

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON TRANSITION OF HALIBUT AREA 2A FISHERY MANAGEMENT

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received a briefing from Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) Staff Officers Robin Ehlke and Brett Wiedoff and reviewed the reports regarding transition of the Area 2A non-Indian directed commercial halibut fishery.

The GAP agrees with the purpose and need of this action as outlined in [Attachment 2](#) under this agenda item. The GAP also generally agrees with the draft range of alternatives as outlined in the document.

Council staff noted this aggressive schedule is in order to be responsive to the International Pacific Halibut Commission's (IPHC's) desire to transition as soon as possible. GAP members recognize the need to act quickly but also want to remain informed of proposed changes. Sometimes regulatory details result in surprises to the industry that require modifying business plans or fishing behavior.

Regarding permitting, GAP members heard from Oregon State Police Lt. Ryan Howell that the current system (status quo) of issuing a paper permit (hard copy) is working well. GAP members also agreed that an online application system works; fishermen are accustomed to dealing with this type of permit registration and issuance.

Specific to the Council transition process (Item 3.1), the GAP suggests including another alternative: a Joint Halibut Subcommittee made up of three GAP member, three Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS) members and one processor from either body that could meet as needed to deal with transition issues or, if the Council preferred, it could meet as necessary to also deal with long-term halibut season issues.

The halibut catch sharing plan is an annual management regime, as is the salmon season-setting process. Many of the same groundfish fishermen also fish halibut, as do many of the salmon fishermen. The Joint Halibut Subcommittee could meet a day or two before the GAP and SAS, giving it time to develop options for SAS and GAP review in March and April.

A subcommittee of both groups would decrease the Council cost of providing travel reimbursement to a full advisory body to meet only once or twice a year. All of the members would already be SAS or GAP members and any increase in cost would only be a day or two of lodging and per diem, without the associated travel costs.

In the future, if the Council chose to keep the Halibut Subcommittee and inseason adjustments are necessary, only the SAS members of the Subcommittee would have to travel to a June, September or November Council meeting; the GAP members would only need to check in a day or two earlier, depending on scheduling.