

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON
TRAWL IQ ALTERNATIVES
FOR
INITIAL ALLOCATION OF OVERFISHED SPECIES,
INITIAL ALLOCATION OF HALIBUT BYCATCH QUOTA, AND
AREA SPECIFIC MINIMUM HOLDING REQUIREMENTS

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed discussion papers on allocating overfished species on a bycatch rate, allocating Pacific halibut to limited entry trawl permits in the non-whiting trawl fishery based on a bycatch rate, and minimum holding requirements.

Allocating Overfished Species on a Bycatch Rate

The GMT concurs with the concept of allocating overfished species (OFS) based on a bycatch rate because it would arguably provide more fishing opportunity for more individuals in the trawl fishery than allocating based on landings history. If OFS are allocated based on landings, a relatively small number of individuals would receive a relatively large share of quota.

The GMT reviewed the proposed methodology for assigning OFS quota to vessels based on the target species catch history, depth shoreward or seaward of the rockfish conservation area (RCA), and a bycatch rate. The methodology uses the available data sources in the following manner:

- Fish ticket data from 2003-2006 would provide the record of target species landed catch made by a permit. The target species catch would be used to estimate quota shares of target species.
- Quota shares of target species would be applied to the target species OYs that would go into effect during the implementation of the TIQ program (est. 2011).
- Depth data from logbooks (2003-2006) would be used to stratify each permits quota pounds into shoreward or seaward RCA locations. A fleet average depth distribution would be used for permits with no corresponding logbook.
- West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP) data from 2003-2006 would be used for estimating shoreward and seaward bycatch rates of OFS.

The GMT concurs with using the projected OY for target species. The method is intended to more accurately reflect the status quo at the time of TIQ implementation, which would reduce the need for market adjustments after the initial allocation. The GMT also supports the use of logbooks in stratifying the landed catch and observer data to estimate bycatch rates.

Allocating Pacific Halibut Bycatch Quota on a Bycatch Rate

The GMT discussed the concept of managing catch of Pacific halibut in the trawl fishery through the use of an individual bycatch quota. Currently, bycatch of Pacific halibut is not a limiting factor for the trawl fishery. However, fluctuations in the total allowable catch (TAC), either due to natural causes or changes in stock assessment methodologies, could change the proportion of the 2A halibut TAC in the trawl fisheries. Further, catches of Pacific halibut could increase or decrease under the TIQ program, depending on the target strategies and areas fished. Therefore, the GMT supports the use of an IBQ as a tool to directly manage Pacific halibut catch in the trawl fisheries.

The GMT reviewed the proposed method for the initial allocation of Pacific halibut IBQ. There are no permit-specific records for trawl landings of Pacific halibut since regulations prohibit the retention of halibut with gears other than hook and line. The proposed methodology, which is similar to that used to allocate OFS, is based on a bycatch rate to target species stratified by area and depth. The target species used to calculate Pacific halibut IBQ are Dover sole and arrowtooth flounder, two species that have been shown to have a positive correlation with Pacific halibut bycatch. This is different from the methodology for OFS where a total of 26 target species are used. For permits with no Dover sole or arrowtooth flounder records, Pacific halibut IBQ could be obtained through equal allocation of the buyback permit history, if an alternative that with equal allocation of the buyback permits is selected. Under the buyback scenario, all permits would obtain some initial allocation halibut IBQ. Depth and area stratifications would be determined using logbook data. Depth-based stratification would occur shallower or deeper than 100 fathoms. Area stratifications would be either the Vancouver or the Columbia/Eureka INPFC areas based on differential bycatch rates reported from the WCGOP.

The GMT discussed the target species used to generate IBQ. There were concerns that generating the IBQ based on such few species (e.g., arrowtooth and Dover sole) may result in too few permits receiving IBQ. One solution may be an alternative where every permit would get some minimum amount of halibut IBQ (e.g., 1%) and those with arrowtooth and Dover sole history would receive an additional amount based on the bycatch rate. The proposal recommends that for permits with no Dover sole or arrowtooth flounder records, Pacific halibut IBQ would be obtained through equal allocation of the buyback permit history. The GMT notes that equal allocation of the buyback permit history is a proposed alternative, but is not guaranteed for implementation. Both alternatives could minimize the potential mismatch between initial IBQ allocation and current fishing practices.

Area Based Minimum Holding Requirements for Overfished Species

The GMT discussed two options for area based minimum holding requirements for OFS 1) depth based and 2) hot spot based. Depth based minimum holding requirements would be determined based on the target and OFS depth distribution. For example, if trawlers intend to target species in depths less than 200 fathoms, a minimum holding requirement for canary and yelloweye rockfish could be required. Vessels could fish deeper without meeting the minimum holding requirement for canary and yelloweye rockfish, but would need to meet those minimum holding requirement provisions if they desire to fish

shallower than 200 fathoms. Depth based holding requirements would cover the entire coast, meaning that all fishers would be required to have OFS reserves. This may not be practical given the few OFS shares available. Additionally, as the year progresses fewer and fewer OFS quota pounds would be available thus fishers would be prevented from fishing at all. Assuming that current management measures are still available under the TIQ regime, inseason action could be taken to implement a depth restriction if few OFS quota pounds were remaining. For example, if nearly all the canary quota pounds were used early in the season then a 150 fm depth restriction could be implemented to reduce the probability of a catch that is larger than the remaining quota pounds on the market.

Hot spot minimum holding requirements were also discussed. Hot spot areas would be identified based on the presence of OFS and the probability that a trawler would encounter them. Access to the hot spot areas would then require a minimum holding requirement of the OFS common to the area. The hot spot minimum holding requirement would provide some insurance that some amount of OFS catch can be covered. Contrary to the depth based minimum holding requirement, at the end of the year, if few OFS quota pounds were available one could still conceivably fish in areas with low/no OFS impacts. As such, the hot spot minimum holding requirement might be a more feasible alternative.

At the very minimum, the area based holding requirement would discourage fishing in areas with high OFS with no IFQ to cover. While OFS quota pounds will be scarce, the holding requirement would encourage the development of risk pools or cooperatives to ensure that catch could be covered. Vessels could elect to enter into voluntary pooling agreements in order to reach that minimum holding requirement. This would require that trawlers forming voluntary risk pools register with, or notify the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) that they are in a voluntary quota sharing pool for a year. This would provide verification that vessels in those pools collectively meet the minimum holding requirement of a given OFS. The declaration process could be handled through the current vessel monitoring system. The GMT supports an alternative/mechanism that encourages development of risk pools or cooperatives.

Generally, the team agreed that a mechanism is needed to prevent fishing in areas with high OFS bycatch while holding no OFS quota. Given the OFS constraints, market solutions may be few and a management tool may be necessary to prevent individual behavior that could negatively affect the fleet. To the extent that a minimum holding requirement could act as insurance, the concept is supported. The GMT, however, was unable to conceive of a minimum holding requirement mechanism, either depth based or hot spot based, that would provide insurance against a very large tow (e.g., a disaster tow) due to the scarcity of OFS quota.

GMT Recommendations

1. Initial allocation of OFS should be based on the target species catch history, depth shoreward or seaward of the RCA, and a bycatch rate as described in Agenda Item E.2.

2. Create a Pacific halibut IBQ which would provide a management tool to directly manage Pacific halibut catch in the trawl fishery. Explore alternatives that initially allocate Pacific halibut based on arrowtooth flounder and Dover sole catch history stratified by area and depth as described in Agenda Item L. Further explore an alternative that provides some minimum amount of halibut IBQ (e.g., 1%) and some additional amount for permits with arrowtooth and Dover sole catch history.
3. Analyze an alternative that requires hot spot based area minimum holding requirements.