

COUNCIL'S NOVEMBER 2019 GUIDANCE (STAFF SUMMARY)

**Process:** The Council discussed the scope of the Sablefish Area Management and Trawl Allocation Attainment Committee's (Committee) work and agreed that the expectation for the next Committee report is that it would include recommendations related to a suite of alternatives pertaining to gear switching for northern sablefish and some discussion of the southern sablefish issue, including possible need to modify the purpose and need statement. Additionally, when the Council addresses this issue at its June 2020 meeting, outcomes from consideration of a suite of alternatives for analysis could include a decision not to move forward.

**Purpose and Need:** Modify the third sentence as indicated here.

This action is needed because the Shorebased Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program has underattained most of its allocations since the inception of the program in 2011. The underattainment for some northern stocks may be due to the allowance to use fixed gear to harvest shorebased IFQ, declining trawl vessel participation, and the lack of market and infrastructure. Specifically, participants engaging in gear-switching are ~~acquiring~~ using northern sablefish quota that may otherwise be used by trawl gears; this may lead to uncertainty in trawl access to sablefish, thereby affecting the development of markets and infrastructure. Working within the guidance and authority provided by the MSA (§303A(c))<sup>1</sup> and the Pacific Coast Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) goals and objectives, the purpose of this action would be to keep northern sablefish gear switching from impeding the attainment of northern IFQ allocations with trawl gear, while considering impacts on current operations and investments.

This action is also needed because the Shorebased IFQ Program has underattained several of its southern allocations, specifically sablefish south of 36° N. latitude. Sablefish is managed under a coastwide overfishing limit (OFL) and acceptable biological catch (ABC) but the annual catch limit (ACL) is split into two management areas, north and south of 36° N. The Shorebased IFQ allocation and ACL for sablefish south of 36° N. latitude are underattained due to declining gear switching vessel participation in this area since rationalization,<sup>2</sup> limited DTS trawling in this area,<sup>3</sup> and lack of market and infrastructure.<sup>4</sup> The purpose of this action would include encouraging utilization of sablefish south of 36° N. latitude within the current management area and exploring mechanisms that would allow a portion of that allocation to be caught in areas north of 36° N. lat.

These separate underattainment issues result in the Shoreside IFQ Program being unable to meet Management Goals 2 and 3 of the FMP which respectively seek to maximize the value of the groundfish resource as a whole and to achieve the maximum biological yield

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<sup>1</sup> Section 303(A)(c) of the MSA sets forth elements defining the creation of limited access privilege programs, including the promotion of fishing safety; fishery conservation and management; and social and economic benefits.

<sup>2</sup> See page 163 of the Trawl Rationalization Program 5-Year Review (PFMC/NMFS 2017).

<sup>3</sup> See page 151 of the Trawl Rationalization Program 5-Year Review and Table 68 (PFMC/NMFS 2017).

<sup>4</sup> See page 249 of the Trawl Rationalization Program 5-Year Review (PFMC/NMFS 2017).

of the overall groundfish fishery. Additionally, this action would seek to improve the program towards the goal of Amendment 20 to the FMP, which created the Shorebased IFQ Program, of providing for full utilization of the trawl sector allocation.

**Analysis:** Specific to the alternatives under consideration and with consideration of impacts on communities, it was requested that the analysis help develop an understanding of effects related to: use of fixed gear to harvest shorebased IFQ, declining trawl vessel participation, and market and infrastructure.