

Context for BSAI PSC Limit Changes

International Pacific Halibut
Commission
June 2015

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June NPFMC Mtg

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Structure of bycatch mortality accounting and halibut management

- NPFMC management of PSC limits is by the entire Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands region
- IPHC management of halibut is by smaller IPHC regulatory areas (4A, 4B, 4CDE)
- This mismatch in area-based management creates similar mismatches in impacts and expected results of Council and Commission actions



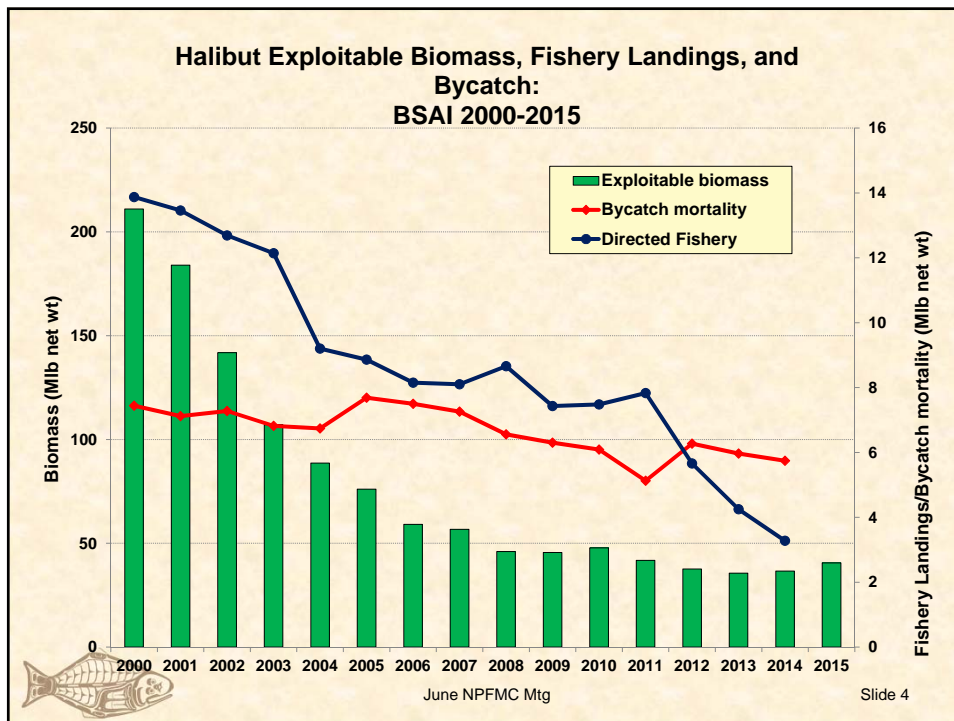
Trends in halibut bycatch mortality and halibut abundance

- Adult halibut biomass has declined over the past fifteen years
- Halibut bycatch mortality has also declined but at a much lower rate
- In the most sensitive area (Area 4CDE) bycatch mortality has increased substantially over the past three years while the directed halibut fishery has decreased substantially



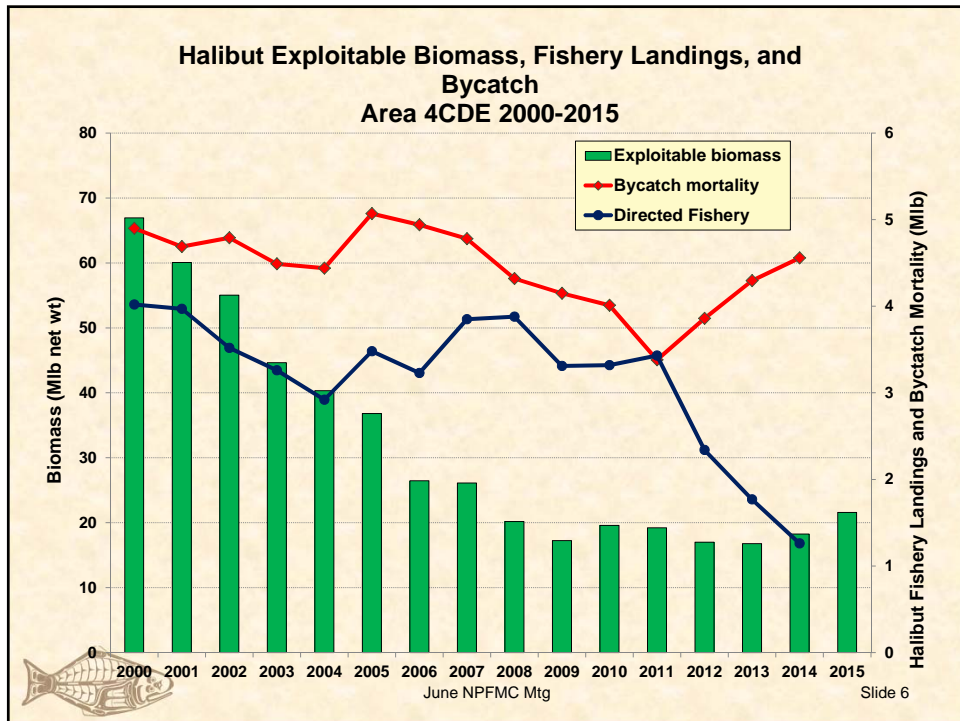
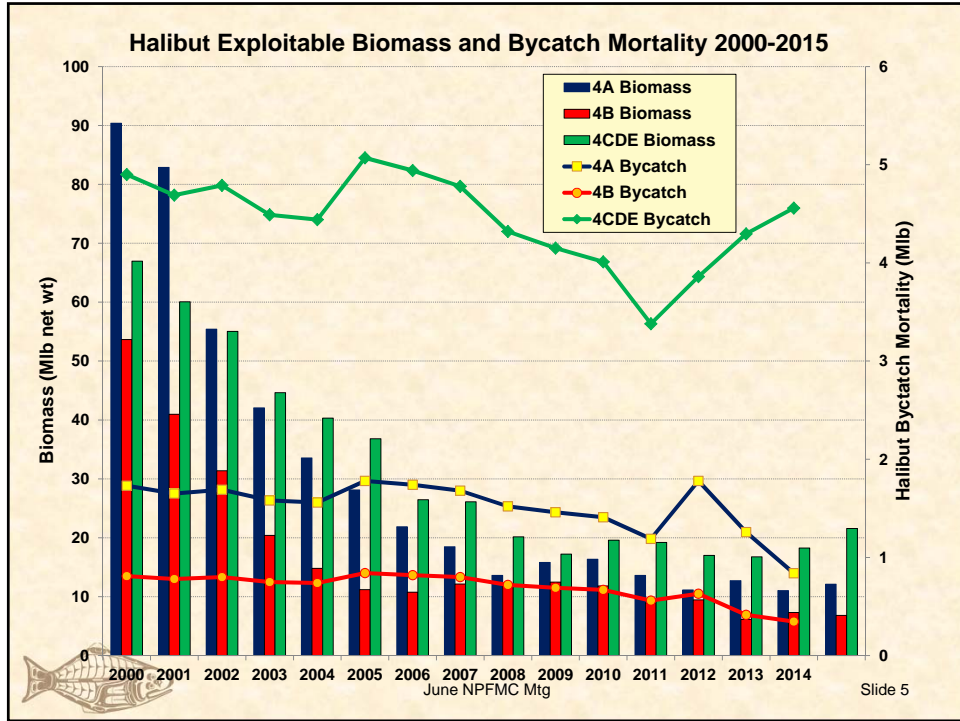
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Relation of bycatch to estimated abundance of juvenile halibut

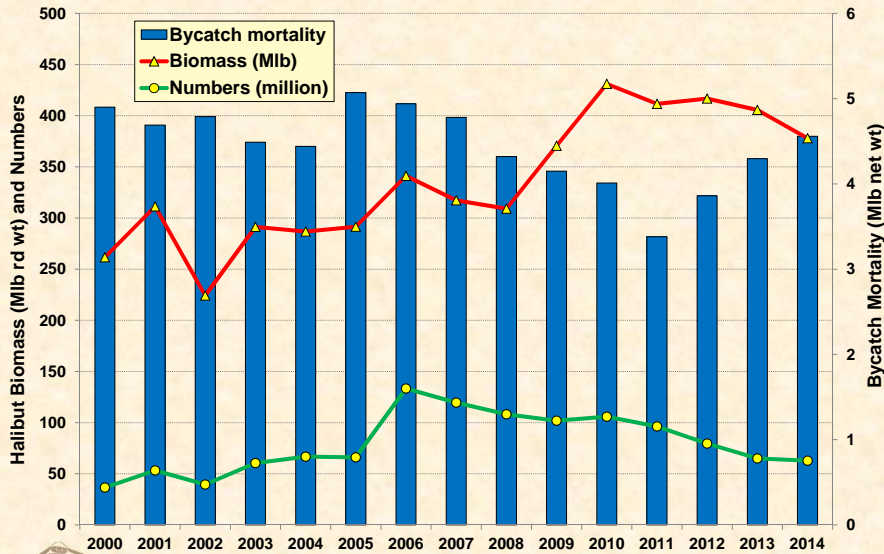
- NMFS trawl survey of juvenile abundance shows decreases in both numbers and biomass in Area 4CDE while bycatch mortality has increased
- Bycatch mortality increases are associated with increases in groundfish species landings



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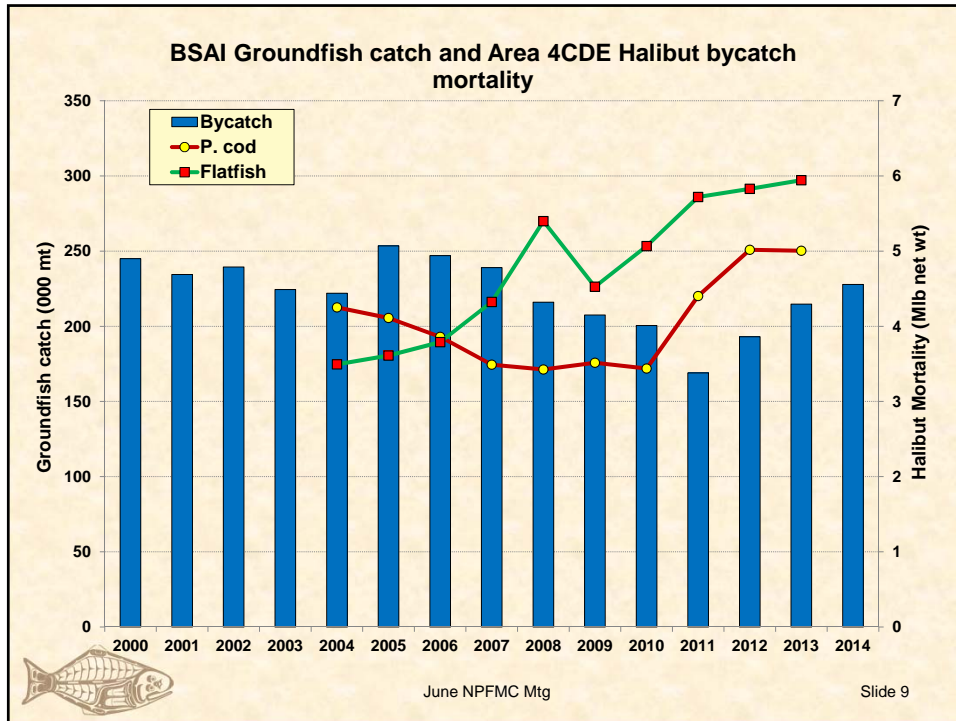
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NMFS Survey Halibut Abundance and Bycatch Mortality (Area 4CDE)



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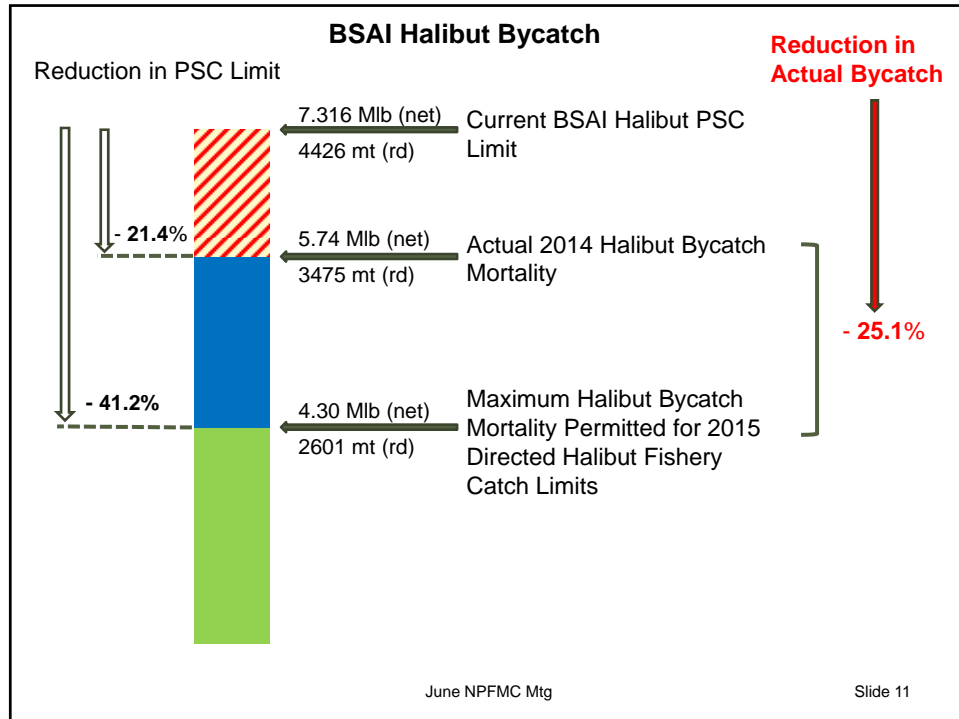
NPFMC Action on bycatch mortality reduction

- Purpose and needs statement for the Council action clearly identifies the need to reduce bycatch

“...the current low status and continued declines in the halibut resource require immediate action by the Council and the industry. Additional regulatory measures to avoid halibut and further minimize halibut bycatch mortality would help improve the halibut stock conditions, provide additional harvest opportunities in the directed halibut fishery, and be consistent with National Standard 9.”

- A key element in the statement is the identification of necessary reductions in halibut bycatch mortality, rather than simply a reduction of the PSC limit



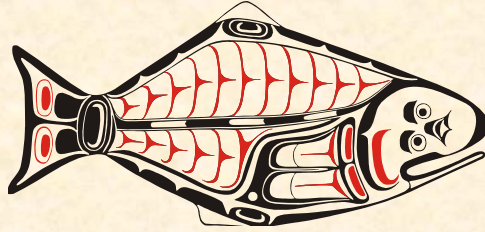


Actions by the Commission and the Council

- In a January 2015 letter to the Commission, NFMS Deputy Administrator Sobeck urged the Commission to adopt a catch limit for Area 4CDE that would provide needed economic opportunity.
- She based this recommendation in part upon a commitment that NMFS and the Council would reduce halibut bycatch
- After considerable debate and commentary from its advisory bodies, the Commission chose not to reduce yield and adopted a status quo catch limit for Area 4CDE
- A minimum of a 41% reduction of the BSAI halibut PSC limit is required to support the Commission's decision on the Area 4CDE directed fishery catch limit



Questions?



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