GROUNDFISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON PROPOSED PROCEDURES FOR
ESTIMATING PACIFIC HALIBUT BYCATCH IN THE GROUNDFISH FISHERIES

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed Agenda Item D.2.b, NMFS Report and provides the following comments for Council consideration. The Pacific halibut bycatch estimates are reported combined legal (≥ 82 cm) and sublegal (< 82 cm). The GMT recommends including information on Pacific halibut total mortality estimates by size class (legal and sublegal separately). The GMT understands that International Pacific Halibut Commission does not require this information, yet we believe the Council should consider these data when developing management measures that reduce take and mortality to the Pacific halibut stock. Including this information in the annual reports will reduce workload, as the GMT would not have to make an additional request to the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program to inform management decisions made by the Council. For example, mortality of a sublegal-size halibut does not equate to the mortality of a legal-size halibut. Currently, the halibut allocation for the rationalized trawl fishery will be 15 percent of the Constant Exploitable Yield (CEY), and the CEY is comprised of only legal sized halibut, whereas trawl individual bycatch quota (IBQ) will include both legal and sublegal-sized halibut beginning 2011. Further, the additional information may be used to help guide management decisions, for example, whether to allow incidental retention of halibut by other fisheries (e.g., fixed gear sablefish fishery, Agenda Item D.3.b, ODFW Report, September 2010).

PFMC
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