SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS, ALTERNATIVES, AND OPTIONS FOR HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS FLEXIBILITY

Agenda Item F.5., Attachment 1 presents five action items for which the Council could consider adopting a range of alternatives (ROA) and/or preliminary preferred alternative(s) (PPA) at this meeting. The five action items are Carryover (all-sector), Phase-In of Acceptable Biological Catch (ABC) Changes, Mid-Biennium Harvest Specifications Change, Accounting for Off-the-Top Deductions, and Harvest Specifications Frequency.

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) could elect to adopt a ROA/PPA for some, all, or none of the action items. Some of the alternatives within action items are mutually exclusive to other alternatives. Further discussion on the interplay between each alternative will be provided in *Supplemental Attachment 3*.

Note that current harvest specification values or those proposed for the 2027-2028 biennium would not be changed for any species with this amendment. Rather, any action items would or could be applied through future management actions related to setting catch limits.

Carryover (All Sector)

Purpose: Adds a framework to the groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) to allow unutilized annual catch limit (ACL) to be used in the following year in a prescriptive manner in order to expedite issuance of additional quota to fisheries.

Alternatives

No Action: The National Standard 1 Guidelines allowances for Carryover would not be incorporated in the groundfish FMP.

Alternative 1- ABC Carryover: Modify the ABC Harvest Control Rule (HCR) in the FMP to allow ABCs to be increased up to but not exceeding the overfishing limit (OFL) from the current ABC value when there is unharvested baseline ACL in a recent prior year. The ACL HCR would not be modified.

Alternative 2 - ACL Carryover: Modify the ACL control rule in the FMP to allow ACLs to be increased when there is unharvested baseline ACL in a recent prior year from the value resulting from the default ACL control rule to up to ABC=ACL.

*Baseline ACL refers to harvest specifications that do not include any Carryover quota

Eligibility Criteria

- Option A: Stock status is known and stock is not overfished.
- Option B: Stock is not subject to Phase-In ABC control rules.
- Option C: Stock has not exceeded ACL more than once in the past 4 years.

Options for Alternatives

For both Alternative 1 and 2, the Council needs to specify when and how this change in the ABC or ACL control rule would apply and how Carryover would be implemented through the allocation framework.

Process Options

Process Option A: Carryover is approved by the Council on a stock-by-stock basis, similar to alternative ABC/ACL HCRs during development of the biennial harvest specifications, and Carryover would be continued for the stock unless the Council determines otherwise. or

Process Option B: Carryover is part of the default /ABCACL control rule via the FMP framework for all stocks unless certain conditions are met (see "Stock Eligibility Criteria" for example conditions for consideration).

Data Options

Option A: Use final mortality data from Year 1 to issue Carryover in Year 3.

Option B: Use projected underage from Year 1 to issue Carryover in Year 2.

Buffer Between OFL and ABC

Buffer Option A: Allow for the maximum extent possible of ABC carryover, which would set the ABC at X percent (to be determined by the Council) less than the OFL.

Buffer Option B: The allowance to increase the ABC would be based on the category of the assessment.

Specifications/Management Measures

1. Should the same off-the-top deduction for the tribes apply to the new ACL?
2. How should allocations, HGs, etc change?

   Option A: Proportional increase across sectors.
   Option B: Increase only the "remainder" allocation for stocks with specified metric tonnage to one sector.
   Option C: Conditional allocation based on recent attainment.
3. Should at-sea set asides change- and how?

   Option A: No change to set-asides.
   Option B: Proportional increase based on trawl allocation.

Phase-In of ABC Changes

Purpose: Adds a framework to the FMP to allow for phase-in of ABC changes to provide stability to fisheries due to changes in stock status and resulting changes in harvest specifications (both increases and decreases).

Alternatives

No Action: The Council could continue to consider deviating from the default ABC control rule for any stock on a case-by-case basis, including both a phase-in increase or decrease.

Alternative 1: Specify a phase-in framework in the groundfish FMP which would allow phase-in ABC increases or decreases for a maximum of up to three years as permitted by the National Standard 1 guidelines.

Eligibility Criteria

Option A: Stock is not selected for ABC carryover in the same year.
Option B: ABC decreases ≥15% compared to previous biennium.

Mid-Biennium Harvest Specification Change

Purpose: Add a framework to the groundfish FMP to allow increases in harvest specifications in the second year of a biennium for newly assessed stocks in a prescriptive manner in order to expedite issuance of additional quota to fisheries.

Alternatives

No Action: Harvest specifications (OFL, ABC, and ACL) changes outside the biennial process are allowed through FMP Section 5.5, which allows harvest specifications to be reduced via the "Red Light" provision for rebuilding stocks, or for any stock through the "points of concern" framework. Section 5.5 also allows harvest specifications to be changed higher or lower when there is a technical correction, or under the socioeconomic framework.

Alternative 1: Develop a framework to allow a mid-biennium harvest specifications increase for previously identified stocks, i.e. "green light". Stocks would be identified for potential candidates for the framework in June of even years when final recommendations for stock assessments for the next biennium are made. The same P* applied in the biennial process would be applied throughout the framework and no changes to research, EFP, or IOA off-the-top deductions would occur. Final recommendations for a mid-biennium increase would occur in September or November of odd years for implementation in the following year.

Specifications/Management Measures

For Alternative 1, the Council needs to specify how Carryover would be implemented through the allocation framework.

1. Should the same off-the-top deduction for the tribes apply to the new ACL?
2. How should allocations, HGs, etc change?

   Option A: Proportional increase across sectors.
   Option B: Increase only the "remainder" allocation for stocks with specified metric tonnage to one sector
   Option C: Conditional allocation based on recent attainment.
3. Should at-sea set asides change- and how?

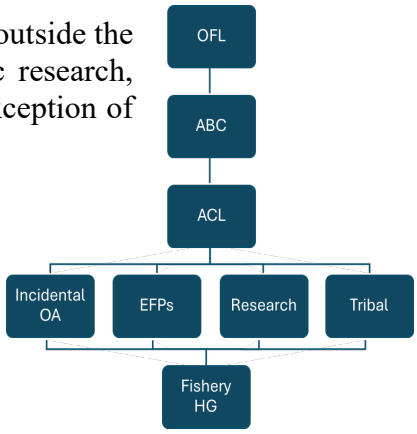
   Option A: No change to set-asides.
   Option B: Proportional increase based on trawl allocation.

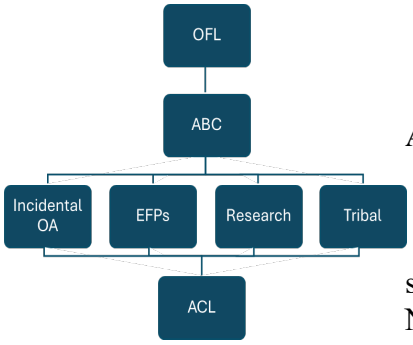
Accounting for Off-the-Top Deductions

Purpose: Proposes changing the current framework for off-the-top deductions (i.e., expected mortality from scientific research, tribal fisheries, incidental fisheries and exempted fishing permits (EFPs)) from being deducted from the ABC instead of the ACL, aiming to prevent unnecessary fishery closures and increase available quota to groundfish sectors.

Alternatives

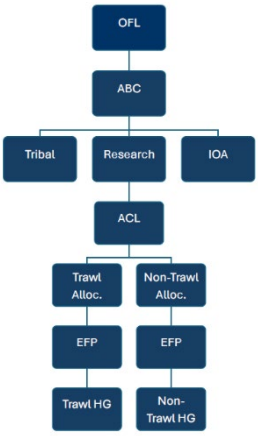
No Action: Expected harvests for the upcoming biennium from sources outside the recreational, and non-tribal commercial groundfish fisheries (scientific research, IOA, tribal fisheries, and EFPs) are deducted from the ACL with the exception of sablefish north of 36° N. lat.





Alternative 1: Revise the off-the-top accounting structure for sources outside the recreational and commercial non-tribal groundfish fisheries (scientific research, non-groundfish fisheries, tribal fisheries, and EFPs) to be deducted from the ABC prior to setting the ACL for all species/stocks, except sablefish North of 36° N. lat..

Alternative 2: Revise the off-the-top accounting structure for sources outside the recreational and commercial non-tribal groundfish fisheries (scientific research, non-groundfish fisheries, tribal fisheries) to be deducted from the ABC prior to setting the ACL. Any EFP off-the-top deductions would come off the sector specific allocation (if applicable) rather than off-the-top of the ACL. Alternative 2 would revise the catch accounting framework for all species/stocks, except sablefish North of 36° N. lat.



Harvest Specification Frequency

Purpose: Considers changing the biennial specification cycle to an annual specifications process or maintaining the biennial cycle with less frequent specification frequency (setting specifications for a to-be-determined number of years for certain stocks) to enhance responsiveness while reducing workload.

Alternatives

No Action: All groundfish specifications are set on a biennial cycle as described in Council Operating Procedure 9.

Alternative 1- Annual Specifications: The groundfish specifications would change to an annual specifications cycle where harvest specifications and management measures would be set annually.

Alternative 2, Biennial Cycle with Varying Specification Frequency: Modify the biennial harvest specifications and management process to allow for setting of harvest specifications (OFL, ABC, and ACL) for a to-be-determined period rather than a two-year period.

PFMC
10/22/25