

## C2 BSAI Halibut PSC

The AP recommends the Council adopt Alternative 2, and options as presented below, as the preferred alternative for final action.

Alternative 2. Amend the BSAI Groundfish FMP and Federal regulations to revise halibut PSC limits as follows:

Option 1. Reduce halibut PSC limit for the Amendment 80 sector by:

Suboption 1 reducing the halibut PSC limit to Amendment 80 cooperatives by 45% (motion to amend to 25% failed 8/13).

Suboption 2 reducing the halibut PSC limit to Amendment 80 limited access fishery by 60%.

Option 2. Reduce halibut PSC limit for the BSAI Trawl Limited Access Sector by 15% (motion to amend from 45% carried 11/10).

Option 3. Reduce halibut PSC limit for Pacific cod hook and line catcher processor sector by 15%.

Option 4. Reduce halibut PSC limit for other non-trawl (i.e., hook and line catcher vessels and catcher processors targeting anything except Pacific cod or sablefish) by 30%.

Option 5. Reduce halibut PSC limit for Pacific cod hook and line catcher vessel sector by 30%.

Option 6. Reduce the CDQ halibut PSC limit by 20% (motion to amend from 30% carried 11/10).

A motion to add the following failed 10/11: These revised halibut measures will sunset after an abundance based management system is in place or within 5 years, whichever comes first.

The final motion as amended passed 11/10.

### Rationale for passed motion:

- This action addresses the necessary conservation of the halibut resource as well as the needed equity amongst all halibut user groups. It is responsive to the need to balance the competing National Standards, especially with regard to small coastal communities.
- Total BSAI trawl bycatch mortality in recent years has been greater than the total mortality in the BSAI directed halibut fisheries and halibut PSC levels have not decreased as EBio has declined over the last 15 years.
- Draft TCEY calculations resulting from the above sector reductions make significant strides towards making Area 4 directed halibut fishermen whole but represents a compromise since this motion does not quite preserve the 2014 harvest levels.
- The relationship between bycatch and the directed fishery has changed. The proportion of bycatch has increased from an average of 55% to 77% of total halibut removals in 2014, while directed fishery amounts have decreased from an average of 43% to 21% of total halibut removals in 2014.

- PSC reductions are a blunt tool and it is difficult to determine what is practicable from the groundfish fisheries, but assumptions favor creativity and innovation towards figuring out a way to harvest their available target allocations.
- Smaller reductions for the HAL CP sector, the TLAS sector, and the CDQ sector recognize that these sectors have generally been good performers by operating below their PSC cap.

Minority Report: A minority of the AP did not support the final motion as amended because they felt that, as amended, the motion did not go far enough to reduce bycatch as necessary to provide for harvest for directed users and conservation of the resource. The 31% overall reduction is not sufficient to provide for directed fisheries in Area 4CDE. Reducing bycatch to a level which will provide for directed harvests for the Alaska Native communities of the Pribilof Islands is necessary to meet the United State's trust responsibilities and ensure that tribal fishing rights are satisfied. Directed harvests have been reduced in response to declines in the halibut resource, and action is needed now to reduce PSC as well. Greater reductions in PSC are practicable, and are necessary to ensure sustainable management of the halibut resource. Signed by: Jeff Kauffman, Becca Robbins-Gisclair, Andy Mezirow, Chuck McCallum.

Minority Report: A minority of the AP supported the substitute motion below for the following reasons:

- These PSC reductions are directly responsive to industry and individual sectors' determination of what is practicable for them, while also recognizing the significant strides towards bycatch reduction that have been achieved to date.
- These PSC reductions will serve to constrain the BSAI groundfish fisheries while also avoiding drastic measures that would result in sectors being completely shut down. Given recent events in the GOA, it is necessary to avoid blunt management measures that constrain fleets unnecessarily because addressing one crisis situation often leads to the creation of other crises.
- Any level of PSC reductions will promote conservation of the halibut resource by leaving fish, primarily juveniles, in the water to sustain the population.
- Significant public testimony supports the development of tying PSC amounts to the abundance of halibut. Inclusion of a sunset clause is intended to maintain Council and IPHC momentum towards this goal.
- Significant halibut PSC trawl reductions in the BSAI are likely to shift effort into the Gulf of Alaska, creating additional problems for that unrationalized fishery.

Signed by: Matt Upton, Ruth Christiansen, Anne Vanderhoeven, Paddy O'Donnell, Mitch Kilborn, Sinclair Wilt, John Gruver, Craig Lowenberg, Jerry Downing, Kurt Cochran.

The AP recommends the Council amend the BSAI FMP and Federal Regulations to revise halibut PSC limits as follows:

- Option 1: Reduce halibut PSC limit for the Amendment 80 sector by:
  - Suboption 1: reducing the halibut PSC limit to the Amendment 80 cooperatives by 15%.
  - Suboption 2: reducing the halibut PSC limit to the Amendment 80 limited access fishery by 50%.
- Option 2: Reduce the halibut PSC limit for the BSAI trawl limited access sector by 10%.
- Option 3: Reduce halibut PSC limit for Pacific cod hook and line catcher processor sector by 10%.
- Option 4: Reduce halibut PSC limit for other non-trawl by 10%.
- Option 5: Reduce halibut PSC limit for Pacific cod hook and line catcher vessel sector by 10%.
- Option 6: Reduce the CDQ halibut PSC limit by 20%.

The AP believes these management measures reduce bycatch to the extent practicable and help provide for the sustained participation of fishing communities.

These revised halibut measures will sunset after an abundance based management system is in place or within 5 years, whichever comes first.

The AP also recommends the Council prioritize their work with the IPHC to improve stock assessments and better integrate information on the impacts of both directed harvest and bycatch on the halibut stock.

The substitute motion failed 10/11.