GROUNDFISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON PACIFIC HALIBUT BYCATCH ESTIMATE FOR THE 2012 GROUNDFISH FISHERIES

An issue regarding halibut rollover was brought to the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) and we offer the following comments and recommendations.

The GAP notes that the onset of the Trawl Individual Quota (TIQ) Program brought a dramatically decreased halibut mortality allotment to the trawl fishery than had been available in previous years. Mortality estimates in the years prior to the onset of the program were roughly 70,000 pounds higher than the current trawl allocation. Halibut is a major constraining species on many areas of the coast and the trawl fishery may need access to all of its halibut plus rollover in some years to be able to best access target species. The GAP points out that it is poor policy to remove the incentive (rollover) for fishermen to fish cleanly.

One potential solution would be what is done in Canada. As we understand it, Canada provides the full allotment plus rollover to the trawl fleet each year. While this appears to be double counting fish on paper, it has worked effectively in that fishery, providing certainty to the trawl fleet without harming other sectors. This will become increasingly important as the trawl halibut allocation decreases from 130,000 pounds to 100,000 pounds over the next several years.

In the event that the fleet is limited to 130,000 pounds for 2012, the GAP believes it is better to simply allocate that amount rather than allocating 117,000 pounds plus a 13,000-pound rollover. Using the rollover in that instance would result in giving more halibut to those who are less constrained by it.

PFMC
09/17/11