

COMMERCIAL FISHERY REGULATION CHANGES: VESSEL MONITORING SYSTEMS,
SEABIRD AVOIDANCE, AND CATCH REPORTING – FINAL

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) is considering three changes to management measures that apply to vessels participating in the non-Tribal directed commercial Pacific halibut (DC halibut) fishery and fish ticket recording requirements for commercial landings of Pacific halibut. Specifically, the Council is considering:

- (1) Requiring all vessels participating in the DC halibut fishery carry and operate a vessel monitoring system (VMS) unit;
- (2) Requiring all vessels participating in the DC halibut fishery using bottom longline gear use seabird avoidance gear (deploy streamer lines when setting gear); and
- (3) Requiring all fish receiving tickets specify that both the pounds and number (count) of Pacific halibut are recorded.

The Council has specified the above changes may be necessary to ensure the intended benefits of closed area regulations and essential fish habitat are fully realized, reduce the likelihood of seabird bycatch, and monitor catch of halibut. Enforcement Consultants have stated the management changes may also improve enforcement operations during the DC halibut fishery openings and monitoring and enforcing incidental Pacific halibut limits in the salmon troll fishery (see September 2024 Council Meeting [Agenda Item F.2.a Supplemental EC Report](#)).

At their September 2024 meeting, the Council reviewed a draft Initial Regulatory Impact Review/Halibut Act analysis for these three action items ([Agenda Item F.2, Attachment 1](#)). The Council also selected a preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) for the second action item, which would require all vessels participating in the DC halibut fishery and using bottom longline gear fishing in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to deploy streamer lines when setting gear.

Since the September meeting, staff have added additional information on the impacts of each Action to the analysis (Attachment 1) and developed a draft Regulatory Flexibility Act analysis (Supplemental Attachment 2). NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) has also provided a report on the features and security requirements a VMS unit must have to be approvable by OLE (OLE Report 1). At this meeting, the Council should consider the information provided as well as any advisory body or public comments and select a final preferred alternative for each Action.

Council Action:

- 1. For Action 1 (VMS), adopt a final preferred alternative, taking into consideration the cost of VMS compared to the benefit of increased vessel location information on impacted vessels.**
- 2. For Action 2 (Seabird Avoidance Measures), adopt a final preferred alternative, taking into consideration the cost of streamer lines compared to the potential benefit to seabirds.**
- 3. For Action 3, (Catch Reporting), adopt a final preferred alternative, taking into consideration the management and implementation needs associated with**

implementing the new reporting requirement compared to the benefit of any new additional catch information.

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item G.2, Attachment 1: Draft Initial Regulatory Impact Review/Halibut Act Document (***Electronic Only***).
2. *Agenda Item G.2, Supplemental Attachment 2: Draft Regulatory Flexibility Act.*
3. Agenda Item G.2.a, OLE Report 1: Vessel Monitoring System Update.
4. If received, Public Comments are electronic only (see [e-portal](#)).

Agenda Order:

- G.2 Commercial Fishery Regulatory Changes: Vessel Monitoring Systems, Seabird Avoidance, and Catch Reporting—Final Angela Forristall
- a. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Adopt Final Preferred Alternatives

PFMC
10/22/24