

# Interim Report on the Halibut Deck Sorting EFP – October 2019

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# Scope of the Report

- Covers deck sorting operations from January 20<sup>th</sup> through mid-September 2019 (roughly same timeframe covered in previous DS EFP reports)
- Provides performance metrics for 2019 and comparison to previous years (which had differing time frames, catch handling protocols, observer data collections methods and rules for deck sorting)

# Rules of the 2019 EFP

- Vessel must have a NMFS-approved safety plan detailing potential hazards and appropriate deck access routes, and must brief the observers on this plan
- Observer must be present on deck whenever deck sorting occurs
- Vessel cannot run fish from stern tanks into factory while deck sorting, unless two observers are on duty
  - Vessel must use a visual signal on the flow scale conveyor to indicate when deck sorting is occurring
- Vessels have option of taking one or two extra observers (in addition to the normally required two)

# Rules of the 2019 EFP

- Observer data collection on deck determines amount and mortality of deck sorted halibut
  - Stratified random sample of one-in-five halibut
- Observer species composition samples in factory determine amount of halibut in factory
  - Annually specified DMR applied to halibut in factory
- 35-minute time limit on deck sorting, beginning when codend is opened
- Vessel may opt out of deck sorting for one or more hauls

# Performance Metrics of Interest

- EFP participation has increased to include all of Amendment 80 and some CDQ and TLAS non-pollock fishing
  - 9 vessels in 2015
  - 12 vessels in 2016
  - 17 vessels in 2017
  - 21 vessels in 2018
  - 22 vessels in 2019
- EFP represents most yellowfin sole and other flatfish harvest, and a significant proportion of Pacific ocean perch and Atka mackerel

# EFP Performance Across Years\*

Year	Number of Vessels in EFP	Total Groundfish Catch (MT)	Halibut Catch (Encounter) Rate	Halibut Mortality (MT)	Mortality Rate	Halibut Mortality at Annual DMR (MT)	Halibut Savings (MT)
2015	9	38,561	1.3%	234	49%	409	176
2016	12	79,905	0.9%	331	45%	620	290
2017	17	206,768	0.8%	900	54%	1,418	519
2018	21	220,078	1.1%	1,210	49%	2,054	844
2019	22	235,547	1.4%	1,600	50%	2,510	910

\*Note when comparing years that there have been changes in number of vessels, timeframe for deck sorting, geographic areas, target fisheries, etc.

# Selected Performance Metrics

- Halibut bycatch “catch rate” increased somewhat from last year
  - 1.3% in 2015
  - 0.9% in 2016
  - 0.8% in 2017
  - 1.1% in 2018
  - 1.4% in 2019
- Overall halibut mortality rate continues to be around 50%
  - 49% in 2015
  - 45% in 2016
  - 54% in 2017
  - 49% in 2018
  - 50% in 2019

# Potential Future Developments in Deck Sorting

- Second field trial of electronic length board scheduled for mid-October
- Will test the original length board developed by industry as well as version currently used by RACE Division for survey work in a deck sorting application
- Final rule on implementation of deck sorting is currently in review with Department of Commerce, expected to be in regulation by January 2020



# Change in annual halibut mortality savings over DS EFPs 2015 to 2019

