

PHASED IN APPROACHES TO CHANGING CATCH LIMITS - SCOPING

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) is exploring a change in the groundfish and coastal pelagic species harvest management frameworks to allow a phase-in of declining harvest limits in cases when a new assessment or any other analysis affecting the available harvest of a key stock indicates a dramatic decline in harvest opportunity. The Council scheduled this agenda item in response to the new sigma values for determining acceptable biological catch (ABC) buffers recommended by the [Scientific and Statistical Committee \(SSC\) in March](#). The larger ABC buffers inferred by these new sigma values will result in lower annual catch limits (ACLs) for some key high attainment stocks, such as Oregon black rockfish, compelling this exploration of phased-in approaches for changing catch limits.

One such phased-in approach allowable in the National Standard 1 (NS1) guidelines is the “phase-in ABC control rules” (section 600.310(f)(2)(A); see Agenda Item D.5, Attachment 1). The phase-in of an ABC control rule is designed to help stabilize catch levels as stock assessments are updated. The NS1 guidelines allow “... a control rule that phases in changes to ABC over a period of time, not to exceed 3 years, as long as overfishing is prevented each year (i.e., the phased-in catch level cannot exceed the OFL [overfishing limit] in any year).” The NS1 guidelines specify, “The Council must articulate within its FMP [fishery management plan] when the phase-in and/or carry-over provisions of the control rule can and cannot be used and how each provision prevents overfishing, based on a comprehensive analysis.” The NS1 guidelines also stipulate, “The ABC control rule should consider reducing fishing mortality as stock size declines below B_{MSY} ...”. Therefore, whether to apply such a phase-in control rule for stocks in the precautionary zone or for those stocks managed under rebuilding plans should be part of the scoping discussion.

Another phased-in approach is one recommended for consideration by the Groundfish Management Team where the maximum P^* (overfishing probability) is raised above 0.45 to mitigate short-term economic impacts associated with a significantly declining ABC. The scoping discussion should include which stocks should be considered for such a phased-in approach, how long would a higher P^* be implemented in a phase-in approach (is this a short duration phase-in with the P^* reverting back to its default value?), would increasing the maximum P^* threaten the integrity of the harvest management framework (is there an adequate accounting of the uncertainty associated with estimating the overfishing limit or does this rule increase the risk of overfishing?).

This agenda item is concerned with initial scoping of new phased-in harvest control rules, all of which would entail an amendment of the affected FMP. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) provides a report with their comments and recommendations on these approaches (Agenda Item D.5.a, NMFS Report 1). The Council should consider the scoping comments and recommendations from all of its advisors before deciding whether to pursue any FMP amendments that would consider phased-in harvest control rules.

Council Action:

1. Scope the Potential Benefits of Phased-In Changes to Catch Limits.

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item D.5, Attachment 1: Excerpt of Section 600.310(f) from the National Standard 1 Guidelines.
2. Agenda Item D.5.a, NMFS Report 1: National Marine Fisheries Service Report on Phased-In Approaches to Changing Harvest Limits: Scoping.
3. If received, Public Comments are electronic only (see e-portal).

Agenda Order:

- D.5 Phased In Approaches to Changing Catch Limits - Scoping John DeVore
- a. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Review the Impacts of Revised Sigma Values and Scope the Potential Benefits of Phased-In Changes to Catch Limits

PFMC
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