



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Action Memo

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Dan Hull, Chairman
David Witherell, Executive Director

SUBJECT:

Stranded Cod in GOA Trawl B Season - Discussion Paper

STAFF CONTACT: Sam Cunningham and Jim Armstrong (NPFMC)

ACTION REQUIRED:

- Review discussion paper
- Decide what further action is warranted

BACKGROUND:

In December 2016 the Council requested that staff draft a discussion paper describing the stranding of Pacific cod TAC in the B season of the GOA trawl fishery. In this context, "stranding" refers to TAC that is allocated to a sector but is not caught and landed. The Council asked that the paper consider whether or how the stranding of Pacific cod TAC relates to regulatory allocations across gear and vessel size categories, regulatory areas, and seasons. The paper describes the regulations that define how Pacific cod TAC is allocated to various Western and Central GOA gear and operational-type sectors, and spread across the A and B seasons. Seasonal TAC apportionment is the result of Steller sea lion protection measures, while GOA Pacific cod sector allocations were established in 2012 in order to limit the instability caused by a race for fish between the different sectors. The paper also describes the policies - also based in regulation - that determine when and how NMFS inseason managers can reallocate sector apportionments of TAC that would go unharvested to other sectors.

The paper includes information on the other gear/area endorsements that are contained on the set of LLP licenses that are endorsed to use trawl gear in the Western and Central GOA. Fish Ticket data is included to give a sense for how many GOA vessels fish for Pacific cod with trawl gear *and* fish in Federal and/or state-waters Pacific cod fisheries. The paper gives a brief sketch of the timing of GOA Pacific cod fisheries throughout the year, and what the vessels that fish B season trawl cod might be doing in the winter and spring. Finally, the paper considers ex-vessel price trends over the course of the calendar year, which might inform future motivation to make additional Pacific cod TAC available prior to the B season as it is currently defined.

Because the seasonal apportionment of Pacific cod TAC is rooted in Steller sea lion protection measures, any change to that apportionment would require a review of potential marine mammal impacts. Two appendices are provided to describe the "ESA Section 7" consultation process, and to update the public on the history and stock status of sea lions whose breeding range occurs in the GOA