

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

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 the salmon fisheries include designating the “C-shaped” yelloweye rockfish conservation area as an area to be avoided on a voluntary basis to provide protection of yelloweye rockfish.

Salmon Troll Fishery

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

- Option 1a: Status quo – Beginning May 1, 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: Beginning May 1, license holders may land no more than 1 halibut per each 2 Chinook, except 1 halibut may be landed without meeting the ratio requirement, and no more than 40 halibut may be landed per trip. Halibut retained must be no less than 32 inches in total length (with head on).
- Option 1c: Beginning May 1, 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 24 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 1 or 2 above, designate the “C-shaped” yelloweye rockfish conservation area, as defined in the Pacific Council Halibut Catch Sharing Plan in the North Coast subarea (Washington 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 two public review options for landing limits on incidental halibut harvest in the fixed gear primary sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis:

- Option 1: Status Quo – Beginning May 1, restrict incidental halibut landings to 100 pounds (dressed weight) of halibut for every 1,000 pounds (dressed weight) of sablefish landed and up to 2 additional halibut in excess of the 100 pounds per 1,000-pound ratio per landing. Retention of halibut allowed beginning May 1.
- Option 2: Beginning May 1, restrict incidental halibut landings to 120 pounds (dressed weight) of halibut for every 1,000 pounds (dressed weight) of sablefish landed and up to 2 additional halibut in excess of the 125 pounds per 1,000-pound ratio per landing. Retention of halibut allowed beginning May 1.
- Option 3: Beginning May 1, restrict incidental halibut landings to 80 pounds (dressed weight) of halibut for every 1,000 pounds (dressed weight) of sablefish landed and up to 2 additional halibut in excess of the 75 pounds per 1,000-pound ratio per landing. Retention of halibut allowed beginning May 1.

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 incidental halibut landing restrictions for implementation by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) in the 2006 commercial troll salmon fishery.**
- 2. Adopt incidental halibut landing restrictions for implementation by the National Marine Fisheries Service in the 2006, primary, limited entry longline sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, Washington.**

Reference Materials:

None.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview
- b. Recommendations of the States, Tribes, and Federal Agencies
- c. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- d. Public Comment
- e. **Council Action:** Adopt Final Annual Incidental Halibut Harvest Restrictions

Chuck Tracy

PFMC
03/14/06

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON INCIDENTAL CATCH
REGULATIONS FOR THE SALMON TROLL AND FIXED GEAR SABLEFISH FISHERIES

Mr. Brian Culver of the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) joined the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) for its discussion of this issue.

The GAP supports status quo management for the reasons provided in the GMT statement. In the sablefish fishery, the GAP agrees that a 100-pound incidental halibut catch per 1,000 pounds of sablefish provides for incidental catch. In the salmon troll fishery, the GAP has concerns that increasing the halibut to salmon ratio may increase impacts on yelloweye and canary rockfish.

PFMC
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GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON INCIDENTAL CATCH
REGULATIONS FOR THE SALMON TROLL AND FIXED GEAR SABLEFISH FISHERIES.

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the proposed management measures to provide for the incidental take of Pacific halibut in the salmon troll fishery and the primary sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis, Washington and has the following comments.

Commercial Sablefish Fishery North of Point Chehalis

In reviewing the catch summary for halibut bycatch provisions in the sablefish fishery, the GMT believes that the status quo provision of 100 pounds of halibut (dressed) per 1,000 pounds of sablefish (dressed) does a reasonable job of providing for incidentally taken halibut, sustaining the opportunity to do so across the April through October period of the fishery, and remaining within the 70,000 pound halibut allocation provided to the sablefish fishery.

Salmon Troll Fishery

Relative to the options adopted by the Council in March, the GMT has some concerns about changing the status quo allowable take of halibut in the salmon troll fishery from one halibut per three Chinook to one halibut per two Chinook, as proposed in Option 1b, Agenda Item D.1. The Team is concerned that this change could result in increased halibut targeting by some salmon trollers in order to achieve the increased allowance. Since the salmon troll fishery is not subject to the 100-fathom non-trawl Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) in place to protect yelloweye, the GMT believes that this potential increase in halibut targeting could result in an increased take of yelloweye rockfish for which we have not accounted in the scorecard. Data collected from the Washington salmon troll fishery over the past three years indicate that the one-to-three halibut-to-Chinook ratio in the current regulation comfortably accommodates the incidental halibut catch that might occur in the fishery.

PFMC
04/04/06