



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Action Memo

File Number:HAL 18-010

Agenda Date6/4/2018

Agenda Number:D5

Dan Hull, Chairman
David Witherell, Executive Director

SUBJECT:

BSAI Halibut O26 performance standard - Review description of O26 sampling data

STAFF CONTACT: Diana Stram (NPFMC)

ACTION REQUIRED:

- Review discussion paper; action as necessary

BACKGROUND:

The Council is interested in evaluating a prohibited species catch (PSC) performance standard associated with over 26" (O26) halibut that could potentially be included in the forthcoming Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands halibut abundance-based management (ABM) analysis. As noted in deliberations at the April 2018 Council meeting, however, some preliminary understanding of the available O26 data from the groundfish fisheries suggests that there may be limitations to the utility of these data in establishing a performance standard. Therefore, as an interim step, the Council requested a discussion paper describing the available O26/U26 PSC and mortality data and a description of sampling protocols within and outside of the deck sorting exempted fishing permit (EFP) and any potential sources of bias or anomalies in the PSC data.

We provide an overview of the existing data, data issues relative to deck sorting EFP, length-to-weight extrapolation for halibut, sampling protocols as well as some correlation considerations between the O26 PSC data and the O26 abundance from the two primary indices to be considered in the forthcoming halibut abundance-based management (ABM) alternatives: the EBS trawl survey and the IPHC setline survey in 4ABCDE.

The Council also requested that staff develop O26 performance standard options and evaluate the ability of such options to achieve the objectives of this action. At this time, we are providing an overview of considerations in developing a performance standard. The Council and the public can evaluate the data and issues described in this paper and provide direction to the working group as to what performance standard options could be developed and what objectives these options would achieve. With this direction, the working group would then provide a discussion of specific performance standard options at the October Council meeting. The Council could then decide whether to pursue a performance standard in the ABM alternative set or as a follow up action.

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This paper is organized into three parts. The first section describes the methodology for assessing halibut intercepted in BSAI groundfish fisheries, including differences that occur when a vessel is deck sorting. Next, we provide data from various sources about the percentage of halibut that are over 26 inches, and finally there is a discussion of considerations for developing a performance standard using this data.