeting, the Council asked NMFS to maintain the current practice of having PSMFC perform video review responsibilities, but develop protocols for transferring financial responsibility for the video review from NMFS to the industry. In addition, the Council requested that NMFS examine the feasibility of using a sole provider (PSMFC) model indefinitely. The Council will receive a report from NMFS regarding preliminary findings of this request and discuss potential policy implications. The Council is scheduled for a final decision at November 2017 meeting.

Council Action:

- 1. Adopt Preliminary Pacific Halibut Discard Mortality Rates and a Third-Party Video Review Policy for Public Review.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item E.6, Attachment 1: Predictors of Halibut Viability for Electronic Monitoring in the West Coast Trawl IFQ Fishery.

Agenda Order:

- E.6 Electronic Monitoring - Preliminary Pacific Halibut Discard Mortality Rates and Third-Party Review Brett Wiedoff
- a. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Adopt Preliminary Pacific Halibut Discard Mortality Rates and Third-Party Video Review Policy for Public Review

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