


MEMORANDUM

TO: Council, SSC and AP Members

FROM: Clarence Pautzke  
Executive Director 

DATE: November 29, 2001

SUBJECT: Halibut Excluder Device Research

ESTIMATED TIME 10 HOURS (for all D-1 items)
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**ACTION REQUIRED**

Receive report from John Gauvin, Groundfish Forum.

**BACKGROUND**

Groundfish Forum's "halibut excluder for the trawl cod fishery" report presents the results of a two-year study of modifications to cod trawls to reduce halibut bycatch while retaining target cod catches. The project is a research collaboration between several industry sectors and Dr. Craig Rose of the RACE Division at the Alaska Fisheries Science Center. The project included several NMFS research charters for initial development of approaches to excluder devices, an informal industry pilot test of components of the excluder, and finally two full scale at-sea tests under experimental fishing permits approved by the Council for 2000 and 2001.

The excluder device incorporates a series of stages starting in the throat of the trawl and extending to the intermediate including: 1) a large net mesh panel in the taper section of the trawl, 2) a series of steel grates in the beginning of the trawl intermediate, and 3) a chamber of fiberglass rods arranged as horizontal "slot panels" placed aft of the grate device. The separate stages are designed to separate (hence exclude) large, medium, and small halibut and other non target species at different places in the cod trawl.

In its final modified form for the Bering Sea test in the spring of 2001, the cod trawl equipped with the halibut excluder (minus the steel grate) reduced halibut bycatch by approximately 85% while reducing target catch of cod by only about 15 to 20%. Groundfish Forum's report to the Council will make several suggestions regarding the utility of the device to the regular cod trawl fishery and ways to move forward toward the goal of reducing halibut bycatch in trawl fisheries.