

Agenda Item C-1
BSAI Trawl Limited Access Yellowfin Sole Fishery

The Council adopts the following purpose and need and alternatives for analysis:

Purpose and Need

The Amendment 80 program assigns a portion of the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (BSAI) yellowfin sole total allowable catch (TAC) to a limited access fishery. Amendment 80 catcher processors are precluded from fishing in the limited access fishery, however they are not prohibited from acting as a mothership for catcher vessels in this fishery. Since the implementation of the trawl limited access fishery in 2008, American Fisheries Act (AFA) and Non-AFA catcher vessels, AFA catcher processors, floating processors, and Amendment 80 motherships have participated in the limited access fishery. In 2015, new vessels entered the limited access fishery. Historic participants are concerned about the impact of these new participants on their access to the yellowfin sole in the limited access fishery.

The Council has recognized the concern of historic participants in the limited access fishery by establishing a control date of October 13, 2015, that may be used as a reference date for a future management action to limit access to the offshore sector of the limited access fishery. Limiting access may help ensure that the limited access fishery continues to provide benefits to historic participants, mitigate the risk that a “race for fish” could develop, and help to maintain the consistently low rates of halibut bycatch in this fishery. The Council also recognizes that when the TAC assigned to the limited access fishery is relatively high, opportunities for new entrants could be provided without unduly constraining historic participants.

Alternative 1: No Action-Status Quo

Alternative 2: A catcher vessel may directed fish in the BSAI trawl yellowfin sole limited access fishery and deliver its catch to a mothership or catcher/processor only if that catcher vessel is assigned an LLP that is credited with at least one directed fishery landing in the yellowfin sole limited access fishery made to a mothership or catcher/processor between 2008 – 2015.

Suboption 2.1: in any year

Suboption 2.2: in any two years

Option 2.1: The limits on access to catcher vessels are relieved if the TAC assigned to the trawl yellowfin sole limited access fishery is equal to or greater than:

Suboption 2.1.1: 15,000 mt

Suboption 2.2.2: 20,000 mt

Suboption 2.2.3: 25,000 mt