
ADVISORY PANEL REPORT – C2 ONLY

APRIL 2021



C2 BSAI HALIBUT ABM (1/7)

1. The AP recommends that the Council revise the Halibut ABM analysis according to the recommendations from the SSC before publishing the draft EIS, and prior to selecting a Preliminary Preferred Alternative.¹
2. The AP recommends the following changes to the October 2020 Council motion language, using strike-through for elements removed and bold for new elements.

¹ *Amendment failed 7-13, to add to the end of the paragraph:*

“and select Alternative 4 as the preliminary preferred alternative (PPA)”.



C2 BSAI HALIBUT ABM (2/7)

Purpose and Need: *Note, this is unchanged from the analysis*

Halibut is an important resource in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI), supporting commercial halibut fisheries, recreational fisheries, subsistence fisheries, and groundfish fisheries. The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) is responsible for assessing the Pacific halibut stock and establishing total annual catch limits for directed fisheries and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) is responsible for managing prohibited species catch (PSC) in U.S. commercial groundfish fisheries managed by the Council. The Amendment 80 sector is accountable for the majority of the annual halibut PSC mortality in the BSAI groundfish fisheries. While the Amendment 80 fleet has reduced halibut mortality in recent years, continued decline in the halibut stock requires consideration of additional measures for management of halibut PSC in the Amendment 80 fisheries.

When BSAI halibut abundance declines, PSC in Amendment 80 fisheries can become a larger proportion of total halibut removals in the BSAI, particularly in Area 4CDE, and can reduce the proportion of halibut available for harvest in directed halibut fisheries. The Council intends to establish an abundance-based halibut PSC management program in the BSAI for the Amendment 80 sector that meets the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, particularly to minimize halibut PSC to the extent practicable under National Standard 9 and to achieve optimum yield in the BSAI groundfish fisheries on a continuing basis under National Standard 1. The Council is considering a program that links the Amendment 80 sector PSC limit to halibut abundance and provides incentives for the fleet to minimize halibut mortality at all times. This action could also promote conservation of the halibut stock and may provide additional opportunities for the directed halibut fishery.



C2 BSAI HALIBUT ABM (3/7)

Alternatives:

Alternative 1: No Action

Alternative 2: A 3X2 look-up table with PSC limits that range from current PSC limit to 20% below current limit. PSC limit is determined annually based on survey values from the most recent year available.

		EBS shelf trawl survey index (t)	
		Low < 150,000	High ≥ 150,000
IPHC setline survey index in Area 4ABCDE (WPUE)	High ≥ 11,000	1,571 mt (10% below current)	1,745 mt (current limit)
	Medium 8,000 – 10,999	1,483 mt (15% below current)	1,571 mt (10% below current)
	Low	1,396 mt	1,483 mt

Note, this is unchanged from the analysis



C2 BSAI HALIBUT ABM (4/7)

Alternative 3: A 4X2 look-up table with PSC limits that range from 15% above current PSC limit to 30% below current limit. PSC limit is determined annually based on survey values from the most recent year available.

		EBS shelf trawl survey index (t)	
		Low < 150,000	High ≥ 150,000
IPHC setline survey index in Area 4ABCDE (WPUE)	High ≥ 11,000	1,745 mt (current limit)	2,007 mt (15% above current)
	Medium 8,000 – 10,999	1,396 mt (20% below current)	1,745 mt (current limit)
	Low 6,000-7,999	1,309 mt (25% below current)	1,396 mt (20% below current)
	Very Low < 6,000	1,222 mt (30% below current)	1,309 mt (25% below current)

Note, this is unchanged from the analysis



C2 BSAI HALIBUT ABM (5/7)

Alternative 4: A 4X2 look-up table with PSC limits that range from current PSC limit to 45% below current limit. PSC limit is determined annually based on survey values from the most recent year available.

		EBS shelf trawl survey index (t)	
		Low < 150,000	High ≥ 150,000
IPHC setline survey index in Area 4ABCDE (WPUE)	High ≥ 11,000	1,396 mt (20% below current)	1,745 mt (current limit)
	Medium 8,000 – 10,999	1,222 mt (30% below current)	1,396 mt (20% below current)
	Low 6,000-7,999	1,047 mt (40% below current)	1,222 mt (30% below current)
	Very Low < 6,000	960 mt (45% below current)	1,407 mt (405% below current)

Note, this is unchanged from the analysis



C2 BSAI HALIBUT ABM (6/7)

Options for Alternatives 2, 3 and 4:

Option 1: PSC limit is determined using a 3-year rolling average of survey index values instead of the most recent survey value.

~~Option 2: PSC limit varies no more than (suboptions: 10% or 15%) per year.~~

Option 3: Establish an annual limit of (suboptions: 80% or 90%) of the PSC limit generated by the look-up table. In 3 of 7 years, the A80 sector may exceed the annual limit up to the PSC limit generated by the look-up table. If the A80 sector has exceeded the annual limit in 3 of the past 7 years, then (suboptions: 80% or 90%) of the PSC limit generated by the look-up table is a hard cap for that year.

~~Option 4: (mutually exclusive with Options 2 and 3) PSC unused in one year may roll to the following year to increase the PSC limit generated by the lookup table up to 20%. Any PSC savings in excess of 20% would stay in the water.~~



C2 BSAI HALIBUT ABM (7/7)

3. The AP recommends that the following information be added to the analysis:

- A. The purpose and need statement calls out the possible effects of bycatch specifically on Area 4CDE directed halibut fishery, at low levels of halibut abundance; the analysis should provide specific information regarding those effects.
- B. Regarding the alternatives' possible effects on Area 4CDE, including on Alaska Native peoples living in that area, the analysis should provide information on the ratio between the directed halibut fishery and the bycatch fishery in Area 4CDE under each alternative. This should include the ratio that occurred in the past, as well as the resulting ratio from each alternative.
- C. The analysis should quantify the alternatives' possible effects on directed fishery catch limits in downstream areas resulting from the bycatch of U26 fish in the BSAI.

Motion passed 13-7

