



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Action Memo

File Number: HAL 13-005

Agenda Date 12/9/2013

Agenda Number: C-1

Eric Olson, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director

SUBJECT:

Halibut Issues

ESTIMATED TIME:

6 hours

ACTION REQUIRED:

Recommend management measures for Area 2C and Area 3A for 2014

BACKGROUND:

The Council adopted a new approach to manage the charter halibut fisheries under the Guideline Harvest Level Program beginning in 2012. The Council recommended 1 fish \leq 45 inches or \geq 68 inches ("U45O68") for Area 2C in 2012, based on recommendations from its Charter Management Implementation Committee, Advisory Panel, and public, that relied on an ADF&G staff analysis of a range of proposed management measures. The recommended measure accounted for an increased GHL from 788,000 lb in 2011 to 931,000 lb in 2012. For Area 3A the Council recommended status quo (2 fish of any size) based on a decreased GHL from 3,651,000 lb in 2011 to 3,103,000 lb in 2012. The International Pacific Halibut Commission adopted the Council recommendations at its January 2012 Annual Meeting. NMFS published the IPHC regulations in the Federal Register on March 22, 2012 as annual management measures pursuant to 50 CFR 300.62.

The final 2012 halibut harvest estimate for Area 2C is 605,000 lb for the charter sector (**Item C-1(a)**). The average weight was 14.3 lb for the charter sector. Both metrics were up from 2011, likely due to relaxation of size limits from the 37-inch maximum size limit in 2011 to the U45O68 reverse slot limit in 2012. The final 2012 charter halibut harvest in Area 3A is 2,284,000 lb, with an average weight 13.2 lb.

The 2012 management measures were recommended for 2013 by the Council and adopted by the IPHC. The Area 2C GHL for 2013 dropped back to 788,000 lb. The preliminary 2013 charter halibut harvest projection for Area 2C is 723,000 lb. The average weight is 14.1 lb for the charter halibut sector. The Area 3A GHL for 2013 decreased to 2,734,000 lb. The projected charter halibut harvest in Area 3A is 2,271,000 lb, with an average weight 12.8 lb in 2013. This is the lowest estimated average weight for Area 3A since ADF&G began monitoring charter harvests in the early 1990s.

The committee met on October 25, 2013 to recommend a range of potential management measures for Area 2C and Area 3A in 2014 to frame the ADF&G analysis. For Area 2C, measures under consideration continue to be constrained by the 1-fish bag limit, which is implemented under NMFS regulations. The committee's list of recommended measures for analysis is under **Item C-1(b)**. Final committee recommendations from its December 9, 2013 meeting and the ADF&G analysis, which is the basis for those recommendations, will be distributed during the Council meeting. The analysis will provide the projected harvests for the proposed measures under either the GHL Program or Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP), which is still pending Secretarial approval. The Council recommendations would encompass the full range of potential catch limits for Area 2C and Area 3A under consideration by the IPHC.