

Executive Summary

This analysis examines proposed changes to the management of commercial groundfish fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) that would occur through an amendment to the GOA Groundfish Fishery Management Plan. Prohibited species catch (PSC) limits on removals of Pacific halibut can limit fishing activity on targeted groundfish fisheries or affect fishing practices. The fisheries that result in the highest halibut PSC in the GOA are the 1) Pacific cod trawl and longline fisheries, 2) shallow-water flatfish complex and arrowtooth flounder trawl fisheries, and 3) rockfish trawl fishery. In some target fisheries, PSC limits are not typically fully utilized, while other fisheries are 'typically' closed prior to attainment of the target TAC because they have fully utilizing its PSC allowance.

Current halibut PSC limits concern the Council because these limits have remained unchanged since their implementation in 1986 for trawl fisheries and revision in 1995 for fixed gear fisheries. Recent declines in halibut biomass, particularly in the GOA, have exacerbated concerns about levels of PSC in groundfish fisheries because of the potential effect of halibut PSC on other user groups.

This analysis includes an Environmental Assessment/ Regulatory Impact Review/ Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis (EA/ RIR/IRFA). The EA is intended to implement an amendment to the GOA Groundfish Fishery Management Plan. The RIR and IRFA are intended to support federal rulemaking.

In April 2011, the Council adopted a range of proposed reductions for analysis that would be implemented through the GOA groundfish harvest specifications process for 2012/2013 after scoping the issue through a number of discussion papers in 2012 and 2011. In addition to the No Action Alternative, the proposed alternative (Alternative 2) included options for reductions of a) 5 percent, b) 10 percent, and c) 15 percent of the 2,000 mt halibut PSC limit on trawlers and 300 mt halibut PSC limit on fixed gear groundfish operations. Two suboptions addressed effects on trawl PSC limit apportionments. In June 2011, the Council reviewed the suite of alternatives for analysis and reorganized the suboptions.

In October 2011, the Council initiated a new action to remove GOA halibut PSC limits from the annual harvest specifications process through an amendment to the GOA Groundfish FMP and set halibut PSC limits in federal regulation. Such an action would mirror the process for setting halibut PSC limits in BSAI groundfish fisheries. The Council also modified the options under the proposed alternative for revising GOA halibut PSC limits and scheduled initial review of the analysis for the revised management approach and alternatives for February 2012. At that time the Council will determine the schedule for final action (e.g., either April 2012 or June 2012), with the intention that federal regulations to implement the Council's preferred alternative would be in effect by mid-2013.

Environmental Assessment

The Council adopted the following **objective and problem statement** in October 2011.

The Council has long been cognizant of and continues to recognize the extreme importance of halibut to all resource user groups. The Council also acknowledges that, for a wide variety of reasons, the dynamics of the directed and non-directed halibut fisheries have changed significantly since halibut PSC limits were first established. Given concerns with the current halibut PSC limits in the GOA, and the effect this bycatch has on both directed fishing opportunities and productivity of the stock, there is a need to evaluate existing halibut PSC limits and the way in which these limits are established.

Currently, the GOA Groundfish harvest specifications annually establish a 2,000 mt halibut Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) limit for trawl gear and a 300 mt halibut PSC limit for hook and line gear. The GOA Groundfish FMP authorizes the Council to recommend, and NMFS to approve, annual halibut mortality limits as a component of the proposed and final groundfish harvest specifications. Halibut PSC limits are set separately for trawl and fixed gear, which may be further apportioned by season, regulatory area, and/or PSC fishery category.

The Council is concerned about the feasibility of revising GOA halibut PSC limits through groundfish harvest specifications and recognizes that addressing halibut PSC limits in this manner on an annual basis is not in the best interest of the Council's deliberative process in the long run.

With the exception of PSC limit reductions in the IFQ sablefish fishery and the Rockfish Pilot Program, the current PSC limits have not been revised since 1989 for trawl gear and 1995 for hook and line gear. Since that time there have been significant changes in groundfish and halibut management programs and fishing patterns, environmental conditions, fishing technology, and knowledge of halibut and groundfish stocks. Halibut is fully utilized in the directed sport, subsistence, and commercial fisheries and is of significant social, cultural, and economic importance to communities throughout the geographical range of the resource. Halibut PSC limits are also critical to the prosecution of many groundfish fisheries operating in the GOA.

Since the existing GOA halibut PSC limits were established, the total biomass and abundance of Pacific halibut has varied and in recent years the stock has experienced an ongoing decline in size at age for all ages in all areas. Exploitable biomass has decreased 50 percent over the past decade. In recent years, the directed halibut catch limits in regulatory areas 2C, 3A and 3B have declined steadily. From 2002 to 2011 the catch limit for the combined areas 2C, 3A and 3B declined by almost 50 percent and the Guideline Harvest Level (GHL) to the charter halibut sector in Area 2C has been reduced by a similar percentage.

While the IPHC accounts for bycatch mortality when establishing catch limits for the directed fisheries in order to maintain the halibut stock's productivity, it is the Council's responsibility to manage halibut PSC limits and meet the requirements of National Standard 9 to minimize bycatch.

ALTERNATIVES

The Council adopted the following alternatives, options, and suboptions for analysis in October 2011.

Alternative 1. (Status quo). Retain the process for changing GOA halibut PSC limits through the annual groundfish harvest specifications process.

Alternative 2. Amend the GOA Groundfish FMP to remove setting GOA halibut PSC limits from the annual harvest specifications process. GOA halibut PSC limits would be established (and amended) in federal regulation.

Option 1 (Status quo). Retain the existing 2,000 mt trawl and 300 mt hook and line halibut PSC limits and write them into regulation.

Option 2. Revise the current GOA halibut PSC limits and write the new limits into regulation.

Suboption 1. Reduce the halibut PSC limit for hook and line gear CP sector by:

- a) 5 percent
- b) 10 percent
- c) 15 percent

Suboption 2. Reduce the halibut PSC limit for hook and line gear CV sector by:

- a) 5 percent
- b) 10 percent
- c) 15 percent

Suboption 3. Reduce the halibut PSC limit for trawl gear by:

- a) 5 percent
- b) 10 percent
- c) 15 percent

Suboption 3.1. Apply the full trawl PSC limit reduction to the 5th season only.

Suboption 3.2. AFA/Amendment 80/Rockfish Program sideboard limits will be:

- a) Applied as percentage against the GOA halibut PSC limit (Status quo)
- b) Redefined in mt, calculated against the status quo GOA halibut PSC limits

Groundfish

Under the status quo, no groundfish stock has been determined to be overfished or approaching an overfished condition. Annual catch limits (ACLs) and total allowable catches (TACs) generally have been increasing since 2009, and the most recent stock assessments (2011) indicate that the trend is expected to continue into the immediate future. Many groundfish quotas are apportioned spatially and temporally to reduce potential impact on Steller sea lions, and this proposed action would not affect this apportionment. Under Alternative 2, lower PSC limits may result in certain groundfish fisheries closing before the respective TACs or apportionments are reached or the fleets would have to engage in fishing activity to minimize unintended harvests of halibut, while a higher PSC limit would allow for target groundfish fishing at current (or near current) levels, and impacts would likely be similar to the status quo fishery. If groundfish TACs are not fully harvested, fishing would have less impact on the stocks, and there would be no adverse impact on groundfish stocks from the fisheries. Any changes in fishing patterns that may result from the alternatives, however, would be monitored and updated in future stock assessments.

Pacific halibut (Source: IPHC)¹

The GOA groundfish fishery has an adverse impact on Pacific halibut through direct mortality due to prohibited species catch. Under the status quo, Pacific halibut are a prohibited species and it is incumbent upon fishermen, under the regulations, to avoid catching them. The Groundfish Programmatic EIS considered impacts of the fisheries on the halibut population, reproductive success, and habitat, and concluded that it is unlikely that groundfish fishing has indirect impacts on these aspects of Pacific halibut sustainability. The groundfish fisheries also incidentally catches halibut prey species, including euphausiids, herring, sand lance, capelin, smelt, pollock, sablefish, cod, rockfishes, octopus, crabs, and clams, however the catches of these prey species are very small relative to the overall populations of these species. Thus, groundfish fishing activities are considered to have minimal and temporary effects on prey availability for halibut.

Coastwide exploitable biomass (EBio) of Pacific halibut at the beginning of 2011 is estimated to be 318 Mlb. Female spawning biomass (SBio) is estimated at 350 Mlb at the start of 2011. This is an increase of nearly 6% over the beginning of 2010 estimate of 331 Mlb. Estimated exploitable biomass is down by about 5% from the beginning of year 2010, while SBio is a bit over 6% higher than the 2010 beginning of year value estimated in 2009. Exploitable biomass and SBio are both estimated to have declined continuously between 1998 and 2007. EBio continued to decline until 2009, the model estimates that both are now on the increase, with SBio bottoming out in 2007 and EBio bottoming out in 2009. Recruitment (measured as age-eight fish in the year of assessment) has varied between 7 and 33 million halibut since the 1988 year class, with a mean of 17.9 million. The 1989 to 1997 year classes, presently 14 to 22 years old and the main target of the commercial fishery for the past several years, are all estimated to have been below average, several of the year classes substantially below average.

The sharply declining biomass over the past decade has resulted from these small year classes, in combination with reduced growth rates, replacing earlier year classes that were much larger, especially the 1987 and 1988 year classes. The projected increase in 2011 biomasses can be attributed, in large part, to the incoming 1998 through 2003 year classes that are estimated to be well above average, particularly the 1999 and 2000 year classes. The extent to which these year classes will contribute to EBio over the next few years depends on the growth rate which continues to decline.

¹ New information on the status of the Pacific halibut stock, which will be released after this draft is distributed to the Council, will be incorporated into the next draft of this analysis.

Projections based on the currently estimated age compositions suggest that both exploitable and spawning biomass will increase over the next several years as these strong year classes recruit to the fishable and spawning components of the population. Projected increases are tempered both by potential ongoing decreases in size-at-age, as well as realized harvest rates which continue to be above target in several regulatory areas. Trawl estimates of abundance are similar to assessment estimates in most areas, and also provide evidence of very large numbers of small halibut. The coastwide exploitable biomass was apportioned among regulatory areas in accordance with survey estimates of relative abundance, modified by adjustments for hook competition and survey timing.

The halibut stock has declined due to natural declines in recruitment, lower growth rates, and higher than target harvest rates in most. Catch limits adopted for 2011 were lower in the central regions of the stock (Areas 2C and 3) but significant recent reductions in catch limits for the eastern most portion (Areas 2A and 2B) of the stock appear to have resulted in improvements to stock condition in those areas.

The time series of abundance illustrates the strength of the celebrated 1987, and to a lesser extent 1988, year classes. As was true last year, the current assessment suggests that three large year classes – 1998, 1999, and 2000 – are poised to enter the exploitable biomass over the next few years. Presently, both year classes look to be larger – in terms of numbers – than the 1987 and 1988 year classes. However, it is important to note that size at age is much smaller now than it was 20 years ago. This has two important ramifications – first it means that the three strong year classes are only just beginning to reach the exploitable size range and, therefore, their true numbers in the population are still quite uncertain. Secondly, it also means that for a given number of halibut, their collective biomass will be lower.

Currently, a large fraction of males never reach the minimum size limit and thus never enter the EBio. It remains to be seen just how these year classes will develop into the exploitable component of the stock. If size at age remains at current values, then the projections for both the EBio and SBio are optimistic and indicate that the declines over the past decade are on the verge of reversing.

The impacts of reducing halibut PSC limits for groundfish target fisheries does not simply reallocate that reduced halibut mortality amounts to directed fishery halibut users. While halibut PSC limits are often closely approached in the GOA groundfish fisheries, these removals are known imprecisely. While all halibut mortality sources are taken into account when commercial IFQ catch limits (and combined catch limits under the proposed Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP)) are set, the negative impacts of these removals on lost spawning biomass and lost yield are not prevented. Incidental catches of halibut result in a decline in the halibut standing stock biomass, reduced reproductive potential of the halibut stock, and reduced short- and long-term halibut yields to the directed hook-and-line fisheries and the guided sport sector in Area 2C and 3A under the proposed CSP.

Other resource components

Under the status quo, marine mammal and seabird disturbance and incidental take are at low levels and are mitigated by current spatial restrictions on the GOA groundfish fisheries. Under either of the alternatives, disturbance or incidental take is not expected to increase to a level that would result in population level effects on marine mammals or seabirds. Additionally, marine mammals and seabirds may be affected by changes in prey availability or prey density due to fishing, or benthic habitat alteration under the status quo or proposed options under Alternative 2. In years where proposed reductions in halibut PSC limit constrains fishing, Alternative 2 may reduce the potential effects of the groundfish fishery on prey availability. If the fleet spends longer time fishing in areas with low groundfish catch rates to avoid halibut, there may be some increase to benthic habitat impacts and potential removals of marine mammal and seabird prey. However, this increase is unlikely to result in population level effects.

Previous analyses have found no substantial adverse effects to habitat in the GOA caused by fishing activities. Alternative 2 may reduce any effects on habitat that are occurring under the status quo. The potential effects on an area would be constrained by the amount of the groundfish TACs and by the existing habitat conservation and protection measures. Overall, the combination of the direct, indirect, and

cumulative effects on habitat complexity for both living and non-living substrates, benthic biodiversity, and habitat suitability is not likely to be significant under any of the alternatives.

Regulatory Impact Review

The RIR considers the impact of reducing the amount of halibut PSC available to the GOA groundfish fisheries by 5 percent, 10 percent, and 15 percent. Impacts are positive for sectors that rely on halibut IFQ and the guided sport fleet and their clients². Negative impacts are realized by the groundfish fleets and the industry sectors and consumers that rely on GOA groundfish harvests.

To describe the impacts, changes in gross revenue are compared to the status quo to determine how reductions in PSC limits impact various sectors. The analysis acknowledges that comparing changes in gross revenue does not provide information on the profitability of firms or net benefits to the Nation. However, additional data on the costs incurred by the firms that rely on halibut and groundfish from the North Pacific and consumer surplus of U.S. residents that consume these products are needed to generate those estimates. That information is currently unavailable for all sectors that harvest, process, provide support, and consume halibut and groundfish in the Gulf of Alaska.

Proposed halibut PSC reductions may be applied to the trawl, fixed gear, or both fisheries. Currently only the hook-and-line vessels in the fixed gear fishery are operating under halibut PSC limits. Different PSC reductions could be selected for the catcher vessel and catcher processor sectors. It is assumed that the Council has the authority and information, based on this analysis, to select any percentage in the range it considered for any sector.

The retrospective analyses in this document assume that the Status Quo would not cause any change. Therefore, all reductions for the options considered, deduct any change estimated to be contributed by the Status Quo.

Direct comparisons are not made between gross revenue increases in the directed halibut fisheries and the gross revenue foregone in the groundfish fisheries. Estimates for the two sectors were made using different methodologies and assumptions. Direct comparisons may generate misleading results in terms of changes in gross revenue gained or foregone by this action.

The estimates of gross revenue changes assume no modification of fleet behavior as a result of implementing the halibut PSC reductions. If harvesters are able to reduce the halibut PSC rates in the various fisheries considered, the estimates will exceed those that would have actually occurred. Conversely, the analysis assumes the TAC in place historically will not change for the years considered. Stock assessment models and forecasts discussed in the GOA SAFE Report indicate that TACs are projected to increase for Pacific cod and other valuable GOA species. If the TACs increase, and halibut PSC rates do not change, the amount of first wholesale gross revenue foregone will be underestimated. Ex-vessel and first wholesale prices are assumed not to change if the quantity of fish harvested is increased or reduced. These species are sold in a world market for groundfish and the changes in quantities delivered are not expected to influence the world market prices.

Directed Halibut Fishery Impacts

The analysis estimates the increase in pounds of halibut available to the guided sport sector and the commercial IFQ sector, by IPHC area, under each alternative considered by the Council (using tier 1 and tier 2 of the CSP and using the GHL). All halibut projections assumed that the halibut PSC limit change is equivalent to the reduction in halibut PSC taken by the trawl and hook-and-line sectors. Reductions in halibut PSC by the trawl and hook-and-line sectors would reduce the amount of "bycatch" deducted from the total CEY in proportion to the percentage of the total PSC reduction that is assumed to be over 26 inch. For example, if half of the PSC taken in an IPHC area is over 26 inch, half of the PSC taken in that

² Benefits to personal and subsistence users are neutral as those halibut harvests are not limited by other removals.

area would be deducted from the total CEY. The over 26 inch “bycatch” is the only component, that is deducted from the total CEY to estimate the fishery CEY, that is assumed to change in this analysis. Finally, benefits that are estimated to accrue to the directed halibut fisheries are for the first year of PSC reductions. Benefits to these sectors will increase over time as U26” halibut recruit into the directed fishery.

HOW TO INTERPRET THE FOLLOWING TABLES

The tables below are provided as an example of how to interpret the data presented in the halibut impact sections. Proposed trawl PSC limits (in mt on the left and 1,000 lb on the right) head columns across the top of each table and proposed hook-and-line PSC limits (in 1,000 lb) head each rows to the left of the same table. The pounds of PSC are converted from metric tons using the following formula: PSC (mt) ÷ 604.7898 × 1000. For example, the 2,000 mt of halibut PSC is equivalent to 3,307 thousand pounds (or 3.3 million pounds) of halibut PSC mortality of fish over 26 inches. These sample tables demonstrate which proposed options for halibut PSC reductions (0/5/10/15 percent) are associated with each proposed PSC limit (in mt and thousand lb).

The matrix of cells represents the increase in halibut available to the guided sport and commercial IFQ sectors under each option. Using the bookends of results from the above table on the right as an example of how to interpret the tables, maintaining the status quo trawl PSC limit (e.g., 0% reduction) and reducing the hook-and-line limit under Alternative 2 Option 1 (e.g., 5 percent), results in an estimated 18,600 lb increase in the amount of halibut available to the guided sport and commercial IFQ sectors. If both the trawl and hook-and-line sector’s PSC limit is reduced under Alternative 2, Option 3 (e.g., 15 percent), an additional 366,000 lb of halibut is estimated to be available for the guided sport and commercial IFQ sectors.

GOA		Trawl PSC (mt)			
		2,000 (0%)	1,900 (5%)	1,800 (10%)	1,700 (15%)
HAL PSC (mt)	300 (0%)	All combinations of PSC reductions, some tables report weight others report revenue changes			
	285 (5%)				
	270 (10%)				
	255 (15%)				

GOA		Trawl PSC (1000 lb)			
		3307 (0%)	3142 (5%)	2976 (10%)	2811 (15%)
HAL PSC (1000 lbs)	496 (0%)	0.0	103.4	206.7	310.1
	471 (5%)	18.6	122.0	225.4	328.7
	446 (10%)	37.3	140.7	244.0	347.4
	422 (15%)	55.9	159.3	262.7	366.0

The GOA-wide the increase in the amount of halibut available to the guided sport sector during the first year of PSC reductions ranges from 0 lb under the status quo to 38,700 lb under a 15 percent PSC mortality reduction applied to both the hook-and-line and trawl sectors (Table ES- 1). The vast majority of the increase is projected to occur in Area 3A. In Area 2C, the increase ranges from 0 lb to under 100 lb, depending on the option selected. Applying tier 2 of the CSP to the halibut available for use by the guided sport sector and the commercial IFQ sector would slightly decrease the amount of halibut allocated to the guided sport sector. The amount of the decrease is equal to the increase by the commercial IFQ sector, because the CSP percentage that divides the available halibut between the two sectors changes.

Estimates for Area 2C may be underestimates of that expected to occur because the model does not account for halibut migration patterns. If it were possible to include those patterns and the general pattern was movement from west to east, the estimates for Areas 3B and 3A may be too high and the estimate for

Area 2C may be too low. However, because the majority of the halibut PSC is taken in Areas 3A and 3B, the greatest impact would be expected there even if migration patterns were included.

Table ES- 1 Increases in halibut (in 1,000 lb net weight) available to the guided sport sector in Areas 2C and 3A, under tier 1 of the CSP. (Source: IPHC estimates of change in fishery CEY)

GOA		Trawl PSC (1000 lbs)			
		3,307	3,142	2,976	2,811
HAL PSC (1000 lbs)	496	0.0	12.0	24.1	36.1
	471	0.9	12.9	24.9	37.0
	446	1.7	13.8	25.8	37.8
	422	2.6	14.6	26.7	38.7

3A		Trawl PSC (1000 lbs)			
		3,307	3,142	2,976	2,811
HAL PSC (1000 lbs)	496	0.0	12.0	24.1	36.1
	471	0.8	12.9	24.9	36.9
	446	1.7	13.7	25.7	37.8
	422	2.5	14.5	26.6	38.6

2C		Trawl PSC (1000 lbs)			
		3,307	3,142	2,976	2,811
HAL PSC (1000 lbs)	496	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	471	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	446	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
	422	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1

3B		Trawl PSC (1000 lbs)			
		3,307	3,142	2,976	2,811
HAL PSC (1000 lbs)	496	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	471	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	446	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	422	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimates of the change in catch were similar, but slightly larger when the GHL method was used versus the CSP. The difference is a result of the entire change in available halibut being assigned to the IFQ sector under the GHL. However, the change would have been greater if the change in halibut available resulted in moving from one tier to another.

Based on Tier 1 of the CSP, each 5 percent decrease in the hook-and-line PSC limit is estimated to increase the IFQ available in the GOA by about 17,600 lb. A five percent reduction in the trawl PSC limit (applied to 2,000 mt) is projected to increase the amount of IFQ halibut by about 91,600 lb (Table ES- 2). IFQ pounds are estimated to increase in Area 2C by about 150 lb for each five percent reduction in the hook-and-line PSC limit. The trawl PSC limit did not impact the estimated IFQ lb that would be available in Area 2C, because of the amount of halibut PSC taken by trawl gear in that area. Estimated increases in IFQ lb ranged from 0 lb under the status quo to 400 lb under a 15 percent reduction to both the hook-and-line and trawl sectors. Halibut IFQ in Area 3A is projected to increase by about 5,800 lb for each five percent reduction in the hook-and-line PSC limit. Each five percent reduction in the trawl PSC limit is projected to increase the amount of halibut IFQ available by 64,900 lb. In Area 3B, a five percent reduction in the amount of hook-and-line halibut PSC is projected to increase halibut IFQ by about 11,600 lb.; and each five percent reduction in the trawl PSC limit is projected to increase the amount of IFQ available by a total of about 26,700 lb. All of the increase in Area 3B is projected to go to the IFQ sector, because of the limit charter sector in that area and the CSP does not apply to Area 3B.

Table ES- 2 Changes in commercial IFQ lb (net weight) under each option to reduce the PSC mortality limit, Tier 1 of CSP. (Source: IPHC estimates of increased Fishery CEY (net weight))

GOA		Trawl PSC (1000 lbs)			
		3307	3142	2976	2811
HAL PSC (1000 lbs)	496	0.0	91.6	183.1	274.7
	471	17.6	109.1	200.7	292.2
	446	35.1	126.7	218.2	309.8
	422	52.7	144.2	235.8	327.3

3A		Trawl PSC (1000 lbs)			
		3307	3142	2976	2811
HAL PSC (1000 lbs)	496	0.0	64.9	129.7	194.6
	471	5.8	70.7	135.6	200.4
	446	11.6	76.5	141.4	206.3
	422	17.5	82.3	147.2	212.1

2C		Trawl PSC (1000 lbs)			
		3307	3142	2976	2811
HAL PSC (1000 lbs)	496	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	471	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
	446	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
	422	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4

3B		Trawl PSC (1000 lbs)			
		3307	3142	2976	2811
HAL PSC (1000 lbs)	496	0.0	26.7	53.4	80.1
	471	11.6	38.3	65.0	91.7
	446	23.2	49.9	76.6	103.3
	422	34.8	61.5	88.2	114.9

The analysis multiplied the increases in IFQ pounds by a range of first wholesale values based on the area of harvest. First wholesale prices were derived from COAR data based on the range reported from 2003 through 2010. The prices per pound used for Area 2C were \$3.64 and \$6.32; for Area 3A they were \$3.52 and \$6.65; and for Area 3B they were \$4.13 and \$8.15. Because most of the increase in IFQ pounds was projected to be in Area 3A and Area 3B, most of the increase in gross first wholesale revenue was also projected to accrue to QS holders in those areas.

Insufficient data are available to estimate the impacts of reducing the halibut PSC limit for the Southeast Outside District (SEO) demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) fishery on directed commercial harvesters, processors, communities, and consumers. It is not possible to determine historic halibut PSC usage in that fishery, due to low observer coverage. Restructuring the observer program will allow NOAA Fisheries to deploy observers in the SEO DSR fishery. Groundfish observers will collect information on halibut PSC as part of their normal duties. That information, collected over time, will provide better estimates of halibut taken in the directed DSR fishery and their survival rates. NOAA Fisheries would then have the information necessary to estimate halibut mortality, and would determine if the 10 mt limit (under the status quo or a 5 percent reduction) or the 9 mt limit (under a 10 percent or 15 percent reduction) is exceeded. Until that information is available, impacts on the SEO DSR cannot be generated.

DSR taken incidentally to the halibut IFQ fishery will not be affected by changes in the halibut PSC limit. Harvesters have historically utilized much of the DSR fishery as incidental catch in the IFQ fishery. At the current low Area 2C IFQ catch limit (2,330,000 lb or about 1,057 mt), the 10 percent DSR incidental catch rate would allow up to 105 mt of DSR to be taken. Additional DSR may be taken above the incidental catch limit, but it may not be sold. Currently most of the DSR taken above the incidental catch limit is for personal use.

Options considered by the Council would decrease the halibut PSC limit for the groundfish hook-and-line sector (other than SEO DSR and sablefish) to the amounts listed below in metric tons. Table ES- 3 assumes that the current seasonal allowances will continue into the future and the catcher vessel and catcher processor split will also continue.

Table ES- 3. Seasonal allowances of halibut PSC limits under proposed options.

	<u>1st season</u> 86 percent (January 1 to June 10)	<u>2nd season</u> 5 percent (June 10 to September 1)	<u>3rd season</u> 9 percent (September 1 to End of Year)
All fisheries except demersal shelf rockfish			
Status quo - both operation types	249	264	290
Catcher processor (42.4% of total)			
Status quo	106	112	123
Option 1 - 5 % reduction	100	106	117
Option 2 - 10% reduction	95	101	111
Option 3 - 15% reduction	90	95	105
Catcher vessel (57.6% of total)			
Status quo	144	152	167
Option 1 - 5 % reduction	136	144	159
Option 2 - 10% reduction	129	137	150
Option 3 - 15% reduction	122	129	142

Based on these PSC limits and historic usage, estimates of the amount of first wholesale gross revenue foregone under each option was estimated. Data from 2003 through 2010 was used to estimate changes in first wholesale gross revenue foregone under each option. A five percent reduction in the halibut PSC limit reduced first wholesale gross revenue for the catcher vessel sector by \$210,000 and \$0 for the catcher processors (2003 through 2010 average). Reducing the non-DSR hook-and-line PSC limit by 10 percent decreased the average catcher processor first wholesale gross revenue by an average of \$240,000 per year and the catcher vessel sector by \$480,000 per year. The catcher processor's foregone first wholesale gross revenue was also reduced by \$33,000 per year when the PSC limit was reduced by 15 percent. However, the catcher vessel sectors first wholesale revenue was reduced by about \$820,000 per year.

The proposed trawl halibut PSC limits for the options considered are presented in Table ES- 4. For the analysis it is assumed that the same seasonal and complex percentages of the overall limit will continue in the future.

Table ES- 4 Trawl halibut PSC limits under the proposed options

	Total allowance	1st season January 20 to April 1	2nd season April 1 to July 1	3rd season* July 1 to September 1	4th season September 1 to October 1	5th season October 1 through December 31
Total Allowance						
seasonal share		27.5 percent	20 percent	30 percent**	7.5 percent	15 percent
Status quo	2000 ^A	550	400	381	150	300
Deep-water complex						
seasonal share		12.5 percent	37.5 percent	50 percent**	0 percent	
Status quo	773	100	300	181		NA
Option 1 - 5% reduction	734	95	285	172	0	
Option 2 - 10% reduction	695	90	270	163		
Option 3 - 15% reduction	657	85	255	154		
Shallow-water complex						
seasonal share		50 percent	11.1 percent	22.2 percent	16.7 percent	
Status quo	900	450	100	200	150	NA
Option 1 - 5% reduction	855	428	95	190	143	
Option 2 - 10% reduction	810	405	90	180	135	
Option 3 - 15% reduction	765	383	85	170	128	
Undesignated						
seasonal share						100 percent
Status quo	300					300
Option 1 - 5% reduction	285					285
Option 2 - 10% reduction	270					270
Option 3 - 15% reduction	255					255
Suboption 1 - all from 5th season						
Option 1 - 5% reduction	200					200
Option 2 - 10% reduction	100					100
Option 3 - 15% reduction	0					0

On average (from 2003 through 2010) the first wholesale gross revenue from trawl gear vessels in the deep-water complex was estimated to decrease by \$730,000, \$2.49 million, and \$3.35 million under a 5 percent, 10 percent, and 15 percent reduction in the deep-water trawl PSC limit, respectively. Average reductions in first wholesale gross revenue for trawl gear vessels in the shallow-water complex were estimated to be \$1.02 million, \$2.74 million, and \$5.10 million, under a 5 percent, 10 percent, and 15 percent reduction in the PSC limit, respectively. Summing these reductions in estimated first wholesale gross revenue yields the estimates in Table ES- 5. Each cell in the matrix of Table 3 shows the estimated average reduction in first wholesale gross revenue to the groundfish industry for an option considered by the Council. Placing the results in the matrix format allows each of the combinations considered by the Council to be easily compared. The smallest reduction (\$210,000), other than the Status Quo, results from a 5 percent halibut PSC reduction applied to the catcher vessels and catcher processors in the hook-and-line fleet. Hook-and-line first wholesale revenue reductions are greatest when the halibut PSC limit is reduced by 15 percent (\$1.15 million). Adding those values to the first wholesale gross revenue reductions from the trawl fleet provides the remaining estimates. So, a 5 percent decrease in the trawl halibut PSC limit was estimated to reduce the first wholesale gross revenue from the trawl fishery by \$1.75 million. Adding that value to the first wholesale gross revenue reduction estimated for a 10 percent halibut PSC reduction to the hook-and-line fleet (\$720,000), yields the \$2.43 million estimate in that cell of the matrix (where the hook-and-line and trawl reductions intersect). The greatest annual reduction was estimated to be \$9.61 million when a 15 percent reduction was applied to both the trawl and hook-and-line PSC limits (Table ES- 5).

Table ES- 5 Estimated annual average first wholesale gross revenue foregone in groundfish fisheries (\$million) (Source: AKFIN summaries of NOAA Fisheries catch accounting and COAR data)

		Trawl			
		Status Quo	5%	10%	15%
Hook- and- Line	Status Quo	\$0.00	\$1.75	\$5.23	\$8.45
	5%	\$0.21	\$1.95	\$5.44	\$8.66
	10%	\$0.72	\$2.47	\$5.94	\$9.17
	15%	\$1.15	\$2.90	\$6.38	\$9.61

The estimates are intended to provide information on the amount of first wholesale revenue that would have been foregone if the halibut PSC reductions had been in place from 2003 through 2010. Actual reductions in revenue that occur in the future will differ from these estimates as halibut PSC rates and TACs change. Given all the factors that contribute to those changes, projecting revenue changes for future fishing years would generate estimates with sizable levels of uncertainty. Therefore, those estimates are not provided in this analysis.

Even if the analysts were able to accurately estimate the amount of revenue that would be foregone in the future, it is currently not possible to determine how individual firms would be affected by the changes. These estimates are fleet-wide averages of changes in gross revenue. Information is currently unavailable to determine the effect that reductions in gross revenue have on the net revenue of firms. It is the overall profitability of the firms and net benefits to the Nation that are of greatest interest for the RIR, because they indicate whether individual firms will remain viable in the long run, if revenues decline, and whether the Nation generates positive economic benefits from the proposed action. That information is not currently being collected for all industry sectors included in this analysis.

Applying the entire halibut PSC reduction to the Fifth Season

Selecting Option 3 (15 percent reduction) does not necessarily mean that the fifth trawl season would not be opened to fishing, even though the allocation to that season would be 0 mt. If sufficient halibut PSC could be rolled-over from the deep-water complex, shallow-water complex, or Rockfish Program NOAA Fisheries could open the fishery. The Amendment 80 fleet is not allowed to roll-over sideboard limits from season-to-season and its seasonal sideboard limit is calculated as a percentage of the annual limit. Therefore, they could still be allowed to fish if halibut PSC under the general limit were rolled-over to the fifth season.

Because overages are deducted from the next season, if the participants in the deep-water complex or shallow-water complex exceeded their limit, it is possible GOA fishermen using trawl gear could use the fifth season limit under any of the options considered. Under Option 1, exceeding their first fourth season's PSC limit by 200 mt would result in the fifth season not opening. Under Option 2, they would need to exceed their limit for the first four seasons by 100 mt.

Historically, the fifth season trawl fishery in the GOA accounts for \$12.55 million to \$29.91 million, annually, in first wholesale gross revenue. From 2006 through 2010, 69 percent of the GOA first wholesale gross revenue from the trawl fleet was derived from pollock target fisheries (77 percent from 2003 through 2010). If pollock target fisheries were excluded from the fifth season total, the reductions in first wholesale gross revenue were always less than \$10.2 million (annually). On average, from 2003 through 2010, the first wholesale gross revenue was \$4.42 million. That amount increases to an average of \$7.23 million, when only 2006 through 2010 data are considered.

Shallow-water flatfish catches have accounted for 12 percent of first wholesale gross revenue and 13 percent of the fifth season weight since the beginning of 2006. Arrowtooth flounder catches have accounted for 7 percent of the first wholesale gross revenue and 9 percent of the weight. The higher valued (\$/lb.) Pacific cod fishery accounted for 6 percent of the revenue, but only 3 percent of the weight.

Rockfish, excluding rockfish from the Central Gulf, accounted for 4 percent of both revenue and catch. All other GOA target fisheries combined accounted for 4 percent of the revenue and 3 percent of the catch. Therefore, the greatest impact of reducing the fifth season halibut PSC limit is likely to occur in the arrowtooth flounder and shallow-water flatfish target fisheries.

Applying the entire halibut PSC reduction to the fifth season is assumed to only impact the revenue generated that season. The magnitude of the impact will vary depending on the size of the halibut PSC reduction and how the fleet responds to a reduced PSC limit. All other seasons are assumed to not be directly impacted, because the amount of halibut available to those seasons will not change under this suboption.

A retrospective analysis, similar to that used to analyze the primary options considered by the Council is used in this section to estimate the amount of first wholesale revenue foregone. Applying the entire reduction to the fifth season requires looking back to see how much halibut would be available for use in the trawl fisheries. The fifth season would not have opened during 2003, 2004 or 2005 under any PSC reduction considered. The fishery would not have opened under Option 3 (15 percent reduction) during 2006, 2007, or 2008. Less than 60 mt of halibut PSC would have been available those years, under Option 2. That amount would compel NOAA Fisheries in season managers to consider whether sufficient halibut PSC was available to open the fishery. Under all the options considered sufficient halibut PSC would have been available to open the fifth season in 2009 and 2010.

Under Option 1 (5 percent PSC reduction), on average, first wholesale gross revenue was estimated to decrease by \$590,000 per year, from 2003 through 2010. From 2006 through 2010, first wholesale gross revenue was estimated to decrease by \$940,000, on average, annually.

When the 10 percent reduction is compared to the Status Quo, the average annual reduction in first wholesale gross revenue was estimated to be \$950,000 (2003 through 2010) and \$1.51 million (2006 through 2010). The greatest reduction occurred during 2008 and no reduction occurred from 2003 through 2006. Comparing the 15 percent reduction to the Status Quo, yields an estimated annual reduction in first wholesale gross revenue of \$2.67 million (2003 through 2010) and \$4.27 million (2006 through 2010).

First wholesale gross revenue reductions were always greater when the reduction was applied to all seasons (Table ES- 6). Part of the reason reductions were always greater when applied to all seasons is that the fifth season accounted for less first wholesale revenue, on average, than was estimated to be foregone under a 10 percent or 15 percent reduction applied to all seasons. Underlying this difference in effects is the ability of participants to use halibut more effectively in the earlier seasons. Specifically, vessels are able to harvest more and more valuable fish in the first four seasons than in the fifth season. As a result, the fifth season halibut reduction has less effect on trawl harvests, since vessels achieve lower catch per ton of halibut during the fifth season than in other season.

Table ES- 6 Comparison of average first wholesale reductions (2003 through 2010) when the reduction is applied to all seasons and when it is applied to only the 5th season

	Status Quo	5%	10%	15%
Applying Reductions to all Seasons	\$0.00	(\$1.75)	(\$5.23)	(\$8.45)
Applying Reductions to 5th Season	\$0.00	(\$0.59)	(\$0.95)	(\$2.67)
Difference (all seasons minus 5th season)	\$0.00	(\$1.16)	(\$4.28)	(\$5.78)

Halibut PSC Sideboard Limits

Sideboards have been implemented limiting the amount of the GOA trawl halibut PSC available to participants in the rockfish program, Amendment 80 program, and non-exempt AFA catcher vessels. These sideboards were adopted as part of catch share programs to limit program participants from fully using the flexibility provided by catch share allocations to increase their harvests in other fisheries.

NOAA Fisheries manages fleets to maintain their catches below the proscribed sideboard limits. The management approach differs with the sizes of the sideboard amount and the subject fleet, as well as the fleet's fishing practices. In fisheries with small sideboard limits that are deemed unmanageable, given the size of the sideboarded fleet, NOAA Fisheries may choose not to open the fishery. Fisheries that are never opened are listed in Table ES- 7.

Table ES- 7 GOA groundfish fisheries that are not opened to directed fishing.

AFA	Amendment 80	Rockfish Program*
Eastern Pacific cod (inshore and offshore)	No directed fishing closures	CV Western pelagic shelf rockfish
Western deep-water flatfish		CV Western Pacific ocean perch
Eastern and Western rex sole		CV Western northern rockfish
Eastern and Western arrowtooth flounder		CV deep-water complex fisheries
Eastern and Western flathead sole		CP shallow-water complex fisheries
Western Pacific ocean perch		
Western Northern rockfish		
Entire GOA pelagic shelf rockfish		
SEO District demersal shelf rockfish		
Entire GOA sculpins		
Entire GOA squids		

* For the month of July

Proposed halibut PSC reductions would not affect the fisheries that are never opened to directed fishing. Fisheries with sideboard limits that can be managed by NOAA Fisheries will be permitted to target groundfish in the open fisheries. Members of these fleets, through cooperative agreements, may also be required to monitor their catches to stay within their sideboard limits. AFA non-exempt catcher vessels are most active in the shallow-water complex, particularly the first, third, and fourth seasons. The fleet is also active in the fifth season, but the halibut PSC sideboard limit is undesignated during the 5th season and therefore not apportioned between the deep-water and shallow-water complex fisheries. Only three times during 2003 through 2010 did seasonal halibut usage exceed the current seasonal sideboard limit. Those three cases were all in the deep-water complex and would have exceeded any of the proposed limits. Given that halibut PSC sideboard usage by the AFA non-exempt catcher vessel fleet is, in most cases, well below the applicable current sideboard limits, the halibut PSC reduction options would appear to minimally constrain the fleet, assuming current fishing practices continue.

Amendment 80 vessels are most active in the deep-water complex, which includes the rockfish and flatfish fisheries (e.g., rex sole, arrowtooth flounder). The third season has the largest number of participating Amendment 80 vessels. Most of these vessels are also qualified for the rockfish program in the Central Gulf. Participation in the shallow-water complex by the Amendment 80 sector is far more limited with only one to three vessels targeting these fisheries. When looking at the impacts of applying the entire halibut PSC reduction in the fifth season, the Amendment 80 fleet could be constrained more by the reduction in the overall halibut PSC limit than by the reduction in its sideboard limit, depending on the percentage reduction selected. The relatively small halibut PSC limit is likely insufficient to support opening a fifth season fishery (for details see Section 4.6.3.5).

The prohibition on sideboard rollovers from season-to-season for the Amendment 80 sector will increase the potential for the deep-water complex and shallow-water complex fisheries to close to Amendment 80 vessels as a result of the sideboards prior to the end of a season, especially the deep-water complex during the second and third season. If the deep-water species TACs were to increase significantly in the future, there is the possibility that the sector may have an insufficient halibut PSC sideboard limit to harvest the deep-water complex TACs. In the shallow-water complex, historical halibut PSC usage by the Amendment 80 sector indicates the first season could be constrained by the halibut PSC sideboard limit in the future.

With the exception of apportionment of halibut PSC to the Rockfish Program, trawl halibut PSC in the GOA is not apportioned between the different sectors. Given that halibut PSC is shared by all trawlers, the Amendment 80 sector is often racing other trawlers in their GOA groundfish fisheries. In general, the proposed reductions of halibut PSC limits will likely increase the race for fish in the GOA amongst all the trawlers.

Catcher processor fleet vessels participating in the Central GOA rockfish program will be limited in their catch of deep-water and shallow-water halibut PSC under a sideboard limit that is intended to constrain harvests from fisheries that are typically halibut constrained. This sideboard limit applies only during the month of July. Effort by the GOA Rockfish Program catcher processors during the month of July is centered on the deep-water complex with the number of vessels ranging from 6 in 2010 to 11 vessels in 2009. Halibut PSC usage by these vessels has ranged from 30 mt in 2010 to 67 mt in 2008. The rockfish program vessels, operating under sideboard limits, focus most of its effort during the month of July on Western GOA and West Yakutat rockfish with some effort in the rex sole fishery. By comparison, effort by the Rockfish Program catcher processors in the shallow-water complex during the month of July is nearly non-existent. One catcher processor participated in the shallow-water complex in 2009.

During 2007, 2008 and 2009 halibut PSC usage by the catcher processors exceeded the 50 mt halibut PSC sideboard limit under the new Rockfish Program and therefore would have triggered a premature closure in the deep-water complex fisheries under all of the halibut PSC sideboard limit reduction options. Given that deep-water halibut PSC sideboard usage exceeded the status quo three times in the last four years, there is a high likelihood that the deep-water complex fisheries will be constrained by a reduced halibut PSC sideboard limit during the month of July. Catcher processors who are limited by the Rockfish Program halibut PSC sideboard limit race other trawlers before a halibut PSC forced shut down occurs during the month of July. A reduction of the halibut PSC will only increase this race for fish during the 3rd season, and would likely result in a shortened third season in most years.

Implementation

Table ES- 8 depicts the most likely timeline for implementation of the Council's preferred alternative, now that final action is anticipated to occur in either April 2012 or June 2012. This time line suggests that mid-2013 implementation of revised PSC limits under Alternative 2 is unlikely.

Table ES- 8 Schedule for analytical, GOA FMP, and harvest specification revision process necessary to support change to the GOA halibut PSC limits mid-season.
(Source: NMFS AKRO SF)

Action	Jan-2012	Feb - May	June	Jul – Mar 2013	Apr - Oct
Initial review of FMP amendment to set GOA Halibut PSC and Council selects preliminary preferred alternative (January 2012)					
Final action of FMP amendment to set GOA Halibut PSC					
NMFS prepares and publishes proposed rule					
NMFS prepares and publishes file rule and revised harvest specifications for PSC limit apportionments					

Industry Tools to Reduce PSC and Fleet Responses

The analysis provides a discussion of the recent Council actions taken and the industry programs that have to been used to limit halibut PSC. Members of industry have provided public testimony that they are currently developing or have tried to utilize the tools available to them to reduce halibut PSC. They indicated that some efforts were unsuccessful because of the race for halibut PSC that occurs in the GOA fisheries and their inability to control the behavior of individuals unwilling to comply with the proposed tools (e.g., stand downs). Efforts to refine other tools are still underway but will require additional time and expense to determine if they can be effective solutions. They have stressed that there are no simple measures that they are aware of that have not been considered or tried.

Halibut avoidance measures and their effects will differ across gear and operation types. The analysis considered both the potential for measures to be effective in the various area and target fisheries and the potential for interactions between those fisheries to affect the propensity of participants to adopt avoidance measures.

Hook and line catcher processors

Under the recent action dividing the GOA Pacific cod TAC among different gear and operation types, the catcher processor longline sector and catcher vessel longline sector each receives not only a portion of the Pacific cod TAC, but also an apportionment of halibut PSC. Because of the almost complete overlap of the sector’s participants in the BSAI with participants in the GOA Pacific cod fisheries and the relatively few participants in the sector – fewer than 20 vessels participate each year, members of the catcher processor sector have been able to extend their cooperative agreement from the BSAI fishery to a less formal agreement in the GOA fisheries. Despite the lack of a sector allocation, the sector agreed to a variety of measures intended to reduce the chance that its halibut PSC results in a fishery closure. Beginning in 2012, the sector will receive an allocation of Pacific cod and a halibut PSC limit that are not accessible to any other sector. Under its agreement, the hook and line catcher processor sector has agreed

to individual limits on halibut PSC. These contractual limits operate as an additional constraint on cooperative members, who also must stop fishing any time regulators announce a fishery closure based on its determination that a hook and line halibut PSC limit will be reached, regardless of whether a member's cooperative limit is reached. Since these non-member vessels are not limited by the agreement, the cooperative must assume those vessels could take a disproportionate share of the available PSC, effectively imposing a disproportionate cost of the PSC limit on the cooperative's members. In practice, participants in the cooperative have historically consolidated their cooperative limits on few vessels that have prosecuted the GOA Pacific cod fishery.

In addition to establishment of member PSC limits based on the current total hook and line halibut PSC limit, the cooperative has also adopted a variety of other measures to reduce halibut mortality. In general, these efforts are focused on avoiding fishing in areas and at times of relatively high mortality rates. Information pooled under this effort is used to manage the cooperative limits, but also result in some degree of peer pressure for vessels with high rates. The fleet is also using informal, on-the-grounds communication among captains. Also under the terms of the agreement, vessels moving into a new area are limited in the amount of gear that may be set, until it is determined that halibut rates are below an acceptable level. The effectiveness of these measures to further reduce PSC is uncertain, as the fleet already uses a variety of measures to reduce halibut mortality.

Hook and line catcher vessels

The GOA hook and line catcher vessel sector uses halibut PSC primarily in the target Pacific cod fishery, along with some catches in the rockfish target fisheries. The hook and line catcher vessel sector has many more participants than the hook and line catcher processor sector, with hundreds of vessels participating annually. A core group of approximately 100 vessels make up the primary fleet, with most of the other vessels making only a few trips in a target fishery subject to the halibut PSC limits. Organization of such a large fleet to divide the PSC limit is unlikely, as vessels may perceive an opportunity to gain an advantage by remaining outside of the agreement. Despite this potential advantage, some catcher vessels currently undertake efforts to avoid halibut through informal arrangements. Under these arrangements vessels share on the grounds information concerning halibut mortality rates, helping vessels to avoid areas with relatively high halibut rates. Measures adopted by the hook and line catcher vessels are unlikely to extend beyond these informal arrangements (or to more costly measures, such as stand downs that delay fishing) under any of the proposed reductions, because of the potential for persons outside the agreement to realize gains by increasing their share of total halibut mortality.

Trawl vessels

The shared seasonal apportionments of the halibut PSC limits may affect the propensity of a vessel operator to avoid halibut, since the usage of halibut mortality is shared with a large fleet (including both catcher vessels and catcher processors) fishing in multiple target fisheries and over a large area (including multiple management areas). These conditions can be a barrier to formation of agreements among participants to address halibut mortality, as participants may have a variety of competing interests and little historical relationship. In addition, policing any agreement would be complicated by the diversity of the fleets and the geographic distribution of their activities. Despite these circumstances, in some cases agreements have been reached and practices adopted to avoid halibut mortality among segments of the fleets.

Trawl catcher processors

Most of the trawl catcher processors that fish in the GOA are also qualified for the Amendment 80 program. All but one of these Amendment 80 vessels is limited by sideboards. Amendment 80 cooperative members communicate halibut mortality rates to cooperative managers. These reports are compiled by the cooperative manager and reported to the fleet on a weekly basis. Occasionally, halibut mortality hot spots are identified through these reports. In addition, cooperative members may use small

tows when beginning fishing in a new location to assess whether halibut rates are acceptably low and will move from areas of relatively high halibut rates. Most of the vessels in the Amendment 80 fleet that fish in the GOA flatfish and Pacific cod fisheries use halibut excluders originally developed for the fleet's use in the Bering Sea. These excluders are believed to be more effective in the GOA, as halibut tend to be larger there than in the Bering Sea. Excluders, however, are not believed to be fully effective and are not used on all vessels at all times. In addition, the effectiveness of the excluder will depend on fishing practices, which may reduce target species catch rates. The incentive to adopt practices reducing the effectiveness of an excluder is likely greatest when the vessel operator believes the fleet is approaching a halibut prohibited species catch limit that will inevitably close the fishery.

Some trawl catcher processors would prefer to delay targeting of certain species during periods of known relatively high halibut mortality rates. These delays would likely result only in forgone catches of the target species, as other vessels (including those in other targets) may continue to fish. At times, Amendment 80 participants are likely to have an additional incentive to fish during periods of high halibut mortality rates, as Amendment 80 halibut PSC sideboard limits that are unused in a season do not rollover to the next season.

Given the number of vessels eligible for GOA trawl fisheries, the adoption of halibut avoidance measures (which often reduce target catch rates) are likely to reduce a vessel's revenues from the fisheries. The proposed PSC limit reductions alone are unlikely to induce any notable additional halibut avoidance by trawl catcher processors. Most vessels participating in an Amendment 80 cooperative are likely to continue to communicate with other members of that cooperative concerning halibut mortality rates and continue to use informal arrangements to reduce halibut mortality. These measures are instigated largely by the Amendment 80 sideboards, rather than halibut PSC limits that apply to the trawl fleet, as a whole.

Trawl catcher vessels

Trawl catcher vessels also face substantial competition for the available halibut PSC limits for prosecuting their target fisheries. While this competition creates a disincentive for the adoption of halibut avoidance measures, catcher vessels have adopted a variety of such measures in recent years. These measures are generally adopted at the prompting of NOAA Fisheries, who are likely unable to manage the fleet effort to remain within the halibut prohibited species catch limit in the absences of the measures.

The Pacific cod fisheries (in the Central GOA and Western Gulf) are the fisheries of the greatest value that are likely to be subject to closures because of the halibut PSC limit being reached. As may be expected, these fisheries also draw substantial numbers of the eligible participants. In the mid-2000s, managers had difficulty managing halibut PSC during the Pacific cod B season, primarily because of the rate at which the fleet prosecuted the fishery and the delay in processing observer data reports. To address this difficulty, managers moved to a system of short openings (of 12 hours and 24 hours), after each of which halibut PSC data would be processed and reviewed. If halibut PSC remained available an additional opening would be announced. This change successfully addressed the immediate problem of managing halibut PSC. Yet, short openings, several days apart made fishing less efficient for participants. To address this loss of efficiency, the fleet has worked with NOAA Fisheries managers to develop several measures to avoid halibut and improve the timeliness of observer data coming available to managers. These efforts have allowed managers to extend the B season Pacific cod openers to a few days.

In addition, participants in the Pacific cod fishery worked to develop a halibut excluder that can be used on the smaller trawl vessels that participate in the GOA fisheries. Although the excluder tests had mixed results, some participants believe it effectively reduces halibut prohibited species catch without unacceptable decreases in target catch (particularly in the Pacific cod fishery). Currently, the Central GOA trawl catcher vessel fleet shares halibut PSC information that is used both for identifying hot spots and for releasing weekly reports of halibut mortality by vessel. Reports identifying vessels with high PSC may create peer pressure to reduce their rates.

In the Western Gulf, halibut avoidance is less well coordinated in the fleet. A few factors likely contribute to this difference. The Western GOA fleet primarily delivers into two locations, Sand Point and King Cove; whereas, the Central GOA fleet delivers almost exclusively into Kodiak. In addition, the Western GOA fleet tends to be smaller vessels than Central Gulf vessels and operate with a greater degree of independence. Few of the Western GOA participants have any experience with cooperative programs. Halibut avoidance in the Western GOA has generally consisted of moving from areas of high halibut mortality. To some degree, vessels exchange information concerning areas of high mortality to aid in these efforts. While these practices are likely to continue, the potential for substantially greater effort to avoid halibut arising from this action is limited. It is possible that this action together with other aspects of the trawl catcher vessel fisheries and their management may collectively lead to more coordinated efforts to limit halibut mortality and achieve greater returns from the fisheries.

Community Analysis

For the purposes of community analysis, a two-pronged approach to analyzing the community or regional components of changes associated with the implementation of proposed Gulf halibut PSC revisions was utilized. First, tables based on existing quantitative fishery information for the period 2003-2010 (inclusive) were developed to identify patterns of participation, by community, in the various components of the relevant fisheries. There are, however, substantial limitations on the data that can be utilized for these purposes, based on confidentiality restrictions. The second approach involved selecting a subset of Alaska communities shown in the data as most heavily engaged in the relevant Gulf groundfish fisheries for characterization to describe the range, direction, and order of magnitude of social- and community-level engagement and dependency on those fisheries, and a series of profiles were compiled for those communities, which included Anchorage, Chignik Lagoon, Homer, Juneau, King Cove, Kodiak, Petersburg, Sitka, and Sand Point. A number of other Alaska communities are substantially engaged in the potentially affected Gulf groundfish fisheries, but none have the range and/or level of engagement of the communities profiled, particularly in terms of steady local fleet participation, especially in the last few years, although Cordova, Akutan, and Unalaska/Dutch Harbor shore-based processors have been steadily engaged in Gulf groundfish processing over the 2003-2010 period. The locally owned fleet of Chignik was identified as relatively dependent on hook-and-line Gulf groundfish fisheries participation compared to other Alaska communities not included in the series of community profiles; no Alaska community outside of those profiled was identified as substantially engaged in the relevant Gulf groundfish fisheries through trawl participation on the part of the locally owned fleet.

In general, it is not possible to quantitatively differentiate potential impacts of the different Gulf halibut PSC reduction alternatives on an individual community basis. Qualitatively, however, it is possible to anticipate the communities where adverse impacts, if any, would most likely take place, along with the nature, direction, and at least rough order of magnitude of those impacts. Adverse impacts would likely be felt at the individual operation level for at least a few vessels in a number of Alaska communities due to increased costs and/or a drop in revenues associated with either changing fishing patterns and/or practices to reduce halibut bycatch or because of season-ending closures based on a particular gear- or species-based sector hitting a (revised) halibut PSC limit earlier in the season than would have been the case under previous/existing (higher) halibut PSC thresholds. Additionally, recent community and social impact assessments for North Pacific fishery management actions suggest that as locally operating vessels experience adverse impacts, indirect impacts are also soon felt by at least some local support service providers to the degree that those individual enterprises are dependent upon customers who participate in the specific fishery or fisheries affected (and the relative dependence of those customers on those specifically affected fisheries). Given the scope of overall impacts anticipated to result from any of the management alternatives assessed for the proposed Gulf halibut PSC revisions, however, community-level impacts would likely not be discernible for most of the engaged communities. The three communities where community-level impacts are a greater possibility are King Cove, Sand Point, and Kodiak, based on the relative involvement with the trawl sector, both on a local fleet and processing basis.

Potential mitigating factors for possible adverse impacts in King Cove and Sand Point, however, include the specific gear, species, and seasonal nature of the Gulf groundfish trawl-related efforts in those communities, such that any Gulf halibut PSC revisions that affected any season other than the cod "A" season (January 1 through June 9) in the Western Gulf would have minimal impacts to King Cove and Sand Point.

Kodiak, however, is substantially engaged in a wide range of Gulf groundfish fisheries in terms of spatial and seasonal distribution of effort, species targeted, and gear types utilized with respect to its local fleet, and Kodiak processing operations are very much the center of Gulf groundfish shore-based processing. Kodiak would be especially more likely to experience any adverse impacts related to Gulf groundfish trawl fisheries in the later part of the year, particularly with respect to flatfish-related operations. A potential mitigating factor for adverse community-level impacts in Kodiak is that the community is substantially engaged in and dependent upon a wide range of fisheries, not just the Gulf groundfish fisheries, and multiple gear types within the Gulf groundfish fisheries. For the local Gulf groundfish fleet, exvessel gross revenues are roughly comparable for the hook-and-line and trawl segments of the fleet. For processing operations, a lack of flatfish toward the end of the year in particular could create a range of challenges with respect to continuity of operations and processing labor issues. For Kodiak shore-based processors, flatfish (year-round) accounted for roughly 10 percent of combined flatfish and other groundfish first wholesale gross revenues on an annual average basis in recent years and roughly 5 percent of first wholesale gross revenues for all species combined.

In general, adverse community-level impacts are not likely to be significant for any of the involved communities and the sustained participation of these fishing communities would not be put at risk by any of the proposed Gulf halibut PSC revision alternatives being considered. For some individual operations, however, especially within the Gulf groundfish trawl sector in Kodiak and those processing operations in Kodiak substantially dependent upon Gulf groundfish trawl deliveries of flatfish in particular, adverse impacts may be felt at the operational level, particularly if the fleet cannot effectively modify behavior to reduce historical halibut PSC rates.

Additionally, there is the potential for community-level beneficial impacts to result from the proposed Gulf halibut PSC reductions. Within the community analysis, it is assumed that direct halibut fisheries would potentially benefit from the proposed Gulf halibut PSC revisions relative to the degree that the Gulf halibut stock itself would potentially benefit from these proposed actions. In both the quantitative indicators and community profile summaries, information is presented on community engagement in the commercial halibut, sport halibut, and subsistence halibut fisheries. The communities profiled as most heavily engaged in the relevant Gulf groundfish fisheries, however, are not always the communities most centrally engaged in/dependent upon the various Gulf halibut fisheries; therefore, the individual communities that have the potential to experience the greatest adverse impacts to the groundfish fisheries may or may not be the same communities as those that have the potential to experience the greatest beneficial impacts to the halibut fisheries. In general, the potential beneficial impacts to the various halibut fisheries, especially the commercial and subsistence halibut fisheries, would be more widespread among communities than the potential adverse impacts to the groundfish fisheries, although potential beneficial impacts to individual halibut fishery participants may be modest compared to potential negative impacts to individual groundfish fishery participants likely to be directly affected by the proposed Gulf halibut PSC reductions. This potential differential distribution of adverse and beneficial impacts among communities is primarily addressed in the quantitative indicators discussion, but engagement in the different halibut fisheries is also discussed in each of the community profiles, where potential negatively affected and positively affected populations are most likely to overlap.

Raw Fish Taxes

There are three fisheries taxes that are levied on GOA groundfish catch/landings by the State of Alaska. A Fisheries Business Tax is levied on persons who process or export fisheries resources from Alaska. The

tax is based on the price paid to commercial fishers or fair market value when there is not an arms-length transaction. The tax rate varies by the type of processor and whether the species being delivered is classified as established or developing. A Fishery Resource Landing Tax is levied on fishery resources processed outside the 3-mile limit and first landed in Alaska or any processed fishery resource subject to sec. 210(f) of the American Fisheries Act. The tax is based on the unprocessed value of the resource, which is determined by multiplying a statewide average price (determined by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) data) by the unprocessed weight. The Fishery Resource Landing Tax is collected primarily from factory trawlers and floating processors which process fishery resources outside of the state's 3-mile limit and bring their products into Alaska for transshipment. The tax rate is 3% for established species and 1% for developing species (as designated by ADF&G). A Seafood Marketing Assessment is levied at a rate of 0.5% of the value of seafood products processed first landed in, or exported from Alaska.

The statewide tax foregone by reductions in groundfish harvests and tax increases from halibut harvests were calculated. The two estimates are not directly comparable because of the different methodologies used to calculate revenue foregone in the groundfish fishery and increase in revenue in the guided sport and commercial IFQ fishery. Alaska statewide average prices used to determine tax liability (2010) were used for both halibut and groundfish. Under Alternative 2 Option 1 (a 5 percent reduction in halibut PSC), the 2010 tax revenues were projected to increase by the amount of the tax applied to halibut landings. This is due to the fact that under the 5 percent reduction in halibut PSC, the groundfish fishery was estimated not to forego any revenue in 2010 (2010 was a low halibut PSC year). No ex-vessel revenues foregone in the groundfish fishery and \$30,000 increase in halibut tax revenues were estimated under the 5 percent reduction. When the PSC limit was reduced by 10 percent the state tax was estimated to have increased by \$59,000 from halibut landings. The linear calculation for the change in halibut tax liability resulted in an increase of \$89,000 in taxes at when the 15 percent reduction to the PSC limit was applied. Statewide taxes forgone from groundfish were estimated to be \$17,000 (10 percent reduction in PSC) and \$114,000 (15 percent reduction in the PSC limit).

Community level taxes are also impacted by changes in landings. King Cove was the only city to charge a Fisheries Impact Tax which is set at a flat rate of \$100,000. The Fisheries Impact Tax is levied against the local processor to help pay for city resources used by the plant. The cities of King Cove, False Pass, and Sand Point impose a 2% fish tax in addition to the 2% fish tax imposed by the Aleutians East Borough. Chignik imposes a 2% fish tax on vessels and a 1% fish tax on processors. Unalaska imposes a 2% fish tax. Estimates of the city fish taxes cannot be reported because less than three groundfish processors are located in each community. Several communities where GOA groundfish are landed do not charge a raw fish tax.

Instead of a raw fish tax, the Kodiak Borough imposed a severance tax of 1.05% on harvested natural resources, including commercial fishing, timber sales, sand or gravel extraction, and mining activities that was in place during 2010. In June 2011, Kodiak lawmakers increased the Borough's severance tax rate to 1.25%. In general, the reductions in raw fish taxes assessed by municipalities would, potentially, have the greatest impact on the community of Kodiak. Under this proposed action, their groundfish tax revenues would be reduced by changes in the halibut PSC limit. Increases in halibut tax revenue may partially or completely offset these decreases.

ROADMAP TO THE DOCUMENT

The document begins by describing the purpose for this proposed action (Section 1.1) and a description of the alternatives considered (Section 2.1). Section 3 contains the Environmental Assessment. Section 3.2 describes the Pacific halibut resource and fisheries. Section 3.3 describes the groundfish resources and fisheries. Section 3.8 provides the biological impacts analysis; it describes how fleet behavior may change as a result of the alternatives. Section 4 contains the Regulatory Impact Review, which evaluates the economic and socioeconomic impacts of the proposed action. It summarizes information on potential

effects of the proposed action on GOA coastal communities, which is included in greater detail under Appendix 7. The community impact analysis was expanded through field work conducted in early 2012, based on recommendations by the Council which incorporated comments by the Scientific and Statistical Committee, Advisory Panel, and public testimony. The Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis evaluates the impact of the action on small businesses. Section 6 reviews the alternatives with respect to the requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and other analytical considerations. Section 7 discusses the environmental impacts of the proposed action and alternatives. Section 8 contains a list of contributors to this analysis.

Modifications have been made throughout the EA and RIR to reflect changes in the proposed alternatives being considered by the Council since it was first reviewed in October 2011. Editorial changes, clarifications, and corrections have also been made. An IRFA has been prepared. Major revisions to the RIR since October include the following. New information on the status of the Pacific halibut stock will be incorporated into the next draft of this analysis.

- Using only O26" halibut PSC to estimate the change in gross revenues to the halibut charter and IFQ fisheries. The benefits presented are for the first year the PSC reductions are in place (Section 4.6.2);
- Revenue estimates for the halibut IFQ sector were changed from gross ex-vessel to gross first wholesale estimates (Section 4.6.2);
- 2010 revenue data were added throughout the RIR, because 2010 COAR data are available. Adding 2010 data resulted in relatively small changes in the average first wholesale gross revenue foregone by each sector (Section 4.6.3);
- A discussion of arrowtooth flounder markets was added (Section 4.5.8);
- A discussion of changing fishing seasons was added to the document (Section 4.6.7);
- A draft IRFA was added to document. The IRFA still must be completed after the Council selects a preferred alternative (Section 5).
- The community impacts section was updated and includes information collected from field work collected in Kodiak since the October meeting (Section 4.6.8 and Appendix 7).

**Agenda C-2
Supplemental
February 2012**

This supplemental package includes:

- Revised Table of Contents to the EA/RIR
- Summary of Changes to the EA/RIR/Appendices
- Appendix 6

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	iii
LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	XXXVII
1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE.....	1
1.1 PURPOSE AND NEED.....	1
1.1 COUNCIL OBJECTIVE	1
1.2 COUNCIL PROBLEM STATEMENT	1
1.3 ACTION AREA.....	3
1.4 BACKGROUND.....	5
1.5 HISTORY OF THIS ACTION.....	6
1.5.1 <i>Prior to the MSFCMA</i>	6
1.5.2 <i>Since MSFCMA</i>	7
1.5.3 <i>Current</i>	8
1.6 PROPOSED ACTION	9
1.7 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PENDING RELATED ACTIONS	9
1.7.1 <i>GOA Chinook salmon PSC limits</i>	10
1.7.2 <i>GOA Pacific cod sector splits</i>	10
1.7.3 <i>Central Gulf of Alaska Rockfish Catch Share Program</i>	12
1.7.4 <i>Observer Program</i>	13
1.7.5 <i>IPHC Halibut Bycatch Work Group</i>	15
1.8 FMP REQUIREMENTS	15
2 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES	17
2.1 ALTERNATIVES.....	17
2.1.1 <i>Alternative 1</i>	18
2.1.2 <i>Alternative 2</i>	18
2.2 IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE	18
2.3 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD	19
3 ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT	21
3.1 METHODOLOGY FOR IMPACTS ANALYSIS	21
3.2 PACIFIC HALIBUT	23
3.2.1 <i>North Pacific Halibut Treaty</i>	23
3.2.2 <i>Life History</i>	24
3.2.2.1 <i>Reproduction and Development</i>	24
3.2.2.2 <i>Growth</i>	25
3.2.2.2.1 <i>Possible causes of low growth rates and the effects on future exploitable biomass and spawning biomass</i> 25	
3.2.2.3 <i>Movements (Migration)</i>	26
3.2.3 <i>Removals</i>	26
3.2.3.1 <i>"Bycatch"</i>	32
3.2.4 <i>Harvest Policy</i>	41
3.2.5 <i>Resource</i>	41
3.2.5.1 <i>Coastwide assessment</i>	41
3.2.5.2 <i>Survey Weight Per Unit Effort Adjustments</i>	47
3.2.5.2.1 <i>Hook competition (catchability)</i>	47
3.2.5.2.2 <i>Effect of survey timing</i>	47
3.2.5.2.3 <i>Survey WPUE weighting</i>	47
3.2.6 <i>Workshops</i>	48
3.2.7 <i>Commercial Halibut IFQ Hook-and-Line Fishery</i>	48
3.2.8 <i>Sport Halibut Fisheries</i>	54
3.2.9 <i>Subsistence Fisheries</i>	59
3.3 GROUND FISH	66

3.3.1	<i>Life History, Removals, Harvest Policy, Resource</i>	66
3.3.2	<i>Groundfish Fisheries Exempt from GOA halibut PSC Limits</i>	69
3.3.3	<i>State GHL Fisheries</i>	69
3.3.3.1	Halibut Discards in State-water, State-managed Fisheries	70
3.4	MARINE MAMMALS	78
3.4.1	<i>Marine Mammals Status</i>	79
3.4.1.1	Effects on Marine Mammals	80
3.4.1.1.1	Significance Criteria for Marine Mammals	80
3.4.1.1.2	Incidental Take Effects	81
3.4.1.1.3	Incidental Take Effects under Alternative 1: Status Quo	81
3.4.1.1.4	Incidental Take Effects under Alternative 2: Reduced PSC Limits	81
3.4.1.1.5	Harvest of Prey Species	82
3.4.1.1.6	Prey Availability Effects under Status Quo: Alternative 1	83
3.4.1.1.7	Prey Availability Effects under Alternative 2	84
3.4.1.2	Disturbance	84
3.4.1.2.1	Disturbance Effects under Status Quo: Alternative 1	84
3.4.1.2.2	Disturbance Effects under Alternative 2: Hard Caps	84
3.5	SEABIRDS	85
3.5.1	<i>Seabird Species and Status</i>	85
3.5.1.1	ESA-Listed Seabirds in the GOA	86
3.5.1.1.1	Short-tailed albatross	86
3.5.1.1.2	Steller's eider	86
3.5.1.1.3	Black-footed Albatross	87
3.5.1.1.4	Kittlitz's Murrelet	87
3.5.1.2	Status of ESA consultations on seabirds	87
3.5.1.3	Seabird Distribution in the Gulf of Alaska	88
3.5.1.3.1	Satellite Tracking of Short-tailed Albatross	89
3.5.1.3.2	Short-tailed Albatross Takes in Alaska Fisheries	90
3.5.2	<i>Effects on Seabirds</i>	91
3.5.2.1	Significance Criteria for Seabirds	91
3.5.2.2	Incidental Take of Seabirds in Trawl Fisheries	92
3.5.2.3	Prey Availability Disturbance of Benthic Habitat	93
3.5.2.4	Alternative 1 Status Quo	95
3.5.2.4.1	Incidental Take	95
3.5.2.4.2	Prey Availability and Benthic Habitat	95
3.5.2.5	Alternative 2	95
3.5.2.5.1	Incidental Take	95
3.5.2.5.2	Prey Availability and Benthic Habitat	95
3.5.2.6	Summary of Effects	95
3.6	HABITAT	96
3.6.1	<i>Effects of the alternatives</i>	96
3.6.1.1	Mitigation	97
3.6.2	<i>Summary of Effects</i>	98
3.7	ECOSYSTEM	98
3.8	IMPACTS OF THE ALTERNATIVES	100
3.8.1	<i>Alternative 1: Status quo</i>	100
3.8.1.1	Impacts on Halibut and Halibut Fishery	100
3.8.1.1.1	Biological Impacts	100
3.8.1.1.2	Economic Impacts	102
3.8.1.2	Impacts on Groundfish and Groundfish Fishery	102
3.8.1.2.1	Biological Impacts	102
3.8.1.2.2	Economic Impacts	103
3.8.2	<i>Alternative 2: Reduce Halibut PSC Limits</i>	104
3.8.2.1	Impacts on Halibut and Halibut Fishery	104
3.8.2.1.1	Biological Impacts	104
3.8.2.1.2	Summary of Economic Impacts	105
3.8.2.2	Impacts on Groundfish and Groundfish Fishery	106

3.8.2.2.1	Biological Impacts	106
3.8.2.2.2	Summary of Economic Impacts	106
3.8.2.3	Impacts on Groundfish and Groundfish Fishery	107
3.8.2.3.1	Biological Impacts	107
3.8.2.3.2	Summary of Economic Impacts	107
3.9	MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT	108
3.9.1	<i>North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program</i>	108
3.9.2	<i>Logbook program</i>	109
3.9.3	<i>Electronic monitoring</i>	109
3.9.4	<i>Summary of the accuracy of data collected from monitoring programs</i>	110
3.10	CUMULATIVE EFFECTS.....	111
3.10.1	<i>Significance</i>	114
4	REGULATORY IMPACT REVIEW	115
4.1	STATUTORY AUTHORITY	115
4.2	PROBLEM STATEMENT	116
4.3	DESCRIPTION OF THE ALTERNATIVES	117
4.3.1	<i>Hook-and-Line Gear Options</i>	117
4.3.2	<i>Trawl Gear Options</i>	119
4.3.2.1	Sideboard Fisheries	121
4.3.2.1.1	Rockfish Program Sideboard Options	121
4.3.2.1.2	AFA Catcher Vessel Sideboard Options	122
4.3.2.1.3	Amendment 80 Sideboard Options	123
4.4	ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT NOT CARRIED FORWARD	124
4.5	DESCRIPTION OF FISHERIES	125
4.5.1	<i>Pacific Halibut Fishery</i>	125
4.5.2	<i>Halibut Growth Rates (source IPHC question page)</i>	127
4.5.3	<i>GOA Hook-and-Line Groundfish Fisheries</i>	127
4.5.3.1	Non-DSR Hook-and-Line Fisheries	127
4.5.3.2	DSR fishery (Source: 2009 GOA SAFE Report)	132
4.5.4	<i>GOA trawl fisheries</i>	136
4.5.5	<i>Rockfish program allocation</i>	146
4.5.6	<i>Processor participation</i>	148
4.5.7	<i>First wholesale gross revenue</i>	149
4.5.8	<i>Arrowtooth Flounder Markets</i>	150
4.5.9	<i>Halibut Mortality Rates</i>	151
4.5.10	<i>Summary of Halibut PSC Closures</i>	153
4.6	ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES	157
4.6.1	<i>Assumptions Used in Analysis</i>	157
4.6.2	<i>Impacts of proposed action on halibut fisheries</i>	158
4.6.2.1	Pacific Halibut Commercial Fishery	160
4.6.2.2	Guided Sport	170
4.6.2.3	Unguided Sport and Subsistence	175
4.6.3	<i>Impacts on the Groundfish Fisheries</i>	176
4.6.3.1	Demersal Shelf Rockfish Fishery	176
4.6.3.2	Non-DSR hook-and-line	177
4.6.3.2.1	Status Quo	178
4.6.3.2.2	5 Percent Halibut PSC Reduction	179
4.6.3.3	Trawl Fishery Impacts	184
4.6.3.3.1	Deep-water Complex	185
4.6.3.3.2	Shallow-water	190
4.6.3.4	Summary of First Wholesale Gross Revenue Changes in the Groundfish Fisheries	193
4.6.3.5	Applying the Entire Halibut PSC Reduction to the Fifth Season	195
4.6.3.5.1	Estimates of first wholesale gross revenue foregone during the fifth season	199
4.6.3.6	Halibut Sideboards	201

4.6.3.6.1	AFA sideboards	201
4.6.3.6.2	Amendment 80 Sideboards	202
4.6.3.6.3	Rockfish program sideboards	203
4.6.3.6.4	Management of sideboard limits.....	204
4.6.3.6.5	Impact of Reducing Sideboard Limits	205
4.6.3.6.6	Suboption 2: Maintaining Sideboard Limits at Current Levels.....	214
4.6.4	Implementation after the Start of the Fishing Year.....	219
4.6.5	Tools for Industry to Reduce Halibut PSC.....	220
4.6.5.1	Council Measures	220
4.6.5.2	Industry Incentives	222
4.6.6	Effects of reduction in halibut PSC limit – Fleet responses	224
4.6.6.1	Hook and line catcher processors.....	225
4.6.6.2	Hook and line catcher vessels.....	227
4.6.6.3	Trawl vessels.....	228
4.6.6.3.1	Trawl catcher processors.....	229
4.6.6.3.2	Trawl catcher vessels.....	230
4.6.7	Changes in Seasonal Limits.....	232
4.6.8	Communities.....	238
4.6.9	Taxes Generated by the GOA Groundfish Fisheries	243
5	INITIAL REGULATORY FLEXIBILITY ANALYSIS (TO BE COMPLETED AFTER FINAL ACTION)	247
5.1	INTRODUCTION.....	247
5.2	THE PURPOSE OF AN IRFA	247
5.3	WHAT IS REQUIRED IN AN IRFA?	248
5.4	WHAT IS A SMALL ENTITY?	248
5.5	WHY THE ACTION IS BEING CONSIDERED	249
5.6	NUMBER AND DESCRIPTION OF SMALL ENTITIES DIRECTLY REGULATED BY THE PROPOSED ACTION	251
5.7	RECORDKEEPING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.....	253
5.8	FEDERAL RULES THAT MAY DUPLICATE, OVERLAP, OR CONFLICT WITH PROPOSED ACTION	253
5.9	SIGNIFICANT ALTERNATIVES.....	253
6	FMP AND MAGNUSON-STEVENS ACT CONSIDERATIONS	254
6.1	MAGNUSON-STEVENS ACT NATIONAL STANDARDS	254
6.2	SECTION 303(A)(9) FISHERIES IMPACT STATEMENT	256
6.2.1	Fishery Participants	256
6.2.2	Fishing Communities.....	256
6.2.3	Participants in Fisheries in Adjacent Areas.....	256
6.3	GOA FMP — GROUND FISH MANAGEMENT POLICY PRIORITIES.....	257
7	NEPA SUMMARY.....	258
8	REFERENCES.....	262
9	PREPARERS, CONTRIBUTORS, AND PERSONS CONSULTED	263
9.1	PREPARERS	263
9.2	CONTRIBUTORS	263
9.3	PERSONS CONSULTED	263

Appendices paginated separately

APPENDIX 1. GOA GROUND FISH FMP CRITERIA FOR SETTING HALIBUT PSC LIMITS	1
APPENDIX 2. GOA PACIFIC HALIBUT PSC LIMITS	4
APPENDIX 3. COUNCIL ACTIONS TO REDUCE OR LIMIT HALIBUT REMOVALS.....	5

APPENDIX 4. 2010 SUMMARY OF THE STATUS OF THE GOA GROUND FISH STOCKS.....	11
Walleye pollock.....	11
Pacific cod.....	12
Sablefish.....	14
Shallow-water flatfish	15
Deep-water flatfish	18
Rex sole.....	19
Arrowtooth flounder	20
Flathead sole.....	20
Pacific Ocean Perch.....	21
Northern rockfish.....	23
Shortraker rockfish	24
Other Slope Rockfish.....	25
Pelagic Shelf Rockfish.....	26
Rougheye and Blackspotted Rockfishes.....	27
Thornyhead Rockfish	28
Demersal Shelf Rockfish.....	29
Atka mackerel	30
Skates.....	31
Sharks	32
Squids	33
Octopuses	34
Sculpins	35
APPENDIX 5. POTENTIAL YIELD AND FEMALE SPAWNING BIOMASS GAINS FROM PROPOSED PACIFIC HALIBUT PROHIBITED SPECIES CATCH LIMIT REDUCTIONS IN GOA GROUND FISH FISHERIES.....	37
APPENDIX 6. GOA GROUND FISH HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS FOR 2012/2013.....	57
APPENDIX 7. COMMUNITY ANALYSIS.....	59

List of Tables

Table 1-1	Western GOA sector allocations (%) with jig allocation taken off the top of the TAC.....	11
Table 1-2	Central GOA sector allocations with jig allocation taken off the top of the TAC	11
Table 1-3	Halibut PSC allocations to HAL CVs and CPs.....	12
Table 1-4	Pacific halibut PSC allocation under the pending Central GOA Rockfish Program.....	13
Table 3-1	Criteria used to evaluate the alternatives.....	22
Table 3-2	The 2010 preliminary estimates of total removals, 2010 catch limits and catch of Pacific halibut by regulatory area, and 2010 sport guideline harvest level and sport guided harvest for Areas 2C and 3A (thousands of pounds, net weight). (Source: IPHC)	27
Table 3-3	2009 IFQ halibut allocations and fixed-gear IFQ landings.....	51
Table 3-4	Halibut QS holdings at year-end 2009	51
Table 3-5	Quota acquired by "IFQ Crewmembers" by species, area, and residence, year-end 2009 ^a	51
Table 3-6	Consolidation of halibut QS, initial issuance through year-end 2009; numbers of persons holding halibut QS by area and size of holdings, expressed in 2009 IFQ pounds.	52
Table 3-7	Number of vessels with IFQ halibut harvests by area and year, 1992–2009	52
Table 3-8	Annual Prices for Halibut QS and IFQ Transfers by Area and Year	53
Table 3-9	Top ten Alaska IFQ halibut ports in rank order for 2009 performance, 1995–2009.....	54
Table 3-10	Area 2C sport halibut harvest history.....	55
Table 3-11	Area 2C charter regulation history.	56
Table 3-12	Area 2C sport halibut harvest estimates by harvest survey area, 2009.	56
Table 3-13	Area 3A sport halibut harvest history.....	57
Table 3-14	Area 3A charter regulation history.....	58
Table 3-15	Area 3A sport halibut harvest estimates by harvest survey area, 2009.	58
Table 3-16.	Number of halibut and sablefish caught in Clarence Strait during the Southeast Alaska sablefish longline survey, 2002-2010.....	71
Table 3-17.	Number of halibut and sablefish caught in Chatham Strait during the Southeast Alaska sablefish longline survey, 2002-2010.....	71
Table 3-18	Average halibut CPUE (number of fish per standardized hook) for the Southeast Alaska sablefish longline Survey, 2002-2010.....	73
Table 3-19.	Number of halibut and sablefish caught during the Prince William Sound sablefish longline survey, 1998-2006.....	74
Table 3-20.	Catch and average CPUE for sablefish and halibut from the northwest quadrant during the Prince William Sound sablefish longline survey, 1998-2006.....	75
Table 3-21.	Number of halibut caught during the Prince William Sound sablefish pot survey, 2011.....	77
Table 3-22.	Total skate harvest, in pounds and numbers, and number of halibut caught as bycatch during observed sets of the Prince William Sound pilot skate longline fishery, 2009-2010.	78
Table 3-23.	Total skate harvest (in pounds) and number of halibut caught as bycatch during the Prince William Sound pilot skate longline fishery, 2009-2010.	78
Table 3-24	Marine mammals likely to occur in the Gulf of Alaska	80
Table 3-25	Criteria for determining significance of impacts to marine mammals.....	81
Table 3-26	Prey species used by GOA marine mammals that may be impacted by the GOA pollock fishery.....	82
Table 3-27	Benthic dependent GOA marine mammals, foraging locations, and diving depths.....	83
Table 3-28	ESA-listed and candidate seabird species that occur in the GOA.....	86

Table 3-29	Reported takes of short-tailed albatross in Alaska fisheries.....	90
Table 3-30	Criteria used to determine significance of impacts on seabirds	92
Table 3-31	Seabirds in the Gulf of Alaska: foraging habitats and common prey species.	94
Table 3-32	Summary of impacts to seabirds from alternatives in this analysis.....	96
Table 3-33	Criteria used to estimate the significance of impacts on essential fish habitat.....	97
Table 3-34	Reasonable Foreseeable Future Actions.....	112
Table 4-1	Hook-and-line gear halibut PSC mortality limits (mt).....	118
Table 4-2	Trawl halibut PSC mortality limits (mt).....	121
Table 4-3	Rockfish program July sideboard options by deep-water and shallow-water complexes.....	122
Table 4-4	AFA non-exempt catcher vessel sideboard limits (maintaining current percentages)	123
Table 4-5	Amendment 80 sideboard halibut limit options	124
Table 4-6	Area 2C halibut removals (Mlb), 1995–2011. Source: G. Williams, IPHC.....	125
Table 4-7	Area 3A halibut removals (Mlb), 1995–2011. Source: G. Williams, IPHC.....	126
Table 4-8	Area 3B halibut removals (Mlb), 1995–2011. Source: G. Williams, IPHC.....	127
Table 4-9	Fishing patterns by hook-and-line vessels in non-DSR target fisheries (mt), 2010	129
Table 4-10	Ex-vessel value of groundfish taken with hook-and-line gear, 2005 through 2009.....	130
Table 4-11	Number of hook-and-line vessels operating in the GOA non-DSR target fisheries (Pacific cod) and DSR, fishery 2003 through 2011	132
Table 4-12	Reported landings of demersal shelf rockfish (mt round weight) from domestic fisheries in the Southeast Outside Subdistrict (SEO), 1982-2009a.....	134
Table 4-13	Number of vessels harvesting DSR from the Southeast Outside District	136
Table 4-14	Total catch of GOA groundfish (1,000 mt) by vessels using trawl gear, 2005 through 2009	137
Table 4-15	Ex-vessel gross revenue of GOA groundfish species by vessels using trawl gear (\$million).....	138
Table 4-16	Gulf of Alaska groundfish catch in 2010 by vessels using trawl gear, by target fishery and week.....	140
Table 4-17	Trawl GOA halibut PSC by target fishery and week ending date, 2010.....	141
Table 4-18	Reported Gulf of Alaska trawl groundfish catch by week and fishery, 2003 through 2010.....	143
Table 4-19	Reported Gulf of Alaska trawl halibut PSC by week and fishery, 2003 through 2010.....	144
Table 4-20	Number of trawl catcher processors and catcher vessels that reported groundfish catch in the GOA, 2003 through 2011 (as of August 8 th).....	145
Table 4-21	Number of trawl catcher processors that reported groundfish catch in the GOA by fishery, 2003 through 2011 (as of August 8 th).....	145
Table 4-22	Number of trawl catcher vessels that reported groundfish catch in the GOA by fishery, 2003 through 2011 (as of August 8 th).....	146
Table 4-23	Halibut PSC allowances and usage by cooperatives in the rockfish pilot program (2007-2010).....	148
Table 4-24	Number of processors taking catcher vessel deliveries of groundfish harvested with hook-and-line or trawl gear by GOA management areas, 2003 through 2010.....	149
Table 4-25	Number of processors taking catcher vessel deliveries of groundfish harvested with hook-and-line gear from GOA management areas, 2003 through 2010	149
Table 4-26	First wholesale value (\$million) of groundfish by vessel type and gear type, 2003 through 2009	150
Table 4-27	Average first wholesale gross revenue of GOA groundfish per processor, 2003 through 2009	150
Table 4-28	Assumed Pacific Halibut Mortality Rates for Vessels Fishing in the Gulf of Alaska, 2000-2011.....	152

Table 4-29	Changes in assumed trawl halibut mortality rates, 2000 through 2011.....	153
Table 4-30	Summary of halibut PSC closures of Pacific cod Hook-and line fisheries from 2000 through April 2011	154
Table 4-31	Summary of GOA trawl closures by halibut PSC limits, 2000 through April 2011	155
Table 4-32	Changes in fishery CEY under each Council alternative reported in metric tons round weight and 1,000's of pounds net weight.	159
Table 4-33	Number of halibut QS holders in 2010, by area.....	160
Table 4-34	GHL tiers for IPHC Areas 2C and 3A and 2009 through 2011 total CEYs.....	161
Table 4-35	Estimated increase in IFQ sector first wholesale revenue (\$1,000), using a low and high first wholesale price, under the GHL assuming no change in the tier level as a result of the decrease in the PSC.....	163
Table 4-36	Percentage of combined fishery CEY allocated to guided sport and commercial	165
Table 4-37	Changes in commercial IFQ (1,000 lbs net weight) under each option to reduce the PSC mortality limit, low fishery CEY (tier 1 of CSP)	166
Table 4-38	Changes in commercial IFQ (1,000 lb net weight) under each option to reduce the PSC mortality limit, tier 2 of CSP	166
Table 4-39	High and low gross first wholesale prices of halibut by IPHC area, 2003 through 2009.....	167
Table 4-40	Estimated increases in halibut gross first wholesale revenue (\$1,000) of the IFQ fleet based on lower price per lb and tier 1 of the CSP	168
Table 4-41	Estimated increases in halibut gross first wholesale revenue (\$1,000) of the IFQ fleet based on low price per lb and tier 2 of the CSP	169
Table 4-42	Estimated increases in halibut gross first wholesale revenue (\$1,000) of the IFQ fleet based on the higher price per lb. and tier 1 of the CSP	169
Table 4-43	Estimated increases in halibut gross first wholesale revenue (\$1,000) of the IFQ fleet based on the higher price per lb. IFQ and tier 2 of the CSP.....	170
Table 4-44	Number of permits issued and number of businesses receiving the permits under the charter halibut limited access program	171
Table 4-45	Participation in the fisheries in the qualifying and recency years	171
Table 4-46	Increases in halibut (in 1,000 lb. net weight) available to the guided sport sector in areas 2C and 3A, under tier 1 of the CSP.....	172
Table 4-47	Increases in halibut (in 1,000 net weight) available to the guided sport sector in areas 2C and 3A, under tier 2 of the CSP.....	172
Table 4-48	Charter mean net weight (lb), Areas 2C and 3A, 1995–2010	173
Table 4-49	Increased number of halibut (numbers of fish) that are available to the guided sport fleets in areas 2C and 3A, under tier 1 and tier 2 of the CSP	174
Table 4-50	Estimated increases in guided sport revenue in Area 3A, under tier 1 and tier 2 fishery CEY divisions	174
Table 4-51	Mean gross revenue increase per business holding a halibut charter permit in Area 3A	175
Table 4-52	Demersal Shelf Rockfish PSC limits under the proposed alternatives.....	177
Table 4-53	Cumulative Non-DSR hook-and-line halibut PSC mortality limits (mt).	178
Table 4-54	Status quo non-DSR hook-and-line PSC limit (cumulative) and the cumulative halibut PSC (mt), 2003 through 2010	179
Table 4-55	A 5 percent reduction in the non-DSR hook-and-line PSC limit (cumulative) and the cumulative halibut PSC (mt), 2003 through November 2011*	179
Table 4-56	A 10 percent reduction in the non-DSR hook-and-line PSC limit (cumulative) and the cumulative halibut PSC (mt), 2003 through November 2011*	180
Table 4-57	A 15 percent reduction in the non-DSR hook-and-line PSC limit (cumulative) and the cumulative halibut PSC (mt), 2003 through November 2011*	180

Table 4-58	Monthly and seasonal halibut PSC, groundfish catch, and halibut mortality rates, 2003 through 2010	181
Table 4-59	Estimates of groundfish catch under each Council option to reduce the non-DSR hook-and-line PSC limit, 2003 through 2010	182
Table 4-60	Estimates of maximum, minimum, average, and median groundfish catch under each Council option to reduce the non-DSR hook-and-line PSC limit, 2003 through 2010.....	182
Table 4-61	Estimates of changes in gross ex-vessel and gross first wholesale revenue, 2003 through 2010	182
Table 4-62	Estimated first wholesale gross revenue reductions associated with each of the options being considered by the Council (\$million)	183
Table 4-63	Difference in non-DSR hook-and-Line first wholesale gross revenue reductions relative to the Status Quo (\$million)	184
Table 4-64	Percentage of GOA first wholesale gross revenue by fishery and year, 2003 through 2010	185
Table 4-65	Halibut PSC mortality (mt), groundfish catch (mt), and halibut PSC mortality rate by month and year for the deep-water complex, 2003 through 2010.....	186
Table 4-66	Deep-water complex cumulative seasonal halibut PSC limits and cumulative seasonal halibut PSC take in the GOA trawl fisheries (mt)	187
Table 4-67	Number of years the proposed deep-water PSC limits would have been exceeded, 2003 through 2011	188
Table 4-68	Difference between the status quo estimate of GOA deep-water complex first wholesale gross revenue and metric tons foregone and the three primary options to reduce the halibut PSC allowance amount.....	188
Table 4-69	Percentage of GOA first wholesale gross revenue estimated to have been foregone by deep-water complex fishery and season, 2003 through 2010.....	189
Table 4-70	Shallow-water complex cumulative seasonal halibut PSC limits and cumulative seasonal halibut PSC taken in the GOA trawl fisheries (mt)	190
Table 4-71	Number of years the proposed shallow-water PSC limits would have been exceeded, 2003 through December 3, 2011	191
Table 4-72	Difference between the status quo estimate of GOA shallow-water complex first wholesale gross revenue and metric tons foregone for the three primary options to reduce halibut PSC.....	191
Table 4-73	Percentage of first wholesale gross revenue reduction by shallow-water complex fishery and season, 2003 through 2010.....	193
Table 4-74	Estimated reductions in first wholesale gross revenue in all GOA groundfish fisheries	194
Table 4-75	Estimated annual average first wholesale gross revenue foregone in GOA groundfish fisheries (\$million).....	195
Table 4-76	Total GOA halibut PSC available under each option and the percentage reductions	196
Table 4-77	Halibut PSC allowance amounts available for the 5 th season under each option, with and without Rockfish Program halibut PSC allowance	196
Table 4-78	First wholesale gross revenue (nominal dollars) generated from GOA trawl fisheries during the 5 th halibut PSC season	197
Table 4-79	Percent of first wholesale gross revenue and metric tons of GOA groundfish harvested in the fifth halibut PSC season.....	198
Table 4-80	Number of trawl vessels fishing during the fifth season, 2003 through 2010.....	198
Table 4-81	Amount of halibut PSC available for use in the fifth season under each option, 2003 through 2010	199

Table 4-82	Revenue reported in data for weeks in the 5 th season after the PSC limit was reached and reported first wholesale gross revenue after Status Quo amount was deducted from the option.....	200
Table 4-83	Comparison of average first wholesale gross revenue (2003 through 2010) when the halibut PSC reduction is applied to all seasons and when it is applied to only the 5 th season (\$million).....	201
Table 4-84.	AFA catcher vessel halibut PSC sideboard limits.....	202
Table 4-85.	Halibut PSC sideboard limits for Amendment 80 vessels.....	203
Table 4-86	Sideboard fisheries that never open to directed fishing.....	205
Table 4-87.	Number of AFA non-exempt catcher vessels participating in the deep-water and shallow-water complex fishery, by season, from 2003 through 2010.....	207
Table 4-88.	Seasonal halibut PSC allowance usage (mt) for deep-water and shallow-water complex fisheries from 2008 through 2010 for AFA non-exempt catcher vessels.....	208
Table 4-89.	Proposed seasonal halibut PSC allowance limits for deep-water and shallow-water complex fisheries for AFA non-exempt catcher vessels (mt).....	209
Table 4-90.	Number of Amendment 80 vessels participating in the deep-water and shallow-water complex fishery, by season, from 2008 through 2010.....	210
Table 4-91.	Seasonal halibut PSC usage (mt) for deep-water and shallow-water complex fisheries, from 2008 through 2010, for Amendment 80 vessels.....	210
Table 4-92.	Proposed seasonal halibut PSC allowance limits for deep-water and shallow-water complex fisheries for Amendment 80 vessels (mt).....	211
Table 4-93.	Vessel count and halibut PSC sideboard usage of Central GOA rockfish program catcher processors during the month of July by halibut PSC complex, 2007 through 2010.....	213
Table 4-94.	Proposed seasonal halibut PSC limits for deep-water and shallow-water complex fisheries for rockfish program catcher processors.....	213
Table 4-95.	Non-trawl LLP licenses by area, operation type, hook and line Pacific cod endorsement, and MLOA.....	225
Table 4-96.	Trawl LLP licenses by area and operation type.....	229
Table 4-97.	Alaska Communities with Annual Average Number of Locally Owned Gulf Groundfish Trawl Vessels Equal to or Greater than 1, 2003-2010.....	240
Table 4-98.	Gulf Groundfish Trawl Vessels Annual Average Exvessel Gross Revenues by Alaska Community of Ownership, 2003-2010.....	240
Table 4-99.	Alaska Communities with Annual Average Number of Locally Owned Gulf Groundfish Hook-and-Line Vessels Equal to or Greater than 5, 2003-2010.....	241
Table 4-100.	Gulf Groundfish Hook-and-Line Vessels Annual Average Exvessel Gross Revenues by Alaska Community of Ownership, 2003-2010.....	241
Table 4-101.	Shore-Based Processors Annual Average First Wholesale Gross Revenues from Deliveries of Gulf Groundfish by Gear Type and by Alaska Community of Operation, 2003-2010.....	241
Table 4-102.	Graphic Representation of Annual Average Engagement in Potentially Affected Gulf Groundfish and Halibut Fisheries for Profiled Alaska Communities.....	242
Table 4-103	Estimated changes in statewide taxes.....	245
Table 4-104	Municipality imposed raw fish taxes.....	246
Table 5-1	Estimated numbers of directly regulated entities (vessels) in the Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries under Alternative 2.....	252

List of Figures

Figure 1-1	NMFS regulatory and reporting areas in the GOA for groundfish.....	4
Figure 1-2	IPHC regulatory areas for Pacific halibut.	4
Figure 2-1	Schedule prepared by NMFS AKRO SF for analytical, GOA FMP, and harvest specification revision process necessary to support change to the GOA halibut PSC limits mid-season.....	19
Figure 3-1	Total halibut removals, 2010. (Source: IPHC).....	28
Figure 3-2	Total removals coastwide for the period 1935-2010. Year and amount of minimum, maximum, and most recent removals are also listed. (Source: IPHC).....	28
Figure 3-3	Summary of removals, abundance indices, age structures, surplus production, and commercial effort for Area 2C. (Source: IPHC).....	29
Figure 3-4	Summary of removals, abundance indices, age structures, surplus production, and commercial effort for Area 3A. (Source: IPHC).....	30
Figure 3-5	Summary of removals, abundance indices, age structures, surplus production, and commercial effort for Area 3B. (Source: IPHC).....	31
Figure 3-6.	Estimated lost yield in millions of pounds in each area due to U32 mortalities. Colors represent the area where U32 mortality occurred and the percentage of local origin is shown.	34
Figure 3-7.	Estimated lost yield in millions of pounds in each area due to wastage mortalities. Colors represent the area where U32 mortality occurred and the percentage of local origin is shown. . Source: http://www.iphc.int/papers/Mig_Bycatch_BB2010_web.pdf	35
Figure 3-8	Age distributions of bycatch, wastage and commercial catch during 1996-2008.	35
Figure 3-9.	Percentage coastwide distribution of U32 mortality (“ByC”), estimated lost yield.....	36
Figure 3-10.	Coastwide estimated Lost Yield in 2011 due to U32 mortality by area and year where yield is lost.	36
Figure 3-11.	Area 2B estimated Lost Yield in 2011 due to U32 mortality by source area and year of mortality.	37
Figure 3-12.	Top: total yield by area for 2009, estimated lost yield due to U32 mortality (“LY_Byc”) and estimated lost yield due to recent unbalanced harvest (“LY_UnbHR”) assuming a total coastwide yield equal to that of 2009 (65.8 Mlb). Bottom: estimated percentage change from 2009 total yield for each area due to U32 mortality (“LY_Byc”) and recent unbalanced harvest rates (“LY_UnbHR”).	38
Figure 3-13.	Top: total yield by area for 2009, estimated lost yield due to U32 mortality (“LY_Byc”) and estimated lost yield due to recent unbalanced harvest (“LY_UnbHR”) assuming a total coastwide yield of 90 Mlb. Bottom: estimated percentage change from 2009 total yield for each area due to U32 mortality (“LY_Byc”) and recent unbalanced harvest rates (“LY_UnbHR”).	39
Figure 3-14.	Top: total yield by area for 2009, estimated lost yield due to U32 mortality (“LY_Byc”) and estimated lost yield due to recent unbalanced harvest (“LY_UnbHR”) assuming a total coastwide yield equal to that of 2009 (65.8 Mlb). Bottom: estimated percentage change from 2009 total yield for each area due to U32 mortality (“LY_Byc”) and recent unbalanced harvest rates (“LY_UnbHR”).	40
Figure 3-15.	History of halibut removals from 1888 to 2009. bycatch and wastage mortalities	40
Figure 3-16	Representation of the IPHC harvest policy. The background curve illustrates theoretical relationship between biomass and surplus production, taken as yield. The slope of the straight line is a 20% harvest rate, and the harvest rate decreases linearly to zero as the biomass approaches established reference points, termed the female spawning biomass threshold and limit. The scatter about the harvest rate indicates the effect of the “Slow Up Fast Down” adjustment to catch limits in terms of realized harvest rate. (Source: IPHC)	43

Figure 3-17	Pacific halibut stock report cards (Source: IPHC)	44
Figure 3-18	Harvest rates of halibut by area, 2001 - 2010 (Source: IPHC).....	45
Figure 3-19	Recruitment and biomass estimated trends from 2010 IPHC stock assessment	45
Figure 3-20	Coastwide halibut Ebio projections (Source: IPHC).....	46
Figure 3-21	Commercial halibut catch and average price/lb, 1928 - 2010.	50
Figure 3-22	Area 2C charter and non-charter halibut harvests for 2009.	56
Figure 3-23.	Area 3A charter and non-charter halibut harvests for 2009.	58
Figure 3-24	Estimated number of Alaska subsistence halibut fishers, 2003–2009 by regulatory area of tribe or rural community.	60
Figure 3-25	Estimated number of subsistence halibut fishers by place of residence, 2003–2009, communities with 50 or more fishers in 2009.....	60
Figure 3-26	Estimated subsistence halibut harvests, pounds net weight, by regulatory area of tribe and rural community, 2003–2009.	61
Figure 3-27	Estimated Alaska subsistence halibut harvests, pounds net weight by SHARC type, 2003–2009.....	61
Figure 3-28	Percentage of tribal subsistence halibut harvest by tribe, 2009.....	62
Figure 3-29	Percentage of rural community subsistence halibut harvest by community, 2009.	62
Figure 3-30	Percentage of subsistence halibut harvest by regulatory area fished, 2009.....	63
Figure 3-31	Alaska subsistence halibut harvests by geographic area, 2009.	63
Figure 3-32	Percentage of Alaska subsistence halibut harvest by geographic area, 2009.	64
Figure 3-33	Estimated subsistence halibut harvests, pounds net weight, by regulatory area, 2003–2009.....	64
Figure 3-34	Average subsistence harvest of halibut per fisher in Alaska, 2009, by regulatory area, in pounds net weight.....	65
Figure 3-35	Average subsistence harvest of halibut per fisher in Alaska, 2009, by regulatory area, in number of fish.	65
Figure 3-36	Alaska subsistence halibut harvests by place of residence, 2009.....	66
Figure 3-37	GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications, 1992-2010.....	68
Figure 3-38	Summary status of age-structured GOA species relative to 2011 catch levels (vertical axis) and projected 2012 spawning biomass relative to Bmsy levels. Note that the 2010 MSY level is defined as the 2011 catch at FOFL.....	68
Figure 3-39 .	Number of halibut and sablefish caught in Clarence Strait during the Southeast Alaska sablefish longline survey, 2002-2010.....	72
Figure 3-40.	Number of halibut and sablefish caught in Chatham Strait during the Southeast Alaska sablefish longline survey, 2002-2010.....	72
Figure 3-41.	Average halibut CPUE (number of fish per standardized hook) for the Southeast Alaska sablefish longline survey, 2002-2010.....	73
Figure 3-42.	Number of halibut and sablefish caught during the Prince William Sound sablefish longline survey, 1998-2006.....	75
Figure 3-43.	Average CPUE for sablefish and halibut caught in the northwest quadrant during the Prince William Sound sablefish longline survey, 1998-2006.	76
Figure 3-44	Observations of seabird species with conservation status and/or likely to interact with fishing gear in the Gulf of Alaska.	89
Figure 3-45	Observations of short-tailed albatrosses.....	89
Figure 3-46	Map of two recent short-tailed albatross takes in Alaska hook-and-line fisheries (purple stars). Red dots indicate satellite tagging data from birds tagged, 2001-2010.	91
Figure 3-47	GOA food web	99
Figure 4-1	First wholesale price (real 2009 dollars) of Pacific cod from Alaska, 1996 through 2009	131
Figure 4-2	The Eastern Gulf of Alaska with Alaska Department of Fish and Game groundfish management areas: the EYKT, NSEO, CSEO, and SSEO sections comprise the Southeast Outside (SEO) Subdistrict	135

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

	Feet
ABC	Acceptable Biological Catch
ADF&G	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
AFA	American Fisheries Act
AFSC	Alaska Fisheries Science Center
BAWM	Bycatch and Wastage Mortality
BiOp	Biological Opinion
BOF	Board of Fisheries
BSAI	Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands
CA	Closed area (assessment)
CAS	Catch accounting system
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CEY	Constant Exploitation Yield
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
Council	North Pacific Fishery Management Council
CP	Catcher/processor
CPUE	Catch-Per-Unit-Effort
CV	Catcher vessel
DMR	Discard mortality rate
DPS	Discrete Population Segment
DSR	Demersal Shelf Rockfish
E	East
Ebio	Exploitable biomass
EA	Environmental Assessment
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EFH	Essential Fish Habitat
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FCEY	Fishery Constant Exploitation Yield
fm	Fathom
FMA	Fisheries Monitoring and Analysis
FMP	Fishery Management Plan
FONSI	Finding of No Significant Impact
FR	<i>Federal Register</i>
FRFA	Final Regulatory Flexibility Analysis
FSBio	Female Spawning Biomass
Ft	Foot or Feet
GHL	Guideline Harvest Level
GOA	Gulf of Alaska
HAL	Hook-and-line
IRFA	Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis
IPHC	International Pacific Halibut Commission
ITS	Incidental Take Statement
lb(s)	Pound(s)
LLP	License Limitation Program

LOA	Length overall
m	Meter or Meters
Magnuson-Stevens Act; MSA	Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
MMPA	Marine Mammal Protection Act
MSFCMA	Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act
mt	Metric Ton
NAO	NOAA Administrative Order
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NMFS	National Marine Fishery Service
NOAA	National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration
NPFMC	North Pacific Fishery Management Council
O26	Over 26 inches
Observer Program	North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program
OFL	Overfishing Level
PBR	Potential Biological Removal
POP	Pacific Ocean Perch
PSC	Prohibited Species Catch
PSEIS	Programmatic Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement
PSR	Pelagic Shelf Rockfish
PWS	Prince William Sound
RFA	Regulatory Flexibility Act
RFFA	Reasonably Foreseeable Future Action
RIR	Regulatory Impact Review
SAFE	Stock Assessment and Fishery Evaluation
SARS	Stock Assessment Reports
SBA	Small Business Act
Secretary	Secretary of Commerce
SRKW	Southern Resident Killer Whales
STAL	Short-Tailed Albatross
SUFastD	Slow Up Fast Down
SUFulID	Slow Up Full Down
SW	Southwest
TAC	Total Allowable Catch
U26	Under 26 inches
U32	Under 32 inches
U.S.	United States
USCG	United States Coast Guard
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
VMS	Vessel Monitoring System
W	West
WPUE	Weight per unit effort

Summary of Changes to EA/RIR/IRFA/Appendices between September 2011 and January 2012

Modifications have been made throughout the document to reflect changes in the proposed action and alternatives being considered by the Council, since the package was reviewed in October 2011. Editorial changes, clarifications, and corrections have also been made throughout the document.

Summary of Changes to Environmental Assessment

- The Purpose and Need, Objective, and Problem Statement were revised to reflect the revised action which includes amending the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery Management Plan in order to set Pacific halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) limits in federal regulations instead of through the annual harvest specifications process.
- The implementation timeline has been revised to include a NMFS report that mid-2013 implementation of revised GOA halibut PSC limits is unlikely with final action scheduled in April 2012 or June 2012.
- Sport halibut fishery information was updated through 2010.
- New subsection on State of Alaska commercial Guideline Harvest Level fisheries was added.
- Summary of status of 2012 groundfish stocks was added.

Summary of Changes to Environmental Assessment Planned for the next draft

- Update status of the halibut stock through 2011.
- Update commercial halibut fishery information through 2011.
- Update subsistence halibut fishery information through 2010.

Summary of Changes to Regulatory Impact Review

- Using only O26" halibut PSC to estimate the change in gross revenues to the halibut charter and IFQ fisheries. The benefits presented are for the first year the PSC reductions are in place (Section 4.6.2);
- Revenue estimates for the halibut IFQ sector were changed from gross ex-vessel to gross first wholesale estimates (Section 4.6.2);
- 2010 revenue data were added throughout the RIR, because 2010 COAR data are available. Adding 2010 data resulted in relatively small changes in the average first wholesale gross revenue foregone by each sector (Section 4.6.3);
- A discussion of arrowtooth flounder markets was added (Section 4.5.8);
- A discussion of changing fishing seasons was added to the document (Section 4.6.7);
- A draft IRFA was added to document. The IRFA still must be completed after the Council selects a preferred alternative (Section 5).
- The community impacts section was updated and includes information collected from field work collected in Kodiak since the October meeting (Section 4.6.8 and Appendix 7).

**Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis was added
Summary of Changes to Draft Community Analysis
Appendix 7 Proposed GOA Halibut PSC Revisions**

Section 1: Introduction and Methodology. No substantive changes. Minor changes included a number of clarifying edits in the methodology discussion, correction of data errors in several cells in the 2004 columns of Tables 4a and 4b and annual average figures for the rows that included the changed cells, and an overhaul of Figure 1 to correct map projection errors.

Section 2: Quantitative Indicators. No substantive changes. Minor changes included adding separate break-out rows for Chignik Lagoon and Sitka to tables where relevant; text edits for clarity and consistency, including standardizing use of gross revenue terms; and removal of Area 4B halibut data from several tables to focus discussion exclusively on the GOA area.

Section 3: Community Profiles and the Local Context of Potential Impacts of GOA Halibut PSC Revisions. Community profiles were added for Chignik Lagoon and Sitka. Limited information was also added to each community profile, including (1) data on trawl/hook-and-line gear switching by the local fleet and (2) non-confidential individual year local fleet GOA groundfish fishery exvessel gross revenue data for those communities where complete annual series data could not be presented in Section 1 tables (due to the data from one or more years in the series being confidential). Minor edits to this section included clarifying the tabular presentation of housing data.

Section 4: Community-Level Impacts. Substantive changes and additions were made to this section. Each subsection was expanded and new subsections were added. The larger changes made include:

- **Section 4.2: GOA Groundfish Fishery Engagement in the Alaska Communities Profiled.** Information specific to Chignik Lagoon and Sitka was added along with a table summarizing the annual average engagement of all profiled communities.
- **Section 4.3: GOA Groundfish Fishery Dependency and Vulnerability to Adverse Community-Level Impacts of the Proposed Action among Alaska Communities.** Information specific to Chignik Lagoon and Sitka was added. Major changes to existing sections included:
 - The King Cove and Sand Point discussion (Section 4.3.4) was substantially expanded to include more data describing how potential adverse community impacts, if any, would be largely, if not exclusively, linked to the cod "A" season fishery. A potential environmental justice concerns section was also added to the King Cove and Sand Point discussion.
 - The Kodiak discussion (Section 4.3.5) was substantially expanded to include additional quantitative information as well as qualitative information gathered during brief fieldwork in the community. Discussions specific to the local GOA groundfish fleet and processing have been added, along with a discussion of Kodiak engagement in the GOA

halibut fisheries. A new community-level impacts section has been added, along with a new potential environmental justice concerns section.

- The “Other Alaska Communities” discussion (Section 4.3.6) was substantially expanded to include additional local hook-and-line quantitative fleet engagement indicators.
- **Section 4.4: Risks to Fishing Community Sustained Participation in the GOA Groundfish Fisheries.** This section has been substantially expanded to include more quantitative information on potential revenues foregone. A new subsection on potential cumulative small/rural community and cultural context issues has been added.
- **Section 4.5: Potential Community-Level Beneficial Impacts Resulting from Positive Impacts to GOA Halibut Fisheries.** This section is new, and aggregates and expands upon earlier halibut fishery community discussions. Discussions in this section include, among others:
 - The distribution of potential beneficial impacts by halibut fishery sector across GOA communities (Section 4.5.2), which includes a range of quantitative indicators of community engagement.
 - Potential beneficial impacts to GOA communities engaged in the commercial halibut fishery (Section 4.5.3), which includes estimates of changes to first wholesale gross revenues.
 - Potential beneficial impacts to GOA communities engaged in the sport charter halibut fishery (Section 4.5.4), which includes estimates of average changes to revenues per sport guided business.

Attachment to Appendix 7: Community Analysis Detailed Fishery Participation Tables. A number of new tables have been added to this attachment.

- **Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Yearly and Annual Average Participation Tables 2003-2010.** These tables (Tables A-1 through A-9) did not change.
- **Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Vessels Fishery Participation Diversity by Species Group Tables 2003-2010.** The tables in this section (Tables A-10 and A-11) are new.
- **Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Fishery Vessel Monthly Participation Tables 2003-2010.** The tables in this section (Tables A-12 and A-13) are new.

APPENDIX 6. GOA GROUND FISH HARVEST SPECIFICATIONS FOR 2012/2013

DRAFT NPFMC Recommendations for Final OFLs, ABCs, and TACs (mt) for 2012 and 2013 for Gulf of Alaska Groundfish (December 9, 2011).

Species	Area	2012			2013		
		OFL	ABC	TAC	OFL	ABC	TAC
Pollock	W(610)		30,270	30,270		32,816	32,816
	C(620)		45,808	45,808		49,662	49,662
	C(630)		26,348	26,348		28,565	28,565
	WYAK (640)		3,244	3,244		3,517	3,517
	Subtotal	143,716	105,670	105,670	155,402	114,560	114,560
	SEO	14,366	10,774	10,774	14,366	10,774	10,774
	Total	158,082	116,444	116,444	169,768	125,334	125,334
Pacific cod	W		28,032	21,024		29,120	21,840
	C		56,940	42,705		59,150	44,363
	E		2,628	1,971		2,730	2,047
	Total	104,000	87,600	65,700	108,000	91,000	68,250
Sablefish	W		1,780	1,780		1,757	1,757
	C		5,760	5,760		5,686	5,686
	WYK		2,247	2,247		2,219	2,219
	SEO		3,173	3,173		3,132	3,132
	E subtotal		5,420	5,420		5,350	5,350
	Total	15,330	12,960	12,960	15,129	12,794	12,794
Shallow water flatfish	W		21,994	13,250		20,171	13,250
	C		22,910	18,000		21,012	18,000
	WYAK		4,307	4,307		3,950	3,950
	SEO		1,472	1,472		1,350	1,350
	Total	61,681	50,683	37,029	56,781	46,483	36,550
Deep water flatfish	W		176	176		176	176
	C		2,308	2,308		2,308	2,308
	WYAK		1,581	1,581		1,581	1,581
	SEO		1,061	1,061		1,061	1,061
	Total	6,834	5,126	5,126	6,834	5,126	5,126
Rex sole	W		1,307	1,307		1,283	1,283
	C		6,412	6,412		6,291	6,291
	WYAK		836	836		821	821
	SEO		1,057	1,057		1,037	1,037
	Total	12,561	9,612	9,612	12,326	9,432	9,432
Arrowtooth flounder	W		27,495	14,500		27,386	14,500
	C		143,162	75,000		142,591	75,000
	WYAK		21,159	6,900		21,074	6,900
	SEO		21,066	6,900		20,982	6,900
	Total	250,100	212,882	103,300	249,066	212,033	103,300
Flathead sole	W		15,300	8,650		15,518	8,650
	C		25,838	15,400		26,205	15,400
	WYAK		4,558	4,558		4,623	4,623
	SEO		1,711	1,711		1,735	1,735
	Total	59,380	47,407	30,319	60,219	48,081	30,408

Species	Area	2012			2013		
		OFL	ABC	TAC	OFL	ABC	TAC
Pacific ocean perch	W	2,423	2,102	2,102	2,364	2,050	2,050
	C	12,980	11,263	11,263	12,662	10,985	10,985
	WYAK		1,692	1,692		1,650	1,650
	SEO		1,861	1,861		1,815	1,815
	E (subtotal)	4,095	3,553	3,553	3,995	3,465	3,465
	Total	19,498	16,918	16,918	19,021	16,500	16,500
Northern rockfish	W		2,156	2,156		2,017	2,017
	C		3,351	3,351		3,136	3,136
	E		0	0		0	0
	Total	6,574	5,507	5,507	6,152	5,153	5,153
Shortraker	W		104	104		104	104
	C		452	452		452	452
	E		525	525		525	525
	Total	1,441	1,081	1,081	1,441	1,081	1,081
Other slope rockfish	W		44	44		44	44
	C		606	606		606	606
	WYAK		230	230		230	230
	SEO		3,165	200		3,165	200
	Total	5,305	4,045	1,080	5,305	4,045	1,080
Pelagic shelf rockfish (Dusky)	W		409	409		381	381
	C		3,849	3,849		3,581	3,581
	WYAK		542	542		504	504
	SEO		318	318		296	296
	Total	6,257	5,118	5,118	5,822	4,762	4,762
Rougheye	W		80	80		82	82
	C		850	850		861	861
	E		293	293		297	297
	Total	1,472	1,223	1,223	1,492	1,240	1,240
Demersal shelf rockfish	SEO	467	293	293	467	293	293
Thornyhead rockfish	W		150	150		150	150
	C		766	766		766	766
	E		749	749		749	749
	Total	2,220	1,665	1,665	2,220	1,665	1,665
Atka mackerel	GW	6,200	4,700	2,000	6,200	4,700	2,000
Big skate	W		469	469		469	469
	C		1,793	1,793		1,793	1,793
	E		1,505	1,505		1,505	1,505
	Total	5,023	3,767	3,767	5,023	3,767	3,767
Longnose skate	W		70	70		70	70
	C		1,879	1,879		1,879	1,879
	E		676	676		676	676
	Total	3,500	2,625	2,625	3,500	2,625	2,625
Other skates	GW	2,706	2,030	2,030	2,706	2,030	2,030
Squids	GW	1,530	1,148	1,148	1,530	1,148	1,148
Sharks	GW	8,037	6,028	6,028	8,037	6,028	6,028
Octopuses	GW	1,941	1,455	1,455	1,941	1,455	1,455
Sculpins	GW	7,641	5,731	5,731	7,641	5,731	5,731
Total	GOA	747,780	606,048	438,159	756,621	612,506	447,752