

**ADVISORY PANEL**  
**Motions and Rationale**  
**February 1-4, 2022 - Anchorage, AK**

**D2 Greenland turbot**

The AP recommends the Council adopt the following purpose and need statement and alternatives for initiating an analysis on the use of longline pots in the directed BS Greenland turbot fishery:

Purpose and Need

Whale depredation is preventing directed fishing for Greenland turbot by commercial fixed gear vessels in the Bering Sea. Participation in this fishery has been a significant source of income for a number of HAL CP vessels that primarily target Pacific cod. The importance of turbot fishing increased for these vessels as Pacific cod TACs in the Bering Sea declined by ½ between 2012 and 2021. A regulatory amendment that would allow vessels to use longline pots when fishing for Greenland turbot would resolve the depredation problem and allow this fishery to resume. The Council granted longline pots as a gear option when whale depredation was negatively affecting the sablefish and halibut IFQ fisheries. Other benefits of reduced whale depredation on Greenland turbot include improved catch accounting for managers and data quality for the Greenland turbot stock assessment. Although this issue has primarily affected vessels in the Bering Sea HAL CP sector, the option to use longline pots would be available to any federally permitted groundfish vessel that is targeting Greenland turbot in the Bering Sea. The characteristics of the Greenland turbot fishery (small size, remote location, and processing requirements) have limited fixed gear participation in this fishery to a few vessels, and that will likely continue.

Alternatives

Alternative 1. No action (no allowance for longline pot gear for Greenland turbot in the Bering Sea).

Alternative 2. Allow the use of pot longline gear when directed fishing for Greenland turbot in the Bering Sea subarea.

Element 1. Maximum tunnel opening restriction for longline pots when directed fishing for Greenland turbot in the BS subarea.

Option 1. Exemption from the 9-inch maximum tunnel opening restriction.

Option 2. 14-inch maximum tunnel opening restriction.

The AP further recommends the Council include the following item as a part of subsequent analyses:

1. An analysis of Greenland turbot harvest in the Bering Sea by both fixed gear and trawl gear looking at both spatial and temporal data.

*Motion passed 16-0*

*Rationale:*

- *The Greenland turbot fishery has been difficult for many years and recently, whale depredation has shut down the fixed gear fishery for Greenland turbot along the Bering Sea slope leaving much of the TAC unharvested. Whale deterrence efforts by fixed gear participants have proven unsuccessful at addressing the issue. This motion addresses concerns expressed by the FLC fleet that they would like to continue fishing for Greenland turbot but that another approach is needed given the problem with whale depredation.*
- *Currently, any vessel with a Federal Fisheries Permit (FFP) for groundfish and the necessary gear (non-trawl) and area (BS) endorsement on its License Limitation Program (LLP) license may fish single pots for Greenland turbot in the BS. The proposed action alternative put forward in this motion would simply add an allowance for longline pots. This proposed approach is similar to the problem the Council helped solve for the sablefish and halibut IFQ fisheries facing whale depredation issues through an allowance for longline pots.*
- *The current discussion paper thoroughly laid out the issues that will need to be addressed in an analysis. An initial analysis will help ensure that the use of longline pots will not be problematic in terms of impacts to bycatch, marine mammals, or other fisheries.*
- *The potential for sablefish bycatch will need to be characterized, including effects on bycatch mortality. Bycatch of crab and Pacific halibut appears to be minimal in the Bering Sea slope areas where the turbot fishery operates, and a turbot longline pot fishery could reduce bycatch mortality further relative to hook and line.*
- *To better understand whether the allowance of longline pots as legal gear could precipitate gear conflicts and grounds preemption, an analysis should include an examination of vessel harvest location and timing to help inform the Council whether this action could change spatial and temporal harvesting patterns for the fixed gear C/P sector.*
- *Specifically highlighted for consideration in an analysis is the potential conflicts between the historic turbot users (A80 and FLC), which is directly responsive to public comment received by representatives from the A80 sector. As this action goes forward, representatives from the A80 and FLC sectors will need to verify that they understand and accept any changes that may be necessary to their agreement.*
- *Other items highlighted for inclusion in an initial analysis include: the potential increase of participation in the Greenland turbot fishery (especially when considering the decline in crab fisheries), the potential for gear conflicts and impacts in non-A80 fisheries, and the potential for limits to be placed on pot gear fishing depths to mitigate bycatch concerns.*