



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Action Memo

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Agenda Date10/5/2015

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Dan Hull, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director

SUBJECT:

Proposed Groundfish Harvest Specifications; Plan Team Reports

STAFF CONTACT: Diana Stram (BSAI), Jim Armstrong (GOA)

ACTION REQUIRED:

Review Groundfish Plan Team Reports, Recommend, for proposal, BSAI and GOA groundfish harvest specifications for 2016-2017.

BACKGROUND:

Plan Team Reports

The BSAI and GOA Groundfish Plan Teams met during September 21-24, 2015, to review and recommend groundfish harvest specifications to be proposed for the upcoming 2016 and 2017 fishing years. The Teams also reviewed reports from assessment authors to identify items for inclusion in stock assessments that will be presented at the November Plan Team meetings. Team recommendations for the upcoming two fishing years consist of rollovers of existing final 2016 harvest specifications. Those harvest specifications were adopted by the Council in December 2014. Minutes from the Joint BSAI/GOA Groundfish Plan Team and individual BSAI and GOA Groundfish Plan Team meetings are attached (Item 1).

Proposed Harvest Specifications

At this meeting, the Council will recommend proposed BSAI and GOA groundfish harvest specifications for the upcoming two-year period (2016 and 2017) to notify the public of expected Council action to set final harvest specifications in December 2015. Existing 2016 harvest specifications were published as a final rule in the *Federal Register* in March and February 2015 and will be in place January 2016 when the groundfish fishing year begins. Proposed harvest specifications for the year after next (2017) are typically set equal to the proposed upcoming year (2016) harvest specifications. In addition to harvest specifications, the Council will recommend proposed gear and target fishery apportionments of prohibited species catch (PSC) limits for halibut, red king crab, Tanner crab, *opilio* crab, and herring. Final harvest specifications will be based on stock assessment reports included in the groundfish SAFEs for BSAI and GOA that will be released in late November 2015.

Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands.

The BSAI Plan Team recommendations for proposed 2016 and 2017 BSAI groundfish annual harvest specifications are attached (Item 2). The Team adopted proposed 2016 BSAI OFLs and ABCs that were published in the *Federal Register* last year for the purpose of notifying the public of potential final harvest specifications. Final BSAI harvest specifications include PSC limits for halibut, red king crab, Tanner crab,

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opilio crab, and herring and their gear type and target fishery apportionments, which are set in federal regulations. The 2016 and 2017 crab PSC limits have been revised using current biomass amounts and the limits are unchanged from 2015 and herring PSC limits will be revised when the most current biomass amounts are known. Proposed harvest specifications for these PSC limits and apportionments based on 2016 are attached (Item 3). At the June 2015 meeting, the Council took action to reduce BSAI halibut PSC limits by 21%. The specific reductions are 25% for Amendment 80 cooperatives, 15% for BSAI trawl limited access fisheries, 20% for CDQ fisheries, and 15% for non-trawl fisheries. These reductions are expected to be implemented in 2016, pending Secretarial approval of Amendment 111, and would result in a reduction of halibut PSC limits in 2016 and 2017.

Flatfish flexibility ABC reserve.

Under Amendment 105, an ABC reserve is specified for flathead sole, rock sole, and yellowfin sole. These species are allocated to CDQ groups and Amendment 80 cooperatives using formulas from the annual harvest specifications process. The ABC reserve for each species is specified by the Council by evaluating the difference between the ABC and TAC for each species (i.e., ABC surplus), and considering whether the amount needs to be reduced by a discretionary buffer based on social, economic, or ecological considerations. The Council then designates some, all, or none of the ABC surplus as the ABC reserve. The Council provides its rationale for setting the ABC reserve at a particular level each year. The 2016 and 2017 CDQ ABC reserves have been provided by NMFS staff based on 2016 TAC levels and an assumption of the maximum ABC reserve (Item 3a). A report on flatfish exchanges by the Amendment 80 cooperatives will be provided to the Council by NMFS at the December meeting. The report will include information on the number of vessels used to harvest cooperative quota, the number of flatfish exchanges and the dates those exchanges were approved, the types of and amounts of cooperative quota and Amendment 80 ABC reserve utilized, and the dates, types, and amounts of inter-cooperative quota transfers. This report is provided each year in December to help the Council make appropriate adjustments, as needed.

Gulf of Alaska.

The GOA Team's harvest recommendations for 2016 and 2017 are listed in the attached table (Item 4). The Team adopted proposed 2016 OFLs and ABCs that were published in the *Federal Register* in 2015 for the purpose of notifying the public of potential final harvest specifications. The Council will need to recommend Pacific cod TACs for the GOA that are a 25 to 30 percent reduction from ABC to account for State GHL fisheries. Using the area apportionments from the proposed 2016 Pacific cod ABCs recommended by the Plan Team, the 2016 and 2017 Federal TACs for Pacific cod would be adjusted as listed in the attached table (Item 5). Recommended 2016 and 2017 halibut PSC apportionments (Item 6) are based on the recommended 2016 apportionments for the Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries. These apportionments incorporated reductions in halibut PSC limits, per Amendment 95, as well as regulatory revisions. Salmon PSC limits are set in regulation.