

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON  
PRELIMINARY ALTERNATIVES FOR INCIDENTAL CATCH RETENTION OF  
PACIFIC HALIBUT IN THE LIMITED ENTRY AND OPEN ACCESS  
FIXED GEAR SABLEFISH FISHERIES

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received a detailed report from Ms. Lynn Mattes from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife regarding agenda item F.2. The GAP would like to thank Ms. Mattes for a very complete report and a briefing on several alternatives that were developed.

The GAP recommends the alternatives for allowing retention of Pacific Halibut in the limited entry (LE) and open access (OA) fixed gear sablefish fisheries be approved for the next level of analysis. The GAP members have the following thoughts about what should be included in the next analysis.

The GAP discussions identified three LE and OA directed sablefish activities authorized by the Council that would claim the need for retention of Pacific Halibut bycatch and require inclusion into the analysis of alternatives. Those sablefish fisheries are the OA daily-trip-limit (DTL) fishery, the LE DTL fishery, and the LE primary fishery. Halibut would be allowed potentially as a bycatch in each of these fisheries. Halibut would be reallocated from the current directed halibut fishery to the fisheries mentioned above. The GAP identified five user groups with some vessel crossover between fisheries that would have to be analyzed.

The next analysis should provide some discussion on the following concerns:

1. The fixed gear GAP members note that future analysis will need to recognize that the halibut gear used in the directed derby fishery may be of a different design (e.g., different sized hooks) than the longline gear used to target sablefish. Vessels in Alaska that use their sablefish gear with smaller hooks to target their individual fishing quota (IFQ) halibut usually catch a smaller size halibut due to hook size. This may or may not be a concern.
2. The amount of allowed bycatch should reflect as close as possible the actual bycatch rates relative to existing fixed gear rockfish conservation areas in order avoid an incentive to target Pacific halibut.
3. The analysis needs to focus on whether the bycatch retention design would actually result in a halibut mortality savings, keeping mind that retained halibut are being transferred from a directed halibut fishery. This proposal should not result in increased mortality relative to the current directed derby and would avoid some of the existing discard mortality in sablefish fisheries.
4. Retention of Pacific halibut in sablefish fisheries south of 40°10' N. latitude should be explored in the analysis.

The GAP puts a higher priority on completing trawl IFQ trailing amendments and other ongoing initiatives approved previously by the Council (e.g., Amendment 16-5) before dedicating Council staff time to this proposed amendment.