

**GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON 2020 TRIP LIMITS FOR
 INCIDENTAL HALIBUT RETENTION IN THE PRIMARY SABLEFISH FISHERY NORTH
 OF PT. CHEHALIS**

The primary sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, Washington exceeded their 2019 allocation for incidental catch of Pacific halibut by 9,360 lbs. (catch = 79,360 lbs.; allocation = 70,000 lbs.). The halibut allocation to the primary sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, Washington is dependent on the Washington sport allocation. The Washington sport catch in 2019 was 11,390 lbs. under the Washington sport allocation, which compensated for the overage in the primary sablefish fishery. Furthermore, Area 2A as a whole (i.e., the U.S. West Coast) remained about 150,000 lbs. below the total directed fishery allocation of 1.5 million lbs. despite the overage.

To ensure that incidental Pacific halibut catch in the primary sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, Washington does not exceed the 2020 allocation of 70,000 lbs., the Groundfish Management Team (GMT) and Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) are proposing to reduce the landing ratio to 200 lbs. of halibut (dressed weight) per 1,000 lbs. of sablefish, plus an additional 2 halibut as described in detail below.

The model for 2019 predicted that increasing the trip limit ratio from 200 lbs. to 250 lbs., effective July 2019, would result in 77.4 percent attainment ([Agenda Item I.7.a, Supplemental GMT Report 1, June 2019](#)). However, the fishery actually attained 113 percent, apparently due to an increase in vessels that caught a higher percentage of the trip limit after it was raised, which could indicate targeting (Table 1). For instance, the percent of boats catching > 90 percent of the landing limit in a period increased from 19 percent, when the trip limit ratio was 200 lbs., to 29 percent when the trip limit ratio was raised to 250 lbs. Although there will always be some targeting in this fishery, increasing the ratio above 200 lbs. (as in 2019) appears to be a tipping point that increases targeting and could cause frequent overages. Decreasing the ratio to 200 lbs. will likely reduce targeting and is expected to keep the fishery within their 2020 allocation.

Table 1. Number of times in 2019 that vessels, in a period, attained 0-50%, 50-75%, 75-90%, or 90-100%, of the incidental Pacific halibut landings limit under ratios of 200 lbs. and 250 lbs. of Pacific halibut to 1,000 lbs. + 2 halibut of sablefish in the primary sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis.

Trip Limit Ratio	Vessel Attainments in a Period			
	0-50%	50-75%	75-90%	90-100%
200 lbs.	44	3	7	13
250 lbs.	55	5	14	30

Landings are difficult to accurately model in this fishery, and the inseason process provides the best management strategy to avoid exceeding the annual allocation. This can be done by setting the higher range of trip limit projections close to the allocation and then adjusting downward inseason if needed. As shown in [Agenda Item F.2, Attachment 1, March 2020](#), landings can be

highly volatile from year-to-year even when the regulations are constant. The best comparison is from 2003 through 2008, since the fishery had a 70,000 lbs. allocation, as will be the case for 2020; during that time, there were two overages, and annual landings varied from 36,769 to 75,071 lbs.

Option 1 would maintain the status quo of a 250 lbs. ratio. However, when projected for the entire year, this option has a very high risk of exceeding the 70,000 lbs. allocation. Option 2 proposes using a 200 lbs. ratio of which the projected landings are expected to be within the 70,000 lbs. allocation. There is a chance that the allocation could be exceeded with Option 2 (maximum projection = ~ 71,500 lbs.), so it will be important to monitor the fishery inseason. Lower ratios than Option 2 would reduce the risk of exceeding the allocation even further, but would increase the likelihood that the higher amounts of the Pacific halibut allocation unharvested.

The GMT recommends the Council consider Option 2: a trip limit ratio of 200 lbs. Pacific halibut per 1,000 lbs. sablefish plus 2 additional Pacific halibut for the incidental halibut retention in the sablefish primary season north of Point Chehalis, Washington. We deem this as the best option for remaining below the allocation without stranding yield. Given the high uncertainty in projections of landings in this volatile fishery, monitoring and addressing these landings inseason will be essential to ensure that future overages do not occur.

PFMC
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