

## GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON NON-INDIAN COMMERCIAL-DIRECTED FISHERY REGULATIONS FOR 2021

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received an overview of the 2021 Pacific halibut catch sharing plan (CSP) from Mr. Brett Wiedoff, Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) staff, and offers the following comments and suggestions. The GAP also reviewed the reports from the [National Marine Fisheries Service](#) (NMFS), the [Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife](#) (WDFW) and [International Pacific Halibut Commission \(IPHC\) Supplemental Report 1](#) and the [Salmon Advisory Subpanel](#) (SAS) and offers the following comments.

Consistent with our [Agenda Item I.3.a September statement on this issue](#), we support the option two as listed in the Situation Summary, a 58-hour season instead of a 10-hour season, and suboption two, Tuesday-Thursday openings. The 58-hour season offers more flexibility and safety for the fleet. Additionally, as we suggested in our [September 2020 report](#), the Tuesday-Thursday openers would allow for more flexibility in purchasing ice and supplying fresh halibut to weekend markets.

The GAP considered the question of potential gear conflicts when the recreational all-depth halibut openings on Thursdays overlap with the commercial openings. Changing the all-depth halibut days for the sport fleet would disrupt accustomed fishing periods, but both sport and commercial fishermen agreed the overlapping day may not be an issue and suggests trying it in 2021. The states could provide some advance notice to both sectors to remain cognizant of the potential for both fleets to be fishing in the same general area.

Lastly, the GAP also continues to support the proposal for “split deliveries,” or “split loads,” as identified in our [September](#) statement.

Regarding the NMFS report on yelloweye, the GAP is very concerned that yelloweye bycatch in the halibut fishery could lead to constraints in the targeted halibut fishery and other groundfish fisheries if left unchecked. More timely information for this fishery is necessary; waiting a year for data essentially means no data is available to inform the subsequent year’s halibut fishery. If yelloweye bycatch is tracking high, no inseason management measures can be taken to mitigate bycatch. Yelloweye has been a constraining species for both sport and commercial fisheries since it was originally listed as overfished and we are on track to reach the  $T_{\text{target}}$  date of 2029. To risk the success we have gained through years of sacrifice is unconscionable.

The GAP would like to see more timely reports of yelloweye bycatch during the year so management measures can be taken, if needed. Understanding where the yelloweye is being caught – whether deeper than 100 fathoms or shallower than 30 fathoms – is crucial. Members of the GAP suggested that fishermen include the amount of yelloweye bycatch in the comments box section of the eTix when the halibut is landed. That could provide a simple way to estimate yelloweye bycatch inseason.

This may be a situation in which the rebuilding paradox – interaction with yelloweye rockfish is increasing as the stock biomass also increases – leaves us in a position of management uncertainty. That level of uncertainty will decrease as we obtain more solid data and the fishery transitions to NMFS management.

PFMC

11/13/20