

CREATION OF AN AD HOC COMMITTEE ON ISSUES RELATED TO TRAWL ALLOCATION AND SOUTHERN SABLEFISH ATTAINMENT

At its March 2018 meeting, the Council decided it would create an ad hoc committee to address issues associated with trawl allocation attainment and under harvest of southern sablefish. The following are relevant excerpts from Council Operating Procedure 8:

CREATION AND TERMINATION

Ad Hoc Committees are created to address specific (or short-term) issues and are intended to be in place for a limited duration. Ad Hoc Committees are created and terminated by vote of the Council. . . .

OBJECTIVES AND DUTIES

Objectives, duties, and expected duration for each Ad Hoc Committee shall be specified at the time the committee is created.

MEMBER COMPOSITION AND TERMS

Based on the advice of Council members and advisory committees, the Council Chair appoints Ad Hoc Committee members.

Issues and Principles – Council March 2018 Discussion

Some initial areas of comment and discussion during the catch share review included the diminishment of sablefish quota available to trawl vessels and between fleet conflicts south of 36° N. lat. due to gear switched vessels targeting southern sablefish. A limited availability of sablefish quota could constrain harvest of species that co-occur in trawl catch, such as doversole. There have been various attributions for the sablefish quota limitation including the purchase of such quota by vessels that gear switch (catching sablefish with fixed gear), purchase of sablefish quota by processors, and limited value of sablefish quota to trawl vessels due to market limits on co-occurring species such as doversole (trawlers wanting to sell their quota). At the same time, southern sablefish allocated to the trawl fishery are being under harvested. Working on the hypothesis that the problem of attaining trawl allocations in the north is a result of a limited supply of sablefish quota, last year proposals were developed that would allow the under-harvested southern quota to be used in the north. More recent discussions at the March 2018 Council meeting also identified a possible need for policies that would encourage increased attainment of southern sablefish allocations (without making the southern sablefish available to northern fisheries).

At its March 2018 meeting, the Council identified a desire to look at these issues in the context of the overall goals of resource access and utilization. The goal of the trawl rationalization program is based on an understanding that trawl gear is the only gear that can viably harvest a number of the groundfish species. The intent of the trawl rationalization program was to make improvements

to the performance of the trawl fishery to this end. The Council's desire is to carefully consider the cause of the allocation attainment problems and how solutions proposed to date or new solutions might address those problems.

Additionally, given the primacy of sablefish to the mixed stock fishery, even if gear switching is not a cause of the immediate attainment problem, consideration of a limitation might be appropriate in order to prevent future problems. Some sablefish is required to access other trawl caught species such that, over the long-term, unlimited gear switching is a potential problem. If unlimited gear switching were to become a problem, reversing conditions on which business plans are developed is disruptive and difficult. Therefore, a long-term view of conditions in the fishery, performance of the program, and proposed solutions needs to be taken in addressing current issues.

As these issues are addressed, Council members identified a number of additional factors that will need to be considered, including: the importance of sablefish to the overall economics of a trawl trip and the interest of buyers in that trip; the importance of trawl deliveries to maintaining markets (including markets utilized by tribal and other fisheries); conservation impacts; potential fleet conflicts that might occur with the geographic redistribution of coastwide sablefish harvest; and implementation costs and challenges for any potential solutions. With respect to the last of these, NMFS participation in discussions will be critical.

Council members noted that the [November 2017 CAB report](#) provided some general principles for guiding development and consideration of alternatives:

- We want to get more sablefish to the trawl fleet.
- We want to consider existing operations/investments.
- We believe that unlimited catch of sablefish through gear switching is not desirable.

Council discussion also indicated a possible interest in maintaining each trawler's opportunity for some harvest with fixed gear, even if they have not previously taken advantage of gear switching provisions.

Many alternatives were developed last fall to address the trawl allocation attainment issue (gear switching issue) (see November 2017, Agenda Item F.2, [Attachment 7](#) and [Attachment 8](#)). The Council expressed interest in having a committee refine and narrow existing alternatives, as well as put creative thought into identifying new solutions that may not involve a limitation on gear switching. Further, the committee would consider ways to encourage utilization of the southern sablefish quota that would not include making it available to northern areas. Such consideration would not preclude options that would make southern quota available in the north.

Proposed Name and Charge

On the basis of the Council’s March 2018 discussion, summarized above, the following are offered as potential actions for Council consideration:

1. Appoint an Ad Hoc Trawl Allocation and Southern Sablefish Attainment Committee (TASSAC) (see following section for composition).
2. Provide the new committee with the following charge:

Identifying obstacles to achieving the goals and objectives of the catch share plan related to under attainment of non-sablefish trawl allocations and unharvested sablefish quota pounds (QPs) south of 36 degrees. As appropriate to overcome identified obstacles, the committee will discuss and develop options, including but not limited to, actions that may modify rules for gear switching by trawl permit holders and QP leasing to vessels using fixed gear, as well as options that may encourage increased utilization of sablefish QPs south of 36 degrees.

Composition

The committee would be composed of six Council members and six constituent advisors. Members of the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel or the Community Advisory Board might be asked to serve in the advisor roles.

Seat	Appointee
Council Members (Voting)	
Council Chair	
NMFS	
Washington State Rep. or Designee	
Oregon State Rep. or Designee	
California State Rep. or Designee	
At-Large Council Member	
Constituent Advisors (Nonvoting)	
Advisor Seat 1	
Advisor Seat 2	
Advisor Seat 3	
Advisor Seat 4	
Advisor Seat 5	
Advisor Seat 6	

PFMC
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