

INITIAL CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO PACIFIC HALIBUT
ALLOCATION FOR BYCATCH AND CATCH SHARING
IN THE GROUND FISH FISHERIES

At its September 2007 meeting, the Council received a proposal to allow retention of Pacific halibut caught in fixed gear sablefish fisheries in the Port Orford area. The Council took no action on the proposal, but did state its intent to consider halibut bycatch retention on a broader scale. This agenda item provides an opportunity to explore allocation and other issues associated with bycatch retention and to consider a process for developing formal proposals for retention of halibut bycatch in fixed gear groundfish fisheries. Given the potential nature of allocation issues, it is not anticipated that proposals would be solely handled through the annual Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) modification process. The decisions at this initial stage include whether to consider this issue further, and if so, to determine scoping issues for pursuing alternatives for halibut bycatch retention in groundfish fisheries.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has developed a report (Agenda Item D.3.b, ODFW Report) outlining current fleet characteristics and halibut mortality issues, some possible alternatives for retention of halibut in fixed gear groundfish fisheries, and a decision process to consider alternatives. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has developed another report (Agenda Item D.3.b, WDFW Report), which reviews the history of the directed non-Indian halibut fishery and halibut retention in the fixed gear sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis.

Agenda Item G.6.a, Attachment 1, the Council's preliminary year-at-a-glance summary of potential agenda items for workload planning purposes, shows a possible Council meeting schedule that is timed to reach a final decision on this matter, should the Council decide to do so, consistent with the International Pacific Halibut Commission annual process for 2010 fisheries.

Council Action:

- 1. Provide guidance on consideration of proposals for halibut bycatch retention.**
- 2. Determine scope of issues to be considered, if appropriate.**
- 3. Recommend schedule for completing a final decision process, if appropriate.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item D.3.b, ODFW Report: Initial Consideration of Proposed Changes to Pacific Halibut Allocation for Bycatch and Catch Sharing in the Groundfish Fisheries.
2. Agenda Item D.3.b, WDFW Report: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Report on Changes to Halibut Allocation for Bycatch and Catch Sharing.
3. Agenda Item D.3.c, Public Comment.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Consider the Proposed Changes and Plan Further Actions as Appropriate

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PFMC
08/26/10