SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES AND OPTIONS FOR HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES FLEXIBILITY- FINAL ACTION

Agenda Item G.7, Attachment 1 presents five action items for which the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) could consider adopting a final preferred alternative (FPA) 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 Adjust the Harvest Specifications Frequency.

The Council could elect to adopt an FPA for some, all, or none of the action items. Some of the alternatives within action items are mutually exclusive to other alternatives. 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, via any new framework(s) implemented by this action, through future management actions related to setting catch limits.

The following is a summary of the range of alternatives (ROA) and preliminary preferred alternatives (PPA) adopted by the Council in November 2025 as well as options that need to be specified by the Council to specify the FPA.

Carryover (All-Sector)

Purpose: Adds a framework to the fishery management plan (FMP) to allow unutilized annual catch limit (ACL) for select stocks to be used in a following year, in a prescriptive manner, in order to expedite issuance of additional harvestable pounds to fisheries.

Alternatives

No Action: Do not add an FMP framework for carrying unused ACL forward. Existing **S**horebased Individual Fishing Quota Program surplus carryover would remain available.

Note: Alternatives 1 and 2 are not mutually exclusive.

Alternative 1, ABC Carryover (PPA): Allow unused Baseline ACL to increase a future year's ABC, up to the overfishing limit (OFL), while retaining the default ACL harvest control rule.

Eligibility options for ABC Carryover

Option A (Stock Status): Stock status is known…

A1: and stock is above maximum stock size threshold/not overfished.

A2: and stock is above its management target.

Option B (Alternative harvest control rule (HCR)): Stock is not subject to an alternative ABC control rule that increases ABC during the year Carryover would be issued.

Option C (Catch Exceedance)

C1: OFL has not been exceeded in the past four years.

C2: ACL has not been exceeded more than once in the most recent four years.

Option D (Assessment): No ABC Carryover during the two-year biennial period when there is a new assessment.

Alternative 2, ACL Carryover (PPA): Allow unused Baseline ACL to increase a future year's ACL, up to the ABC.

Eligibility options for ACL Carryover

Option E (Stock Status): Stock status is known…
E1: If rebuilding, rebuilding is on schedule.
E2: Stock is not overfished or is estimated above its management target in the year used to calculate Carryover.

Option F (Catch Exceedance)
F1: OFL has not been exceeded in the past four years.
F2: ACL has not been exceeded more than once in the most recent four years.

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

<u>Options for Alternatives</u>

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 Option A (PPA): Council identifies Carryover stocks on a stock-by-stock basis.
Data Option A (PPA): Use final mortality data from Year 1 to determine Carryover for Year 3.
Minimum OFL-to-ABC buffer options for ABC Carryover
Option A: Allow Carryover ABC up to 99 percent of OFL.
Option B: Establish minimum buffers based on assessment category.
Option C: Establish buffers based on natural mortality/life history.
Option D: Limit ABC Carryover to 15 percent of Baseline ABC (can be combined with other options).

Specifications/Management Measures

1. Should the same off-the-top deduction for the tribes apply to the new ACL?
Tribal Deduction Option A: Proportional increase upon request.

2. How should allocations, harvest guidelines (HGs), etc. change?
Allocation Option C (PPA): Conditional if/then allocation for flat-amount/remainder structures and proportional increases for percentage-based allocations.
The percentage for the conditional increase would need to be specified as part of the FPA.

At-Sea Set-Aside Option B (PPA): Proportional increase.
At-Sea Set-Aside Option C: Conditional increase based on recent utilization.
Note, if the Council selects Option C as the FPA, the percentage for the conditional increase would need to be specified.

Phase-In of ABC Changes

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

Alternatives

No Action: Continue considering departures from the default ABC HCR, including phase-in approaches, on an ad hoc basis.

Alternative 1 (PPA): Add an FMP framework allowing ABC increases or decreases to be phased in for up to three years. The framework would clarify eligibility and what HCR applies after the phase-in concludes.

> **Eligibility Option A:** A stock could not receive an ABC Carryover increase during a year in which a Phase-In ABC HCR ("ramp down") is being implemented.

Mid-Biennium Harvest Specifications Change, "Green Light"

Purpose: Add a framework to the FMP to allow increases in harvest specifications in the second year of a biennium for newly assessed stocks, where new assessments indicate improved stock status, in a prescriptive manner, in order to expedite issuance of additional harvestable pounds to fisheries.

Alternatives

No Action: Retain the existing FMP framework, which provides mechanisms for certain mid-biennium reductions or adjustments but does not provide a general mechanism for increasing harvest specifications based on improved new scientific information.

Alternative 1 (PPA): Establish a "green light" framework allowing harvest specifications to increase in the second year of a biennium for previously identified, newly assessed stocks. The default HCR would be used.

> ***Specifications/Management Measures***
>
> *1. Should the same off-the-top deduction for the tribes apply to the new ACL?*
> **Tribal Deduction Option A:** Proportional increase upon request.
>
> *2. How should allocations, HGs, etc. change?*
> **Allocation Option C (PPA):** Conditional allocation for flat-amount/remainder structures and proportional increases for percentage-based allocations.
>
> > *The percentage for the conditional increase would need to be specified as part of the FPA*
>
> **At-Sea Set-Aside Option B (PPA):** Proportional increase.
> **At-Sea Set-Aside Option C:** Conditional increase based on recent utilization.
>
> > *Note, if the Council selects Option C as the FPA, the percentage for the conditional increase would need to be specified.*

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) to be deducted from the ABC instead of the ACL, and/or exempted fishing permits (EFPs) from the trawl/non-trawl allocations (as applicable) in order to prevent unnecessary fishery closures and increase available harvestable pounds for the groundfish sectors.

Alternatives

No Action: Continue generally deducting expected mortality from research, incidental open access fisheries, Tribal fisheries, and EFPs from the ACL, except under the existing sablefish north framework.

Alternative 1 (PPA): Revise the ACL HCR to account for scientific research, non-groundfish fisheries, tribal fisheries 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 or the ABC. For stocks without allocations, the EFP deductions would be taken off the ABC along with other off-the-top deductions. This Alternative is considered for all species/stocks, except sablefish north of 36° N. lat.

Options when off-the-top deductions exceed the ABC-to-ACL buffer:

Option 1: Replace the precautionary ABC-to-ACL buffer with the off-the-top deduction amount.

Option 2: Retain the precautionary reduction in addition to accounting for the off-the-top deductions, resulting in the same fishery HG as No Action.

Alternative 2: No revisions are made to the ACL HCR and off-the-top deductions for scientific research, non-groundfish fisheries, and tribal fisheries would remain the same as No Action. Any EFP off-the-top deductions would come off the sector specific allocation (if applicable) rather than off-the-top of the ACL or the ABC unless the stock or complex is not subject to allocations. If the stock or stock complex is not subject to a trawl/non-trawl allocation, then EFP off-the-top deductions would continue to be taken off the ACL as under No Action. This Alternative is considered for all species/stocks, except sablefish north of 36° N. lat.

Adjusting Harvest Specifications Frequency

Purpose: Consider setting specifications for a longer period for managed groundfish stocks, in order to increase efficiency and reduce workload, while maintaining the biennial specifications cycle.

Alternatives

No Action (PPA): Continue setting groundfish harvest specifications through the existing biennial specifications cycle.

Alternative 1, Biennial Cycle with Varying Specification Frequency: Maintain the biennial management process while allowing OFLs, ABCs, and ACLs to be established for

up to ten based on available projections. Other management measures would continue to be considered through the biennial process.

Option A: Each biennium, adopt longer-term harvest specifications only for stocks with newly adopted assessments or projections.