

C3 Council Motion
Area 4 Vessel use cap
June 8, 2024

The Council recommends releasing the analysis for public review with the following revised purpose and need statement and alternatives. Changes are shown with additions in underline and deletions in strikethrough.

Purpose and Need:

In recent years, utilization of halibut quota in Area 4 has declined ~~and~~. Fishery conditions including lack of processing capacity, COVID-19 concerns in remote communities from 2020 through 2022 with limited medical infrastructure, increased killer whale predation, increases in operating costs, and reductions from historical TACs have all contributed to harvests below the TAC fewer vessels participating in the Area 4 fisheries. The Council concluded the previous vessel use cap was constraining and recommended removing it for five years, from 2023 through 2027, to provide additional flexibility and stability to IFQ participants in Area 4 while a long-term change could be considered. This action is being considered to increase utilization of quota and fishery revenues in Area 4 by providing additional harvest opportunities for vessels that were constrained by the previous vessel use cap while maintaining the Council's objectives for the IFQ program to provide entry level opportunities and support sustained participation by fishery dependent communities. The council is considering adjusting the vessel cap for Area 4 halibut to recognize these conditions and increase utilization of quota in the region.

Alternative 1: No action

Alternative 2: Create a halibut vessel cap for Area 4 of:

Option 1: a. 4%, b. 5%, or c. 6% of the Area 4 halibut TAC

Option 2: ~~150% of the coastwide halibut vessel cap~~ Exclude Area 4A from the vessel cap increase and establish an Area 4B/C/D/E vessel cap of a. 7%, b. 9%, or c. 11% of the Area 4B/C/D/E TAC

Sub-options: (Can apply to either option)

1. Specify that halibut IFQ held by an Area 4B CQE does not accrue towards the Area 4 vessel cap.
2. This action will be reviewed (a. three or b. five) years after implementation. ~~or this action will be included in the next halibut/sablefish IFQ Program Review.~~

Clarifications on analytical assumptions for staff:

- This action is not intended to impact the order in which areas are fished; a vessel may operate in Area 2C, Area 3 and Area 4 in any order. Landings in Area 4 up to an amount equal to the difference between the vessel limit that applies inside and outside of Area 4 does not accrue towards the limit outside of Area 4. This does not change the vessel use limitations that exist outside of Area 4; all landings made outside of Area 4 would be limited by the existing caps and all total landings would apply to the Area 4 cap.