

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

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) discussed Initial Consideration of Proposed Changes to Pacific Halibut Allocation for Bycatch and Catch Sharing in the Groundfish Fisheries and wishes to make the following recommendations.

The GAP moved the following motion on a vote of 8 to 6:

The GAP supports consideration of proposals for halibut bycatch retention. Those supporting the motion discussed the need to have a broader discussion of the allocation and retention of halibut that may include a discussion of trawl concerns. Some discussion centered on reallocating the allocation of halibut currently used in the directed longline fishery to be used not only for the sablefish fixed gear fisheries to accommodate bycatch, but also to accommodate the need for halibut bycatch in the upcoming trawl ITQ fishery.

Those opposed to the motion expressed that the intent of the this agenda item was to give advice to the Council relative to the Port Orford proposal. It was pointed out that the motion that was made could direct the Council into a new allocation discussion for all user groups including recreational, fixed gear, and trawl, as well as treaty allocations. Those in opposition did not feel this was the discussion the Council intended.

The GAP further entertained a motion to support moving the Port Orford proposal for analysis. The motion failed on a vote of 8 to 6.

The majority felt that the proposal does not provide enough benefit to warrant Council analysis. The concerns that this proposal generates are as follows:

1. There would be an allocation from those who currently participate in the directed halibut fishery. Those participants only choice to fish halibut would be to own or lease a sablefish LE tier permit or participate in the open access daily trip limit fishery.
2. It is not clear if this action would actually stimulate targeting by allowing halibut retention.
3. In table 3 of the Oregon situational paper there would be potentially 62 additional LE sablefish-endorsed permits and 83 existing open access participants that would share this new allocation. The bycatch implication to this would need to be addressed and is considered a potential problem by some members of the GAP.
4. Since open access participation is unlimited, the ability to access halibut in the daily trip limit fishery would likely increase effort in the fishery resulting in more catch impacts.

Those in favor of the motion had the following comments:

1. The current 10 hour directed fishery is becoming an unreasonable fishery to harvest a high valued species like halibut. A bycatch fishery would spread the delivery of halibut and help provide a higher potential price.

2. The future prospects for the derby are poor in that harvest limits are likely to be lower, resulting in even more safety and quality problems than there are currently.
3. It was believed that the Port Orford proposal would lower the overall bycatch and mortality of halibut in sablefish fisheries by moving the current directed allocation of halibut to be taken as a bycatch with sablefish.

PFMC
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