ADOPT FINAL 2003 INCIDENTAL CATCH REGULATIONS FOR THE
SALMON TROLL AND FIXED GEAR SABLEFISH FISHERIES

<u>Situation</u>: 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 designating the "C-shaped" yelloweye rockfish conservation area, as defined in the Pacific Council Halibut Catch Sharing Plan in the North Coast subarea (WA marine area 3), as an area to be avoided on a voluntary basis to provide protection of yelloweye rockfish.

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 1a: 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 1b: 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 25 halibut may be landed per trip. Halibut retained must be no less than 32 inches in total length (with head on).

Option 2: In combination with either Option 1a or 1b above, designate the "C-shaped" yelloweye rockfish conservation area, as defined in the Pacific Council Halibut Catch Sharing Plan in the North Coast subarea (WA marine area 3), as an area to be avoided for salmon troll fishing to provide protection of yelloweye rockfish.

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: Status Quo - Restrict incidental halibut landings to 150 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 150 pounds per 1,000 pound ratio per landing. Retention of halibut allowed beginning May 1.

Option 1b: Restrict incidental halibut landings to 100 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 100 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, designate the "C-shaped" yelloweye rockfish conservation area, as defined in the Pacific Council Halibut Catch Sharing Plan in the North Coast subarea (WA marine area 3), as an area to be avoided for sablefish longline fishing to provide protection of yelloweye rockfish.

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 2003, 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 2003, primary, limited entry longline sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, Washington. (*MOTIONS MUST BE VISIBLE IN WRITING PRIOR TO VOTE.*)**

Reference Materials:

1. None.

Agenda Order:

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

PFMC
03/24/03

GROUNDFISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL STATEMENT ON
PACIFIC HALIBUT MANAGEMENT

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) reviewed and discussed the options for incidental catch regulations in the fixed gear sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, as identified in Exhibit F.1. The GAP recommends the Council adopt the status quo option (Option 1a), as it has not lead to excessive amounts of halibut bycatch.

A majority of the GAP recommends the Council also adopt Option 2, relating to the yelloweye rockfish conservation area, by establishing it as an area closed to fixed gear sablefish fishing. A minority of the GAP recommends Option 2 be adopted with the understanding that it is an area to be avoided, but no closure be formally implemented. Those favoring a formal closure, point out that it would be no different than closures already in place for the recreational fishery. Those opposing a formal closure argue that continuation of "area to be avoided" status will allow the fishing industry to demonstrate their willingness to voluntary comply with conservation requirements.

The GAP also recommends the Council's liaison to the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) make known to the IPHC the extensive closures and bycatch reduction efforts that are in effect for West Coast fisheries. The bycatch savings resulting from management efforts should be reflected in the IPHC's calculations for halibut bycatch.

Finally, a minority of the GAP recommends that some percentage of halibut taken incidentally by the trawl fishery be allowed to be landed. Proponents argue that this will not affect bycatch calculations, since bycatch has already been accounted for, but will prevent waste of fish that is otherwise discarded. Opponents continue to be opposed to the trawl harvest of halibut.

PFMC
04/10/03