

GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT TEAM REPORT ON INCIDENTAL CATCH
RECOMMENDATIONS: OPTIONS FOR SALMON TROLL AND FINAL ACTION ON
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FIXED GEAR SABLEFISH FISHERIES

The Groundfish Management Team (GMT) reviewed the briefing book materials, specifically page 2 of [Attachment 1](#) on incidental Pacific halibut retention in the primary fixed gear sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, WA, and discussed the issue with members of the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP). It is the GMT's understanding that the incidental Pacific halibut allocation to the primary fixed gear sablefish fishery will decrease from 70,000 lbs. to 50,000 lbs. in 2022 due to a reduction in the Fishery Catch Exploitable Yield, warranting a reduction in the Pacific halibut per sablefish landing limit to avoid exceeding the allocation. GMT projections estimate that, under the status quo landing limit of 225 lbs. of Pacific halibut per 1,000 lbs. of sablefish, the fishery will catch 66,474 lbs. of Pacific halibut in 2022. **The GAP is requesting and the GMT supports a landing limit of 150 lbs. of Pacific halibut dressed weight per 1,000 lbs. of sablefish, plus two additional Pacific halibut.** This is similar to the limit that was in place in 2018 (i.e., 140 lbs. of Pacific halibut), the last time the allocation was set at 50,000 lbs. At the 150-lb. Pacific halibut landing limit, GMT projections estimate that the fishery will catch 55,776 lbs. in 2022. While this projection exceeds the 50,000 lb. allocation, actual landings in 2018 were 43,716 lbs. under a 140-lb. landing limit, or 87 percent of the 50,000-lb. allocation. Additionally, the GMT projections use 2021 as a reference year, during which the allocation was 70,000 lbs. and the limit was 225 lbs., meaning that the projections likely overestimate expected landings in 2022. Lowering the limit from 225 lbs. to 150 lbs. is likely to reduce the incentive for vessels to seek out grounds that are productive for both sablefish and Pacific halibut, thereby likely reducing overall Pacific halibut catch beyond what is projected.

The final date in 2022 for retention of incidental halibut in all commercial fisheries, as specified by the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC), is December 7. However, the primary sablefish fishery is required to cease retention of Pacific halibut at the end of the season, currently October 31. To monitor incidental landings of Pacific halibut by the primary sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, WA and ensure that the allocation is not exceeded, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife provides weekly landings updates to IPHC throughout the season. If the allocation is exceeded or projected to be exceeded, IPHC may require that vessels cease retention of Pacific halibut.

PFMC
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