

Recent Council Actions Related to Halibut Fisheries

A report to the International Pacific Halibut Commission, November 2018

David Witherell, Executive Director
North Pacific Fishery Management Council



BSAI Abundance-Based PSC Limits

2015-2016

- Council initiates iterative discussion papers evaluating a range of potential indices to index BSAI halibut PSC

2017-2018

- Council begins to draft a suite of Alternatives for analysis, note this is an iterative process with multiple discussion papers on aspects of the alternatives (Control rules, Indices)
- Council selects two indices for indexing abundance: NMFS EBS Bottom Trawl survey and IPHC Setline survey in 4ABCDE
- NMFS determines the analysis will be an EIS and conducts scoping; Scoping report presented to Council April 2018

October 2018

- Review of draft Alternatives for analysis; revise alternatives as needed

October 2019

- Review of draft EIS/RIR and recommends for public release
- Council may select a preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) at that time

April 2020

- Council takes final action on EIS/RIR

BSAI Abundance-Based PSC Limits

October motion: <https://tinyurl.com/HalibutABM-1018>

Alternative 1: No action (3,515 mt; sector apportionments)

Alternative 2: Single index used to set trawl and/or non-trawl halibut PSC limit.

- Option 1: NMFS EBS bottom trawl survey index.
- Option 2: IPHC Area 4 setline survey index.

Alternative 3: Primary and secondary indices are used to set trawl and/or non-trawl PSC limit.

- Option 1: Primary index is EBS trawl survey, secondary index is Area 4 setline survey.
- Option 2: Primary index is Area 4 setline survey, secondary index is EBS trawl survey.

Alternative 4: Use two indices (EBS trawl survey and Area 4 setline survey) to set the non-trawl PSC limit in the form of a look-up table.

- ✓ A range of elements and options exist for each alternative.
- ✓ A **Stakeholder Committee** will recommend specific alternative/element/option combinations for analysis to understand impacts.

Halibut Charter Permits Renewal

- Council took final action to require an annual application process for CHP in Areas 2C and 3A.
- Application must include CHP number, CHP holder name, address, phone number or email address, any updates to CHP ownership structure, and whether financial compensation was received from use of CHP in prior year.
- Intent is to provide information on changes in ownership and participation to evaluate if changes in the CHP program are needed, facilitate retirement of non-transferrable permits when ownership changes, and ensure valid permits are used for enforcement.

Mixing Guided and Unguided Halibut

- In April, the Council took final action to limit simultaneous possession of guided and unguided halibut on a vessel.
- The different regulations for guided and unguided created difficulties for accountability and enforcement.
- The action requires that when unguided halibut are onboard the fishing vessel at the same time, the stricter IPHC measures for guided sport fishing would apply to all halibut anglers onboard the vessel (i.e., bag and possession limits, size restrictions, and carcass retention).
- The Council did not require compliance with other requirements for guided anglers (day of the week closures, logbooks, and annual limits).

Unguided Rental Boats

- The Council raised concerns that different regulations for guided and unguided anglers had stimulated growth of the rental boat segment of the unguided sector in recent years, which may have negatively affected other fishing sectors.
- Council initiated analysis of alternatives to require registration for non-guided rental vessels in Areas 2C and 3A, and align bag limits between charter anglers and anglers on non-guided rental vessels by applying the charter daily bag and size limit to recreational anglers.

Halibut Retention in BSAI Pot Gear

- The Council took final action to allow retention of legal size halibut in pot gear (provided the operator holds sufficient IFQ or CDQ for the area) to reduce wastage and whale depredation. BSAI does not include Halibut Area 4A south of AI.
- Single or longline pots allowed. No gear tending requirements
- Exemption to the 9" maximum tunnel opening (which provides for directed fishing for halibut)
- All vessels using pots required to use logbooks, VMS
- No escape mechanism for crab required, but recommended. PIHCZ closed to all fishing with pots.

IFQ Medical and Beneficiary Transfers

- In October, the Council selected preliminary preferred alternatives to 1) replace current definition of certified medical professionals with broader term “health care provider” for medical transfers, and 2) change beneficiary transfer provision to include “estate” and use OPM definition of “immediate family member”.
- Options for medical transfers: 1) limit transfers to 2 of 5 yrs or 3 of 7, for any reason; 2) allow leasing of IFQ 4 times in a 7 yr period, but reduce the % of quota allowed to be leased each time.

IFQ CQE Fish Up in Area 3A

- In October, the Council initiated analysis of an action to allow CQE communities to fish “D” class quota on “C” class vessels only after August 15 or September 1, as well as options to limit the number of years to use this opportunity (2 of 3 yrs, 3 of 5, or 3 of 7).
- The purpose would be to allow unfished “D” quota to be harvested late in the season when weather may cause issues for small vessels.

Questions?



North Pacific
Fishery
Management
Council

www.npfmc.org

