

PROPOSED 2002 INCIDENTAL CATCH REGULATIONS FOR THE SALMON TROLL AND FIXED GEAR SABLEFISH FISHERY

Situation: Regulations governing the incidental harvest of halibut in the non-Indian commercial troll salmon fishery and the primary, limited entry longline sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis require the Council to adopt recommended halibut landing restrictions to allow incidental harvest while assuring the quotas are not exceeded. At the March meeting the Council adopted options for both the salmon troll fishery and the sablefish fishery for public review. Options within both the salmon and sablefish fisheries include closing and extending the "halibut hotspot" area during times halibut retention is allowed.

The halibut hotspot is an area off the Washington coast (within a rectangle defined by these four corners: 48°18' N latitude/125°11' W longitude, 48°18' N latitude/124°59' W longitude, 48°04' N latitude/125°11' W longitude, and 48°04' N latitude/124°59' W longitude) approximately 20 miles south of Cape Flattery that is closed to recreational halibut fishing under the Area 2A Halibut Catch Sharing Plan. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has received information from the recreational charter boat fleet that fisheries operating adjacent to this area incidentally encounter yelloweye rockfish at a relatively high frequency. Given the extremely low optimum yield for yelloweye rockfish and the need to control all sources of fishing-related mortality, the Council is considering extending the hotspot closure 4 additional miles to the south (to 48°00' N latitude) and including potential commercial non-Indian incidental halibut fisheries in the closure. WDFW is scheduled to report on the potential for yelloweye rockfish bycatch in fisheries operating in the affected area and recommend a management strategy for decreasing this bycatch under agenda item E.12.

Salmon Troll Fishery

The Council adopted for public review two options for landing restrictions for Pacific halibut caught incidentally in the May/June troll season:

- Option 1: Status quo: License holders may land no more than 1 halibut per each 3 chinook, except 1 halibut may be landed without meeting the ratio requirement, and no more than 35 halibut may be landed per trip. Halibut retained must be no less than 32 inches in total length (with head on).
- Option 2: License holders may land no more than 1 halibut per each 5 chinook, except 2 halibut may be landed without meeting the ratio requirement, and no more than 35 halibut may be landed per trip. Halibut retained must be no less than 32 inches in total length (with head on).
- Option 3: In combination with either Option 1 or 2 above, close the halibut "hotspot" area, as defined in the Pacific Council Catch Sharing Plan in Washington Marine Area 3; and extend the closure south to 48°00'00" for protection of yelloweye rockfish. This closure would be in effect during periods open to retention of halibut.

The primary objective for the annual landing restrictions is to harvest the incidental halibut quota in the May/June salmon troll fishery, and a secondary objective is to harvest any remaining quota during July through September.

Commercial Sablefish Fishery North of Point Chehalis

The Council adopted for public review two options for landing limits on incidental halibut harvest in the fixed gear primary sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis:

- Option 1a: Restrict incidental halibut landings to 80 pounds (dressed weight) of halibut for every 1,000 pounds (dressed weight) of sablefish landed and up to two additional halibut in excess of the 80 pounds per 1,000 pound ratio per landing. Retention of halibut allowed beginning May 1.
- Option 1b: Restrict incidental halibut landings to 200 pounds (dressed weight) of halibut for every 1,000 pounds (dressed weight) of sablefish landed and up to two additional halibut in excess of the 200 pounds per 1,000 pound ratio per landing. Retention of halibut allowed beginning May 1.

- Option 2: In combination with either Option 1a or 1b above, restrict incidental halibut landings to a trip limit of 1,000 pounds (dressed weight) of halibut.
- Option 3: In combination with either Option 1a or 1b above, close the halibut "hotspot" area, as defined in the Pacific Council Catch Sharing Plan in Washington Marine Area 3; and extend the closure south to 48°00'00" for protection of yelloweye rockfish. This closure would be in effect during periods open to retention of halibut.

The objectives for the annual landing restrictions are to reach the halibut allocation at about the same time as the sablefish season ends and to ensure an equitable sharing of the halibut landings among the fishers.

Council Action:

1. **Adopt for implementation by the National Marine Fisheries Service, incidental halibut landing restrictions for the 2002, commercial troll salmon fishery. (MOTIONS MUST BE VISIBLE IN WRITING PRIOR TO VOTE.)**
2. **Adopt for implementation by the National Marine Fisheries Service, incidental halibut landing restrictions for the 2002, primary, limited entry longline sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, Washington. (MOTIONS MUST BE VISIBLE IN WRITING PRIOR TO VOTE.)**

Reference Materials:

1. See Exhibit B.12.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agendum Overview
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Adopt Final Annual Incidental Halibut Harvest Restrictions

Chuck Tracy

Groundfish Fishery Strategic Plan Consistency Analysis

The groundfish strategic plan calls for minimizing discarded bycatch. The sablefish fishery prior to 2001 discarded halibut, alive or dead, due to low halibut quota levels. Retaining halibut is consistent with minimizing discarded dead halibut bycatch.

PFMC
03/27/02

Supplemental Reference Materials
2. Exhibit F.1.c, Supplemental Public Comments.

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