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# INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION

ESTABLISHED BY A CONVENTION BETWEEN CANADA  
AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

B1 September IPHC letter to Council - Item 6a  
October 2014

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26 September 2014

Mr. John Henderschedt  
Acting Chair  
North Pacific Fishery Management Council  
605 W. 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 306  
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252

Dear Mr. Henderschedt,

Thank you for the August 12<sup>th</sup> reply from Mr. Oliver indicating the Council's willingness to meet with the IPHC Commissioners regarding halibut bycatch management. I am encouraged to note that both Commissioners and Council leadership see the opportunity that collaboration offers for a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to management. Such collaboration has the potential to support the conservation of the halibut resource and the economic prosperity of the fisheries catching halibut.

The Commission is currently exploring a new approach for accounting for total mortalities, including a recent discussion at the Commissioner's September work planning meeting.

As you point out, this new total mortality framework merits discussion between the Commission and Council, given its potential implications for management by either body. The staff paper on this, upon which you received a preliminary briefing at your June meeting, is included with this letter. The total mortality accounting framework brings direct accounting for U26 halibut bycatch into the yield calculations and clearly identifies the two points of entry for control of total mortality and the direct tradeoffs associated with these control points. However, the Commission is also interested in a discussion with the Council that addresses other elements of halibut bycatch management. The Commission would like to share what it has learned from the report of its Halibut Bycatch Project Team and discuss how this can inform potential bycatch reduction targets, management measures, and monitoring programs that fall under the Council's authority.

The Commission understands that the Council will be deliberating on adjustments to the halibut PSC limits in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands in February 2015. The Commission is concerned that real reductions in bycatch mortality result from Council actions. The attached figure illustrates that, relative to existing bycatch estimates, anything less than a 20% reduction in PSC limits for the BSAI trawl sector would potentially yield an increase in realized bycatch, which would be the opposite of the Council's intent.

While a meeting in March 2015 may be valuable to draw together the outcomes of the Council's deliberations and the Commission's decisions from its January 2015 Annual Meeting, the

Commission also sees value in meeting with the Council before it concludes its deliberations in February. This would provide an opportunity for the Council and Commission to discuss the implications of progress on the total mortality framework and to discuss the outcomes of the Commission's analysis of bycatch, both of which could inform the Council's deliberations in February. To that end, the Commission would like to meet with the Council during its December 2014 meeting, prior to the Council concluding its deliberations on bycatch management. We believe the discussion between the two bodies could be accomplished in about two hours but also recognize the Council's requirements for public comments.

Consistent with the approach to date, I suggest that Dr. Bruce Leaman, Executive Director IPHC work with Mr. Chris Oliver to continue discussions on the development of an agenda and timeline for this meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul Ryall".

Paul Ryall  
Chair IPHC

cc: IPHC Commissioners  
Chris Oliver

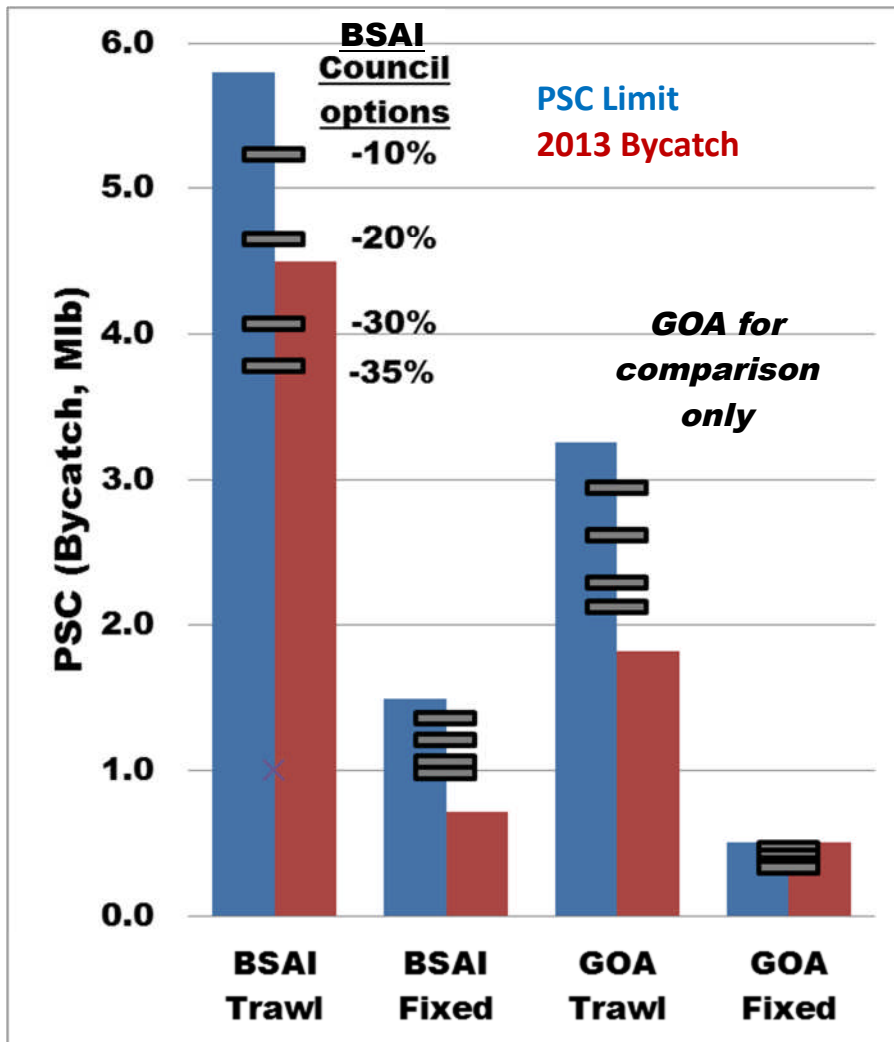


Figure 1. Projected PSC limit options compared to existing bycatch estimates for the BSAI, with similar options applied to the GOA for comparison purposes only.