

## Status of analytical projects related to the Halibut & Sablefish IFQ Program

Updated April 2021

	Description	Status / Target Date
<b>Projects in Council Review</b> (Council has tasked staff and scheduled review at a future meeting)		
Omnibus IFQ amendment package (changes to sablefish pots, jig gear, Adak CQE)	<p>This is an omnibus amendment package to consider of suite of regulatory changes to improve the efficiency and accessibility of the IFQ fisheries. The first alternative set includes considerations related to changing sablefish pot requirements. Specifically this includes 1) clarifying that “slinky pots” are a legal gear for the IFQ fishery, and revising regulations to allow the use of biodegradable twine in the door latch or pot tunnel, 2) remove buoy configuration and flagpole requirements, 3) remove the 9-inch maximum width of tunnel opening requirement so it does not apply when vessel has unfishes halibut IFQ onboard, 4) consideration of changes to pot limits, and 5) consideration of changes to gear retrieval requirements. This alternative also considers allowing jig gear as a legal gear type for harvesting sablefish IFQ. The other alternative (not mutually exclusive) in this package would, for a period of five years, remove the requirement that IFQ held by the Adak CQE must be harvested by a resident.</p> <p>Additionally, the Council requests that NMFS update the Council on the following issues under the NMFS management report at a future meeting: remove notary requirements for IFQ participants, remove the requirement for sablefish pot fishermen to use pot tags.</p>	Initial Review Analysis <b>October 2021</b>
Recreational Quota Entity (RQE) Funding Mechanism	<p>The Council took action to allow the formation of an RQE in December 2016. The RQE has the ability to purchase commercial halibut IFQ on behalf of charter halibut anglers in Areas 2C and 3A to augment the apportioned pounds of halibut for the charter catch limit in an area. Additional pounds could relax the annual charter management measures (e.g., bag limits and size restrictions) up to the allowance for the unguided recreational sector (two fish of any size). Legislation has been proposed in U.S. Congress to grant the Council and NMFS the authority to develop and implement a fee collection mechanism for charter vessel operators that could be used by the RQE to fund administrative costs and purchase of halibut quota share as specified in the RQE program. The analysis would begin the analytical process to explore the administrative requirements necessary to implement a fee collection program for charter vessel operators.</p>	Initial Review Analysis <b>October 2021 (Tentative)</b>

	Description
<b><i>Projects not yet scheduled</i></b>	
Small Sablefish Release	<p>This action would allow discarding (careful release) of sablefish in the IFQ sablefish fishery. Stakeholder support is motivated by disincentives for delivering low commercial value small sablefish. The action that went through initial review included voluntary release of sablefish which was preferred by stakeholders over a size limit. There were two options to address catch accounting including: observer-based and survey-based discard estimation. Total discard mortalities would be estimated in the stock assessment. The analysis was essentially not supportive of voluntary release in the IFQ sablefish fishery, though, it did not clearly state that the action was untenable. The analysis and the SSC identified main areas of uncertainty (DMRs, retention selectivity, and discard estimation) that will need to be resolved order to support a Council decision. These could be resolved by precautionary DMRs, a mandatory size limit, and expansion of IFQ observer monitoring. Additionally, IFQ fishery accounting could be modified to establish an upper limit on total IFQ discards which would otherwise reduce TACs for both the IFQ and trawl sectors.</p>