

REPORT OF THE AD HOC GROUND FISH TRAWL INDIVIDUAL QUOTA COMMITTEE

The Ad Hoc Groundfish Trawl Individual Quota Committee (TIQC) met October 28 and 29, 2003. All members were present. Substantial progress was made on the initial specification of the provisions for an individual quota (IQ) program alternative. This progress report solicits Council comment or action on:

- TIQC charge and the goals for an individual quota (IQ) program.
- TIQC recommendation for a control date.

The report also provides the Council with:

- The projected time line for action presented to the committee.
- An initial draft of the elements for a program.

The TIQC views the development of an IQ program to cover limited entry trawl landings to be a matter of utmost urgency and asks the Council to do everything possible to enlist the assistance needed to move forward rapidly on this issue. This should include finding a way to make use of the assistance offered from outside sources.

The TIQC would like to meet again as soon as information has been developed to assist the committee in evaluating, refining, and further developing the proposals. The target period for the next meeting is late-January early-February.

The TIQC received a report from Mr. Bill Robinson, NMFS, on the administration policy with respect to IQs for processors. He reviewed Dr. Hogarth's recent comments to congress on the issue and the Department of Justice opinion. Ms. Eileen Cooney, NOAA General Counsel, reviewed National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) requirements as they pertain to the committee task.

Committee Charge and Goals for Individual Quotas

The draft charge given the TIQC was, essentially, to provide assistance to the Council in scoping alternatives and impacts in support of MSA and NEPA processes and to specifically identify provisions for an IQ program.

The statement of need (problem statement) and goals determine the types of alternatives to status quo and IQ programs that should be considered in this process. The goals to be addressed should be closely related to the statement of need. The draft charge provided to the committee was stated in the context of the Council Strategic Plan capacity reduction goal. The committee believes capacity reduction should not be the primary goal addressed by the IQ program and suggests the Council endorse the following as the preliminary goals for this process.

- Provide for a well-managed system for protection and conservation of groundfish resources.
- Provide for a viable and efficient groundfish industry.
- Provide for a fair and equitable distribution of fishery benefits.
- Provide for a safe fishery.

A list of objectives related to these goals is provided as part of the section of this report on elements of the program. Also provided, there is a draft statement of need. Based on these goals and objectives and the statement of need, the committee suggests its draft charge be as follows.

The TIQC is charged with assisting the Council in developing an IQ program to address problems identified in the statement of need, together with reasonable alternatives to such a program. In meeting this charge the committee should provide supporting rationale for recommendations and ensure its recommendations take into account other standards and criteria contained in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Management and Conservation Act and other applicable law, as well as, public comment received during scoping processes. Additionally, the committee should assist the Council in identifying critical impacts that should be analyzed.

Control Date

The committee recommends the Council adopt a control date of November 6, 2003. The date should cover the issuance of individual fishing quota to all potential initial recipients, possibly, but not necessarily including, and not limited to, vessel owners, permit owners, vessel operators, crew, and first receivers (processors and buyers).

Time Line for Action

The committee was presented with a possible time line for implementing a an IQ program (Table 1). Under the time line, if the Council chooses to recommend an IQ program, it would not be implemented until the start of 2007. It is the committee's hope that the resources can be found to stay on this schedule, and if possible, accelerate it.