

HALIBUT INCIDENTAL GROUND FISH REGULATIONS FINAL ACTION

The Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan for Area 2A (CSP) establishes an allocation to provide for halibut retention in the primary sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, Washington when the appropriate conditions are met. The Council recommends landing restrictions at its spring public meeting each year to control the amount of halibut caught incidentally in this fishery, based on the amount of the allocation and other pertinent factors. The incidental fishery regulations are published in both the halibut and groundfish regulations and, as such, prohibiting retention when the quota has been attained requires both a halibut and a groundfish inseason action. While a halibut inseason action can be done quickly, groundfish inseason actions require a Council meeting and a *Federal Register* notice to become effective.

The Council requested National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) bring forward an option to prohibit retention faster to ensure the quota is not exceeded. As discussed at the September and November 2015 Council meetings, one option would be to provide NMFS the automatic action authority to prohibit retention when the halibut quota for this fishery is reached or projected to be reached (Agenda Item H.3.a, NMFS Report 1, March 2016). After reviewing the relevant materials, the Council should select a final preferred alternative.

Council Action:

1. Select a final alternative for prohibiting retention of halibut in the limited entry fixed gear primary sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, Washington when the halibut quota has been attained.

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item H.3.a, NMFS Report 1: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Report on Halibut Incidental Groundfish Regulations.

Agenda Order:

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| H.3 Halibut Incidental Groundfish Regulations Final Action | Kelly Ames |
| a. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies and Management Entities | |
| b. Public Comment | |
| c. Council Action: Adopt Final Regulations for Sablefish Fishery Incidental Landing Regulations | |