

PROPOSED INCIDENTAL CATCH REGULATIONS FOR
SABLEFISH LONGLINE FISHERY NORTH OF POINT CHEHALIS

Situation: For the first time, the total Area 2A halibut quota is large enough this year (over 900,000 pounds) to provide for an incidental halibut harvest in the commercial, longline sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, Washington. This incidental fishery is allocated that portion of the Washington sport allocation in excess of 214,110 pounds, provided a minimum of 10,000 pounds is available. For 2001, the available incidental harvest amounts to 47,946 pounds.

To manage the incidental halibut harvest, the Council will need to develop some form of restrictions to allow incidental harvest while assuring the halibut quota is not exceeded. At the March Council meeting, a joint staff proposal recommended the Council use a landing ratio restriction similar to that used for the incidental harvest of halibut in the salmon troll fishery. The joint staff believes this alternative would be superior to allocating the catch among vessels or permits based on the sablefish tier or vessel length.

Since this is the first year incidental halibut catch has been available for the sablefish fishery, the Council must establish both the framework mechanism and the specific 2001 restrictions to manage the fishery. Attachment 1 provides a revised version of the joint staff report from March which describes the basic approach to establishing these regulations. More detailed descriptions of the possible alternatives and impacts of the incidental harvest management will be provided in a supplemental report at the Council meeting.

Council Action: To control incidental harvest of Pacific halibut in the commercial, longline sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, Washington:

1. **Adopt for implementation by National Marine Fisheries Service, a proposed framework mechanism for considering and establishing annual management restrictions.**
2. **Adopt for public review, proposed options for annual management restrictions in 2001(e.g., various landing ratios or limits).**

Reference Materials:

1. Exhibit G.1.a, Revised Joint Staff Proposal from March.

Groundfish Fishery Strategic Plan Consistency Analysis

The groundfish strategic plan calls for minimizing discarded bycatch. The sablefish fishery has heretofore discarded halibut, alive or dead, due to low halibut quota levels. Retaining halibut is consistent with minimizing discarded dead halibut bycatch.