



Advisory Panel MINUTES

October 5-9, via webconference

The Advisory Panel met Monday, October 5, through Friday, October 9, 2020, in a virtual teleconference. The following members were present for all or part of the meetings (absent members are ~~stricken~~):

Christiansen, Ruth (Co-Vice Chair)	Johnson, Jim	Peterson, Joel
Curran, Tory	Kauffman, Jeff	Scoblic, John
Donich, Daniel	Johnson, Mellisa	Upton, Matt (Co-Vice Chair)
Drobnica, Angel (Chair)	Kavanaugh, Julie	Vanderhoeven, Anne
Gruver, John	Lowenberg, Craig	Velsko, Erik
Gudmundsson, Gretar	Mann, Heather	Weiss, Ernie
Hayden, Natasha	O'Connor, Jamie	Wilt, Sinclair
	O'Donnell, Paddy	

The AP approved the minutes from the June 2020 meeting.

C2 Groundfish Specs

AP Motion 1

C-2 BSAI Groundfish Specifications

The AP recommends the Council approve the attached Table 1, the proposed 2021 and 2022 BSAI OFLs and ABCs as recommended by the SSC, and a rollover of the 2021 TACs with the recognition of a correction for Northern Rock Sole and that adjustments will be made to accommodate the state waters cod fishery.

The AP also recommends the Council approve Tables 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12; attached.

Motion Passed 21-0

Rationale:

- *These OFL and ABC levels are consistent with what was approved by both the Bering Sea Groundfish Plan Team and the SSC. The 2021 TAC levels are those that were adopted by the Council at their December 2019 meeting (and published in the Federal Register) and carried into 2022 in order to meet the Council's process of setting TACs for two years.*
- *Species stock assessments, including OFL and ABC levels, will be updated over the next several weeks and final recommendations made by both the Groundfish Plan Team and SSC at their upcoming November and December meetings. As such, it is recognized that all the OFL, ABC, and TAC numbers contained in Table 1 will change before final adoption by the Council in December. The primary task at this October meeting is to set placeholder numbers to provide a logical outgrowth for whatever is passed for final specifications in December.*

- *Concern was expressed regarding the 2021 TAC amount for sablefish and its potential market implications. The sablefish TAC in 2020 was set lower than ABC due to uncertainty relative to the strength and maturity of the large 2014 and 2016 year classes and the negative impact on the sablefish market of a large increase in the catch of predominantly small fish. These considerations remain valid for the 2021 season. Setting an unrealistically high preliminary sablefish TAC for 2021, even as a housekeeping exercise, may have a negative effect on the current price for sablefish thereby causing additional economic harm for fishermen in 2020. Because of this, it was noted that it may be more appropriate for the preliminary TAC to reflect past Council action to reduce TAC below max ABC.*

Table 1. Proposed OFL, ABC, and TAC for Groundfish in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (metric tons) for 2021-2022.

Species	Area	Proposed 2021 and 2022		
		OFL	ABC	TAC
Pollock	EBS	3,385,000	1,767,000	1,450,000
	AI	70,970	58,384	19,000
	Bogoslof	183,080	137,310	75
Pacific cod	BS	125,734	102,975	92,633
	AI	27,400	20,600	13,796
Sablefish	BSAI	64,765	n/a	n/a
	BS	n/a	2,865	2,865
	AI	n/a	3,891	2,500
Yellowfin sole	BSAI	287,943	261,497	168,900
Greenland turbot	BSAI	10,006	8,510	5,376
	BS	n/a	7,429	5,125
	AI	n/a	1,081	251
Arrowtooth flounder	BSAI	86,647	73,804	10,000
Kamchatka flounder	BSAI	11,472	9,688	7,000
Northern rock sole	BSAI	251,800	245,500	49,000
Flathead sole	BSAI	86,432	71,079	24,000
Alaska plaice	BSAI	36,500	30,700	20,000
Other flatfish	BSAI	21,824	16,368	5,000
Pacific Ocean perch	BSAI	56,589	46,885	42,036
	BS	n/a	13,600	13,600
	EAI	n/a	10,619	10,619
	CAI	n/a	7,817	7,817
	WAI	n/a	14,849	10,000
Northern rockfish	BSAI	19,070	15,683	10,000
Blackspotted/Rougheye Rockfish	BSAI	1,090	899	424
	EBS/EAI	n/a	560	85
	CAI/WAI	n/a	339	339
Shortraker rockfish	BSAI	722	541	375
Other rockfish	BSAI	1,793	1,344	1,088
	BS	n/a	956	700
	AI	n/a	388	388
Atka mackerel	BSAI	74,800	64,400	54,482
	EAI/BS	n/a	22,540	22,540
	CAI	n/a	13,524	13,524
	WAI	n/a	28,336	18,418
Skates	BSAI	48,289	40,248	16,000
Sculpins	BSAI	n/a	n/a	n/a
Sharks	BSAI	689	517	150
Octopuses	BSAI	4,769	3,576	300
Total	BSAI	4,857,384	2,984,264	1,995,000

TABLE 7—PROPOSED 2021 AND 2022 ABC SURPLUS, ABC RESERVES, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT QUOTA (CDQ) ABC RESERVES, AND AMENDMENT 80 ABC RESERVES IN THE BSAI FOR FLATHEAD SOLE, ROCK SOLE, AND YELLOWFIN SOLE

[Amounts are in metric tons]			
Sector	Flathead sole	Rock sole	Yellowfin sole
ABC	71,079	245,500	261,497
TAC	24,000	49,000	168,900
ABC surplus	47,079	196,500	92,597
ABC reserve	47,079	196,500	92,597
CDQ ABC reserve	5,037	21,026	9,908
Amendment 80 ABC reserve	42,042	175,475	82,689

TABLE 8—PROPOSED 2021 AND 2022 APPORTIONMENT OF PROHIBITED SPECIES CATCH ALLOWANCES TO NON-TRAWL GEAR, THE CDQ PROGRAM, AMENDMENT 80, AND THE BSAI TRAWL LIMITED ACCESS SECTORS

PSC species and area ¹	Total PSC	Non-trawl PSC	CDQ PSQ reserve ²	Trawl PSC remaining after CDQ PSQ	Amendment 80 sector ³	BSAI trawl limited access sector
Halibut mortality (mt) BSAI	3,515	710	315	n/a	1,745	745
Herring (mt) BSAI	2,547	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Red king crab (animals) Zone 1	97,000	n/a	10,379	86,621	43,293	26,489
<i>C. opilio</i> (animals) COBLZ	12,850,000	n/a	1,374,950	11,475,050	5,639,987	3,688,081
<i>C. bairdi</i> crab (animals) Zone 1	980,000	n/a	104,860	875,140	368,521	411,228
<i>C. bairdi</i> crab (animals) Zone 2	2,970,000	n/a	317,790	2,652,210	627,778	1,241,500

¹ Refer to § 679.2 for definitions of zones.

² The PSQ reserve for crab species is 10.7 percent of each crab PSC limit.

³ The Amendment 80 program reduced apportionment of the trawl PSC limits for crab below the total PSC limit. These reductions are not apportioned to other gear types or sectors.

TABLE 9-PROPOSED 2021 AND 2022 HERRING AND RED KING CRAB SAVINGS SUBAREA PROHIBITED SPECIES CATCH ALLOWANCES FOR ALL TRAWL SECTORS

Fishery categories	Herring (mt) BSAI	Red king crab (animals) Zone 1
Yellowfin sole	111	n/a
Rock sole/flathead sole/other flatfish ¹	54	n/a
Greenland turbot/arrowtooth flounder/Kamchatka flounder/sablefish	7	n/a
Rockfish	7	n/a
Pacific cod	13	n/a
Midwater trawl pollock	2,313	n/a
Pollock/Atka mackerel/other species ^{2,3}	42	n/a
Red king crab savings subarea non-pelagic trawl gear ⁴	n/a	24,250
Total trawl PSC	2,547	97,000

¹“Other flatfish” for PSC monitoring includes all flatfish species, except for halibut (a prohibited species), Alaska plaice, arrowtooth flounder, flathead sole, Greenland turbot, Kamchatka flounder, rock sole, and yellowfin sole.

²Pollock other than midwater trawl pollock, Atka mackerel, and “other species” fishery category.

³“Other species” for PSC monitoring includes skates, sharks, and octopuses.

⁴In October 2020, the Council recommended that the red king crab bycatch limit for non-pelagic trawl fisheries within the RKCSS be limited to 25 percent of the red king crab PSC allowance (see § 679.21(e)(3)(ii)(B)(2)).

Note: Species apportionments may not total precisely due to rounding.

TABLE 10–PROPOSED 2021 AND 2022 PROHIBITED SPECIES BYCATCH ALLOWANCES FOR THE BSAI TRAWL LIMITED ACCESS SECTOR

BSAI trawl limited access sector fisheries	Prohibited species and area ¹				
	Halibut mortality (mt) BSAI	Red king crab (animals) Zone 1	<i>C. opilio</i> (animals) COBLZ	<i>C. bairdi</i> (animals)	
				Zone 1	Zone 2
Yellowfin sole	150	23,338	3,476,708	346,228	1,185,500
Rock sole/flathead sole/other flatfish ²	-	-	-	-	-
Greenland turbot/arrowtooth flounder/Kamchatka flounder/sablefish	-	-	-	-	-
Rockfish April 15-December 31	4	-	5,743	-	1,000
Pacific cod	391	2,954	148,192	60,000	49,999
Pollock/Atka mackerel/other species ³	200	197	57,438	5,000	5,000
Total BSAI trawl limited access sector PSC	745	26,489	3,688,081	411,228	1,241,500

¹ Refer to § 679.2 for definitions of areas.

² “Other flatfish” for PSC monitoring includes all flatfish species, except for halibut (a prohibited species), Alaska plaice, arrowtooth flounder, flathead sole, Greenland turbot, Kamchatka flounder, rock sole, and yellowfin sole.

³ “Other species” for PSC monitoring includes skates, sharks, and octopuses.

Note: Species apportionments may not total precisely due to rounding.

TABLE 11–PROPOSED 2021 AND 2022 HALIBUT PROHIBITED SPECIES BYCATCH ALLOWANCES FOR NON-TRAWL FISHERIES

Halibut mortality (mt) BSAI				
Non-trawl fisheries	Seasons	Catcher/processor	Catcher vessel	All Non-Trawl
Pacific cod	Annual Pacific cod	648	13	n/a
	January 1-June 10	388	9	n/a
	June 10-August 15	162	2	n/a
	August 15-December 31	98	2	n/a
Non-Pacific cod non-trawl-Total	May 1-December 31	n/a	n/a	49
Groundfish pot and jig	n/a	n/a	n/a	Exempt
Sablefish hook-and-line	n/a	n/a	n/a	Exempt
Total for all non-trawl PSC	n/a	n/a	n/a	710

TABLE 12–PROPOSED 2021 AND 2022 PACIFIC HALIBUT DISCARD MORTALITY RATES (DMR) FOR THE BSAI

Gear	Sector	Halibut discard mortality rate (percent)
Pelagic trawl	All	100
Non-pelagic trawl	Mothership and catcher/processor	84
Non-pelagic trawl	Catcher vessel	58
Hook-and-line	Catcher vessel	9
Hook-and-line	Catcher/processor	9
Pot	All	27

AP Motion 2

C-2 GOA Groundfish Harvest Specifications

The AP recommends the Council:

- 1) Set the 2021 and 2022 proposed annual and seasonal Pacific halibut PSC limits and apportionments in the Gulf of Alaska as shown in the action memo (Tables 9 – 11).
- 2) Adopt the proposed 2021 and 2022 halibut discard mortality rates (DMRs) for the Gulf of Alaska as shown in Table 12 of the action memo.
- 3) Adopt the proposed 2021 and 2022 Gulf of Alaska groundfish specifications for OFLs and ABCs as recommended by the SSC and set TACs as shown in the handout. The TACs for both Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod and Pollock have been adjusted to account for the State water GHF fisheries. The Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod adjustments are shown in table 2 of the action memo. The TAC for Pacific cod has been further reduced by 40% to address conservation concerns and match the Council's 2021 specifications that were set in December of 2019.

Motion passed 21-0

Rationale:

- *These OFL and ABC levels are consistent with what was approved by both the Gulf of Alaska Groundfish Plan Team and the SSC. The 2021 TAC levels are those that were adopted by the Council at their December 2019 meeting (and published in the Federal Register) and carried into 2022 in order to meet the Council's process of setting TACs for two years.*
- *Species stock assessments, including OFL and ABC levels, will be updated over the next several weeks and final recommendations made by both the Groundfish Plan Team and SSC at their upcoming November and December meetings. As such, it is recognized that all the OFL, ABC, and TAC numbers contained in the handout will change before final adoption by the Council in December. The primary task at this October meeting is to set placeholder numbers to provide a logical outgrowth for whatever is passed for final specifications in December.*
- *Concern was expressed regarding the 2021 TAC amount for sablefish and its potential market implications. The sablefish TAC in 2020 was set lower than ABC due to uncertainty relative to the strength and maturity of the large 2014 and 2016 year classes and the negative impact on the sablefish market of a large increase in the catch of predominantly small fish. These considerations remain valid for the 2021 season. Setting an unrealistically high preliminary sablefish TAC for 2021, even as a housekeeping exercise, may have a negative effect on the current price for sablefish thereby causing additional economic harm for fishermen in 2020. Because of this, it was noted that it may be more appropriate for the preliminary TAC to reflect past Council action to reduce TAC below max ABC.*

Table 1. Proposed SSC recommended OFL and ABC and AP recommended TACs for Groundfish in the Gulf of Alaska (metric tons) for 2021-2022

10/5/2020

Species	Area	2020			Catch as of 8/29/2020	2021-2022		
		OFL	ABC	TAC		OFL	ABC	TAC
Pollock	State GHL	n/a	2,712	-	-	n/a	2,797	-
	W (610)	n/a	19,175	19,175	6,492	n/a	19,775	19,775
	C (620)	n/a	54,456	54,456	42,757	n/a	56,160	56,159
	C (630)	n/a	26,597	26,597	6,775	n/a	27,429	27,429
	WYAK	n/a	5,554	5,554	5,180	n/a	5,728	5,728
	Subtotal		140,674	108,494	105,782	61,204	149,988	111,888
	EYAK/SEO	13,531	10,148	10,148	-	13,531	10,148	10,148
	Total	154,205	118,642	115,930	61,204	163,519	122,036	119,239
Pacific Cod	W	n/a	4,942	2,076	118	n/a	4,942	2,076
	C	n/a	8,458	3,806	2,187	n/a	8,458	3,806
	E	n/a	1,221	549	244	n/a	1,221	549
	Total	17,794	14,621	6,431	2,549	30,099	14,621	6,431
Sablefish	W	n/a	2,278	1,942	852	n/a	3,003	3,003
	C	n/a	7,560	6,445	3,267	n/a	9,963	9,963
	WYAK	n/a	2,521	2,343	1,263	n/a	3,323	3,323
	SEO	n/a	4,524	3,663	1,954	n/a	5,963	5,963
	Total	50,481	16,883	14,393	7,336	64,765	22,252	22,252
Shallow-Water Flatfish	W	n/a	23,849	13,250	18	n/a	24,256	13,250
	C	n/a	27,732	27,732	3,001	n/a	28,205	28,205
	WYAK	n/a	2,773	2,773	1	n/a	2,820	2,820
	EYAK/SEO	n/a	1,109	1,109	1	n/a	1,128	1,128
	Total	68,010	55,463	44,864	3,021	69,129	56,409	45,403
Deep-Water Flatfish	W	n/a	226	226	1	n/a	225	225
	C	n/a	1,948	1,948	80	n/a	1,914	1,914
	WYAK	n/a	2,105	2,105	3	n/a	2,068	2,068
	EYAK/SEO	n/a	1,751	1,751	1	n/a	1,719	1,719
	Total	7,163	6,030	6,030	85	7,040	5,926	5,926
Rex Sole	W	n/a	2,901	2,901	30	n/a	3,013	3,013
	C	n/a	8,579	8,579	1,098	n/a	8,912	8,912
	WYAK	n/a	1,174	1,174	1	n/a	1,206	1,206
	EYAK/SEO	n/a	2,224	2,224	-	n/a	2,285	2,285
	Total	18,127	14,878	14,878	1,129	18,779	15,416	15,416
Arrowtooth Flounder	W	n/a	31,455	14,500	119	n/a	30,545	14,500
	C	n/a	68,669	68,669	18,203	n/a	66,683	66,683
	WYAK	n/a	10,242	6,900	42	n/a	9,946	6,900
	EYAK/SEO	n/a	17,694	6,900	20	n/a	17,183	6,900
	Total	153,017	128,060	96,969	18,384	148,597	124,357	94,983
Flathead Sole	W	n/a	13,783	8,650	58	n/a	14,191	8,650
	C	n/a	20,201	15,400	1,604	n/a	20,799	15,400
	WYAK	n/a	2,354	2,354	-	n/a	2,424	2,424
	EYAK/SEO	n/a	1,858	1,858	-	n/a	1,912	1,912
	Total	46,572	38,196	28,262	1,662	47,919	39,326	28,386
Pacific ocean perch	W	n/a	1,437	1,437	1,253	n/a	1,379	1,379
	C	n/a	23,678	23,678	17,977	n/a	22,727	22,727
	WYAK	n/a	1,470	1,470	1,466	n/a	1,410	1,410
	W/C/WYAK	31,567	26,585	26,585	20,696	30,297	25,516	25,516
	SEO	5,525	4,653	4,653	-	5,303	4,467	4,467
	Total	37,092	31,238	31,238	20,696	35,600	29,983	29,983
Northern Rockfish	W	n/a	1,133	1,133	701	n/a	1,079	1,079
	C	n/a	3,178	3,178	1,605	n/a	3,027	3,027
	E	n/a	1	-	-	n/a	1	-
	Total	5,143	4,312	4,311	2,306	4,898	4,107	4,106
Shortraker Rockfish	W	n/a	52	52	5	n/a	52	52
	C	n/a	284	284	156	n/a	284	284
	E	n/a	372	372	221	n/a	372	372
	Total	944	708	708	382	944	708	708
Dusky Rockfish	W	n/a	776	776	217	n/a	759	759
	C	n/a	2,746	2,746	1,825	n/a	2,688	2,688
	WYAK	n/a	115	115	83	n/a	113	113
	EYAK/SEO	n/a	39	39	1	n/a	38	38
	Total	4,492	3,676	3,676	2,126	4,396	3,598	3,598
Rougheye and Blackspotted	W	n/a	168	168	3	n/a	169	169
	C	n/a	455	455	168	n/a	455	455
	E	n/a	586	586	138	n/a	587	587
	Total	1,452	1,209	1,209	309	1,455	1,211	1,211
Demersal shelf rockfish	Total	375	238	238	81	375	238	238
Thornyhead Rockfish	W	n/a	326	326	38	n/a	326	326
	C	n/a	911	911	182	n/a	911	911
	E	n/a	779	779	146	n/a	779	779
	Total	2,688	2,016	2,016	366	2,688	2,016	2,016
Other Rockfish	W/C	n/a	940	940	617	n/a	940	940
	WYAK	n/a	369	369	94	n/a	369	369
	EYAK/SEO	n/a	2,744	2,744	82	n/a	2,744	2,744
	Total	5,320	4,053	4,053	793	5,320	4,053	4,053
Atka mackerel	Total	6,200	4,700	3,000	578	6,200	4,700	3,000
Big Skate	W	n/a	758	758	13	n/a	758	758
	C	n/a	1,560	1,560	695	n/a	1,560	1,560
	E	n/a	890	890	160	n/a	890	890
	Total	4,278	3,208	3,208	868	4,278	3,208	3,208
Longnose Skate	W	n/a	158	158	16	n/a	158	158
	C	n/a	1,875	1,875	285	n/a	1,875	1,875
	E	n/a	554	554	193	n/a	554	554
	Total	3,449	2,587	2,587	494	3,449	2,587	2,587
Other Skates	GOA-wide	1,166	875	875	341	1,166	875	875
Sculpins	GOA-wide	6,932	5,199	5,199	507	-	-	-
Sharks	GOA-wide	10,913	8,184	8,184	733	10,913	8,184	8,184
Octopuses	GOA-wide	1,307	980	980	68	1,307	980	980
TOTAL		607,120	465,956	399,239	126,018	632,836	466,791	402,783

Sources: 2019 OFLs, ABCs, and TACs are from harvest specifications adopted by the Council in December 2018; 2020 OFLs, ABCs, and TACs are from the harvest specifications adopted by the Council in December 2019; 2019 catches through December 31, 2019 and 2020 catches through August 29, 2020 from AKR Catch Accounting. Note: State waters GHL for Pacific cod fisheries are not included within the Federal TAC, but they are accounted for, as to not exceed the ABC when added together.

Table 2. GOA TAC and GHL Considerations for State Waters Pacific Cod

Proposed 2021 and 2022 Gulf of Alaska Pacific cod ABCs, TACs and State Guideline Harvest Levels (GHLs) in metric tons.

Specifications	Western	Central	Eastern	Total
ABC	4,942	8,458	1,221	14,621
State GHL	1,483	2,115	305	3,902
(%)	30%	25%	25%	25-30
Federal TAC	2,076	3,806	549	6,431

Note: The Federal TAC is only for Federal fisheries. It does not include the State GHL within it.

Table 9. Proposed 2021 and 2022 Pacific Halibut PSC Limits, Allowances, and Apportionments (Values are in metric tons)

Trawl gear			Hook-and-line gear ¹				
			Other than DSR			DSR	
Season	Percent	Amount	Season	Percent	Amount ²	Season	Amount
January 20 - April 1	30.5	519	January 1 - June 10	86	221	January 1 - December 31	9
April 1 - July 1	20	341	June 10 - September 1	2	5		
July 1 - August 1	27	462	September 1 - December 31	12	31		
August 1 - October 1	7.5	128					
October 1 - December 31	15	256					
Total		1,706			257		9

¹ The Pacific halibut PSC limit for hook-and-line gear is allocated to the demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) fishery and fisheries other than DSR. The hook-and-line IFQ sablefish fishery is exempt from halibut PSC limits, as are pot and jig gear for all groundfish fisheries.

Table 10. Proposed 2021 and 2022 Seasonal Apportionments of the Pacific Halibut PSC Limit Apportioned Between the Trawl Gear Shallow-Water and Deep-Water Species Fisheries (Values are in metric tons)

Season	Shallow-water	Deep-water ¹	Total
January 20 - April 1	384	135	519
April 1 - July 1	85	256	341
July 1 - August 1	121	341	462
August 1 - October 1	53	75	128
Subtotal, January 20 - October 1	643	807	1,450
October 1 - December 31 ²			256
Total			1,706

¹ Vessels participating in cooperatives in the Rockfish Program will receive 191 mt of the third season (July 1 through September 1) deep-water species fishery halibut PSC apportionment.

² There is no apportionment between trawl shallow-water and deep-water species fisheries during the fifth season (October 1 through December 31).

Table 11. Proposed 2021 and 2022 Apportionments of the “Other hook-and-line fisheries” Halibut PSC Allowance Between the Hook-and-Line Gear Catcher Vessel and Catcher/Processor Sectors (Values are in metric tons)

“Other than DSR” allowance	Hook-and-line sector	Sector annual amount	Season	Seasonal percentage	Sector seasonal amount
257	Catcher Vessel	144	January 1 - June 10	86	124
			June 10 - September 1	2	3
			September 1 - December 31	12	17
	Catcher/Processor	113	January 1 - June 10	86	97
			June 10 - September 1	2	2
			September 1 - December 31	12	14

Table 12. Proposed 2021 and 2022 Halibut Discard Mortality Rates for Vessels Fishing in the Gulf of Alaska. (Values are in percent of halibut assumed to be dead.)

Gear	Sector	Groundfish fishery	Halibut discard mortality rate (percent)
Pelagic trawl	Catcher vessel	All	100
	Catcher/processor	All	100
Non-pelagic trawl	Catcher vessel	Rockfish Program	60
	Catcher vessel	All others	69
	Mothership and catcher/processor	All	84
Hook-and-line	Catcher/processor	All	15
	Catcher vessel	All	13
Pot	Catcher vessel and catcher/processor	All	10

AP Motion 3

Sablefish Apportionment

The AP recommends the Council request the Plan Team and SSC discuss the ~~reasonableness of continuing with the fixed~~ apportionment strategy for sablefish in 2021. Included in this discussion should be specific consideration of using the previously approved NPFMC 5-year ~~exponentially weighted~~ apportionment strategy in 2021 until a new apportionment strategy can be analyzed, reviewed, and adopted, which will more accurately represent the current distribution of sablefish while also providing fishery stability. **The AP recommends the SSC also consider identifying the apportionment strategy that protects juvenile sablefish not already accounted for in the stock assessment model.**

Amendment 1 passed 21-1

Amendment 2 passed 18-4

Amendment 3 passed 18-4

Motion as amended passed 14-8

Rationale in Support of Amendment 2:

- *Significant catches of juvenile sablefish in the Bering Sea far exceeding the ABC and TAC set by the Council should be further analyzed by the Groundfish Plan Team and SSC to ensure there are no future biological concerns not already accounted for in the stock assessment model, especially when discussing and considering different apportionment strategies.*
- *When different ABC apportionment strategies are discussed and analyzed, it will be important for the SSC and Council to recognize the high number of incidental catches of small sablefish to ensure that a proper apportionment strategy is selected that will protect juvenile sablefish, especially when considering the implications of large removals of juvenile sablefish in spatially limited areas may not be fully understood.*

Rationale in Support of Amendment 3:

- *The stock assessment model, and its resulting OFL and ABC outputs, accounts for all sources of sablefish mortality on all portions of the sablefish population.*

Rationale in Support of Main Motion as Amended:

- *Evidence indicates the current ABC apportionment strategy no longer accurately represents the current distribution of sablefish in the BSAI and GOA, which has been previously noted by the SSC. The currently applied apportionment method was fixed in 2013 and hasn't been changed since even though there have been significant changes to the sablefish population since that time.*
- *The 2019 stock assessment reported a biomass of age 2+ sablefish of 740,000 tons and the most recent longline survey showed a projected population increase of approximately 47% (on top of previously projected increases). It is important for any ABC apportionment strategy to recognize and incorporate these changes and be reflective of current conditions.*
- *The previously used NPFMC 5-year strategy better incorporates the changing dynamics of the Alaska-wide sablefish population, which would allow for better execution and understanding of the fisheries that utilize sablefish (e.g. trawl catch levels can be measured against ABC levels that aren't artificially low in an area and the risk of localized depletion in an area from the directed fishery is minimized because ABC levels aren't artificially high).*
- *The request being made is not outcome-oriented and is instead intended to flag an issue of growing critical importance. This request is not being made in an attempt to automatically raise the ABC for sablefish in the Bering Sea in order to accommodate catch in the trawl sectors. It*

was acknowledged the way in which they work diligently (costing time and money) to avoid catches of sablefish while simultaneously avoiding other higher priority PSC species. Sablefish overages seen in the trawl sectors are more indicative of apportionment/management not keeping up with current sablefish population dynamics.

- *As an Alaska-wide stock, there is a single ABC for sablefish. It is this amount that is then regionally apportioned to six different areas in the Bering Sea, Aleutian Islands, and Gulf of Alaska. While trawl catches in the Bering Sea have exceeded allocated levels in recent years, total sablefish catch from all sources has not approached the total Alaska-wide ABC level (which has been conservatively set below maxABC the last few years).*

Minority Report Against Main Motion as Amended:

A management strategy evaluation (MSE) of alternate sablefish apportionment approaches is well underway with results likely available by the December Council meeting. Apportionment plans should balance long-term biological and economic considerations, provide predictability and stability to the fishery, and include stakeholder engagement. Public comment noted that preliminary MSE results presented at the February 2020 workshop found that “it is unlikely that one apportionment type is substantially better than others from the perspective of ensuring sustainability of the Alaska-wide stock.” Without a compelling biological reason, switching from the current approach to a new interim approach for one year to cover bycatch concerns in a non-directed fishery creates unnecessary instability in the directed fishery.

Signed: Victoria Curran, Natasha Hayden, Jamie O'Connor, Jeff Kauffman, Craig Lowenberg

C3 Sculpin/Squid

The AP recommends the Council adopt Alternative 2 as its final preferred alternative.

Motion passed 22-0.

Rationale:

- *The only difference in Alternative 2 compared to Alternative 1 (status quo) is reinstating the allowance to process incidental squid (and now sculpin) into any product form, not just meal. This doesn't change the category for squid or sculpin (both remain in the FMPs in the non-target ecosystem component category); this doesn't change the maximum retainable amount (20%) so doesn't affect how much squid can be retained; and this doesn't change the prohibition on targeting these species because they are in the ecosystem category.*
- *Alternative 2 only changes the prohibition on processing these species into anything but meal.*
- *The analysis provides the history of this action, indicating that the Council's original analysis and action to move squid into the ecosystem category in 2017 expected that historical processing of incidental squid into various product forms would continue to occur, but the final regulations (in 2018) did not reflect that. Therefore, this action is a correction to that rule to be consistent with the council's original intent.*
- *As the analysis points out, this action will allow incidental squid in particular to continue to be processed into a local bait product for fixed gear fishermen, which they prefer. This was the primary product form for squid before it was inadvertently prohibited. It is preferable to utilize local bycatch of squid rather than import it from areas as far away as Argentina.*
- *The analysis also states that Alternative 2 is consistent with NS 1 in that we are reducing the amount of squid that are discarded and increasing overall OY.*

C4 Cook Inlet Salmon

The AP recommends that the Council adopt Alternative 2, federal management with delegation to the State, as its preliminary preferred alternative (PPA) during this meeting.

Motion passed 22-0.

Rationale:

- *Alternative 2 offers a path forward that utilizes the resources and systems already in place in Alaska to manage salmon, while providing for the basic steps necessary to satisfy both the MSA and court ruling.*
- *Alternative 2 also offers the best path forward for one entity managing the stock proactively as a single fishery throughout its range, as opposed to two entities managing separately and reactively.*
- *The majority of past and current public comment and testimony to the AP and the Council has supported Alternative 2.*
- *The current Salmon FMP recognizes the State of Alaska as best situated for salmon management. Due to NMFS' lack of salmon management capacity in Alaska, analysis of Alternative 3 shows a number of challenges that could potentially, or are even likely to, result in the closure of the EEZ portion of this fishery. That portion constitutes the majority of the fishery grounds and is historically crucial to the economic vitality of the fishery. Considering the Council's duties under the National Standards, and considering the viable path forward under Alternative 2, the prudent way forward is to identify Alternative 2 as the PPA.*
- *Due to the time constraints imposed by the court, it is important that the Council choose a PPA at this meeting in order to give stakeholders the opportunity to thoroughly review and comment prior to a time certain final action in December. Because this is an unusually short span of time between initial review and final action, it is vital that the Council advance a PPA and inform the public of its intentions in order to support a transparent public process with ample opportunity for public comment on the potential outcome.*
- *The need for that transparency in the form of an identified PPA is further emphasized by the precedent setting nature of this action, which addresses only one of three salmon areas that span both state and federal waters. Those areas are named in this analysis as future considerations for the Council, and include stakeholders from multiple other regions and communities. It is important for the Council to signal its intentions to those diverse stakeholder groups and the broader public in order to support a clear and effective public process.*

C5 Observer/ EM Trawl

The AP supports the NMFS recommendations in the Draft 2021 Annual Deployment Plan (ADP) and expanded recommendations proposed by the partial coverage Fishery Monitoring Advisory Committee (FMAC). This includes the 2021 coverage rates, the port-based deployment model, maintaining the fixed-gear EM pool, support of the pelagic trawl EM EFP, deployment of shore-based observer sampling resources, and **to limit the use of waivers² on a case-by-case basis.** ~~when¹ absolutely² necessary.~~

The AP also recommends that NMFS produce an abbreviated Annual Report for the June 2021 Council meeting. prioritize staff resources on analytical tasks to further EM integration, zero selection, bias metrics re-evaluation, and cost efficiencies analysis already tasked for the partial coverage program.

Amendment¹ passed 22-0.

Amendment² passed 13-9.

Motion as amended passed 18-4.

Rationale in Favor of Motion as Amended:

- *The AP recognizes the extraordinary effort of NMFS leadership and staff in response to the unprecedented impact of COVID-19 on the observer program and fishing fleets in the region. Their response with observer waivers and following up with a solution that increased coverage during a difficult time for observer providers to deploy observers around the region is commendable.*
- *The AP supports the PCFMAC recommendations and specifically highlights the following items: the proposed 2021 coverage rates (15% hurdle, plus optimization) in response to budget and observer availability with port-based deployment; maintaining the current fixed gear EM pool of 169 vessels; prioritization of new vessels according to pre-existing installation; cost-effective vessels that do not cause data gaps as well as vessels between 40-57.5 feet with bunk space or life raft limitations; NMFS's recommendation of the continued dedication of staff resources to the pelagic trawl EM Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP); and an increase to shore-based observer coverage which will fill data gaps where possible.*
- *The PCFMAC pointed out an opportunity to learn from the port-based deployment approach while in use through the remainder of 2020 and 2021. Port-Based deployment of Observers was successful in mitigating complications arising from COVID-19 and allowed the resumption of valuable and necessary data collection. Port Based deployment, unintentionally, resulted in an increased optimization effect for fixed gear and trawl targeting Pacific cod. As such, now is the time to record lessons learned from this different approach to monitoring our region's partial coverage fisheries.*
- *The Annual Report is geared toward evaluating how well the actual deployment of observers matched the predicted deployment from the previous Fall ADP. Because of the impacts resulting from COVID-19, there is not much value or utility in spending a lot of staff time on a lengthy report showing NMFS had to abandon the 2020 ADP when COVID-19 hit. There is greater value in moving ahead on EM integration, the zero-selection pool, refining Port Based Deployment, and determining which supplemental sources to use for biological samples where there are data gaps.*
- *While originally trying to be concise and capture staff recommendations, it was acknowledged that the choice of the adjective 'absolutely' (removed under Amendment 1) was ambiguous. Amendment 2, while lengthier, was intended to clarify the intent of the main motion to limit and make separate determinations on the use of waivers.*

Rationale in Opposition to Motion as Amended:

- *As there is no way of knowing the exact challenges Covid-19 may present for the 2021 fishing year, limiting NMFS' discretion regarding the issuance of waivers at this point does not make sense. Currently, in practice, it is difficult to get a waiver so constraining NMFS even further could cause problems for any type of vessel that is required to take an observer. Further, if a vessel is in need of a waiver (for whatever reason) and they aren't able to get one, that vessel is unable to go fishing, which results in compounded negative social and economic impacts during the time of a Covid-19.*
- *The evidence from 2020 demonstrates that NMFS is unlikely to suddenly begin issuing observer waivers as common practice.*
- *The language contained in Amendment 2 negates the intent of the original language as well as the modified language contained in Amendment 1. Under the original motion, observer waivers were intended to be granted by NMFS sparingly (as is current practice). In contrast, the modified language places a limit on the use of waivers by NMFS.*

C6 BSAI ABM

AP Motion 1

Abundance-Based Management of Halibut PSC limits

The AP recommends that the Council consider initiating another initial review draft of BSAI Halibut Abundance-Based Management of PSC Limits with the following modifications:

I. Modify the Council Purpose and Need Statement for this action as follows (proposed additions in underline and proposed deletions in strike-through):

ABM Purpose and Need:

The current fixed yield-based halibut PSC caps are inconsistent with management of the directed halibut fisheries and Council management of groundfish fisheries, which are managed based on abundance. When halibut abundance declines, PSC becomes a larger proportion of total halibut removals and thereby further reduces the proportion and amount of halibut available for harvest in directed halibut fisheries. Conversely, if halibut abundance increases, halibut PSC limits could be unnecessarily constraining. The Council is considering linking PSC limits in the A80 sector to halibut abundance to provide a responsive management approach at varying levels of halibut abundance. The Council is considering abundance-based PSC limits to control total halibut mortality, particularly at low levels of abundance. Abundance based PSC limits also could provide an opportunity for the directed halibut fishery and promote conservation of the halibut resource ~~protect the halibut spawning stock biomass~~. The Council recognizes that abundance-based halibut PSC limits may increase and decrease with changes in halibut abundance.

II. Modify the Council Objectives as follows (proposed additions in underline and proposed deletions in strike-through):

Council Objectives for ABM:

- Halibut PSC limits should be indexed to halibut abundance.
- Protect and conserve the halibut resource by reducing halibut mortality, ~~Halibut spawning stock biomass should be protected~~ especially at lower levels of abundance.
- There should be flexibility provided to avoid unnecessarily constraining the groundfish fishery particularly when halibut abundance is high.
- Provide for directed halibut fishing operations in the Bering Sea at a level that achieves equity through providing for the historic average proportion of directed halibut use from 2002 to 2011.
- Provide for some stability in PSC limits on an inter-annual basis.

III. Modify the Alternatives as follows (additions underlined and deletions in strike-through):

Alternative 1: Status Quo

Alternative 2: current Alternative 2

Alternative 3: current Alternative 3 (modified to have no floor)

Alternative 4: current Alternative 4 with changes to Element 1 (Starting Point) and Element 3 (Floor) as follows, to reflect the intent of the original alternative:

Element 1: Starting Point; Option 3, 2017 PSC use (~~1,167~~ 917 mt)

Element 3: Floor; Option 4, ~~664 mt (adjusted for 2018 A80 proportional usage of 1,000 mt)~~
496 mt (the A80 proportion of the regulatory limit)

Element 8: In the case of very low halibut abundance, the PSC limit will not be constrained by Element 3 (Floor) or Element 6 (PSC limit responsiveness)

Alternative 5:

Use a (4x2) lookup table using the setline and trawl indices to establish proposed PSC limits.

		EBS shelf trawl survey index (t)	
		Low < 130,000	High > 130,000
IPHC setline survey index in Area 4ABCDE (WPUE)	High ≥ 11,000	Medium 1,400 mt	High 1,745 mt
	Medium 8,000 - 10,999	Low 1,100 mt	Medium 1,400 mt
	Low 6,000 - 7,999	Very Low 900 mt	Low 1,100 mt
	Very Low < 6,000	Extremely Low 496 mt	Extremely Low 496 mt

The Council may consider a mechanism to further reduce the PSC limit when the coastwide spawning stock biomass drops below B30.

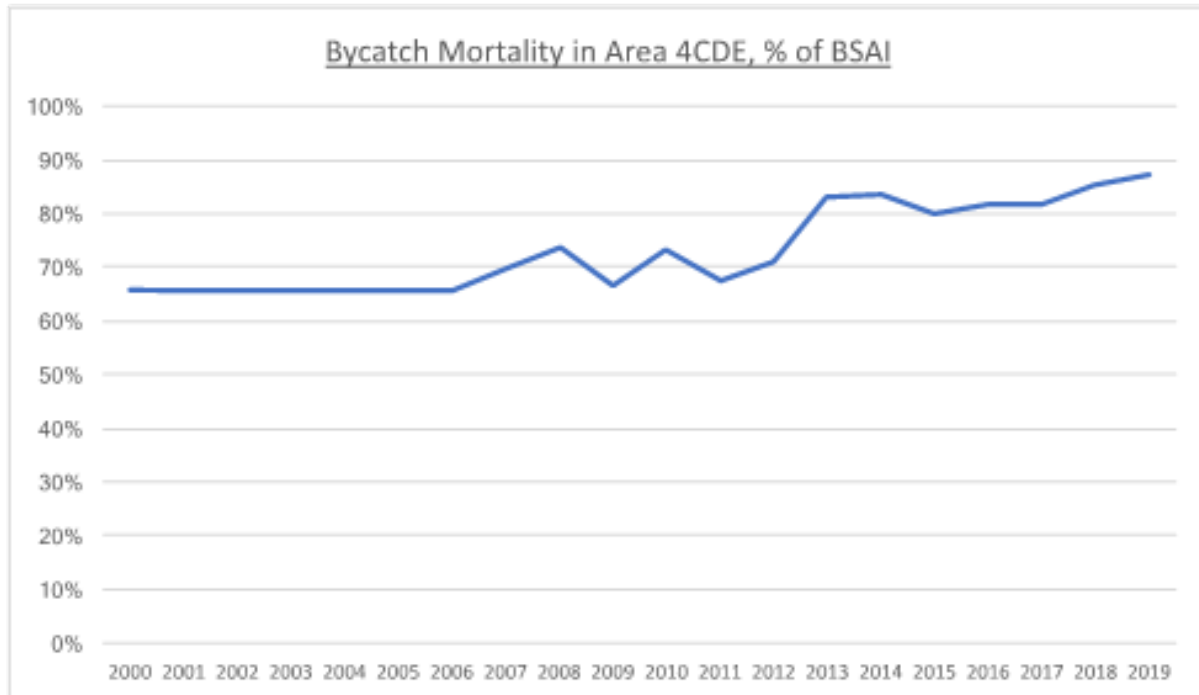
Element A below applies to ²Alternatives 4 and 5 all alternatives

⁴Element A: Abundance Based Performance Standard

The Council will consider developing a performance standard addition to the ABM action that would apply to the rationalized A80 sector, and would include a system of incentives, rewards and penalties designed to encourage optimum halibut bycatch management. The performance standard will be based on PSC limits arrived at through an abundance-based approach.

Request for Analysis: Exploration of A80 PSC Spatial Distribution

The table below shows the rising percentage of bycatch mortality from Area 4CDE. This can cause disproportionate impacts to catch limits across IPHC regulatory areas in the BSAI. The potential for development of a performance standard relating to the spatial distribution of A80 bycatch mortality should be investigated through analysis of A80 bycatch mortality by IPHC regulatory area.



Request for Model Adjustments:

Recommend work group test model assumptions relative to bycatch selectivity, migration, halibut maturity schedule, and the 4A/4B data split between Gulf and BSAI. AP recommends that work group draw on IPHC stock assessment and MSE models to inform process.

Amendment¹ to strike Element A: failed 8-14

Amendment²: passed 22-0

Motion as amended: passed 15 -7

Rationale in Favor of Main Motion as Amended:

- *This motion is responsive to public comment and consistent with the Purpose and Need Statement tying the Council action to halibut abundance. Within the alternatives, there are solutions that can restore a level of equity among user groups and conform to a broad range of National Standards.*
- *The operating model produced outcomes for the directed fishery under Alternatives 3 and 4 that appear to be significantly dampened, particularly when compared to those expected under the more familiar IPHC yield analysis. Further evaluation of the degree of uncertainty in the assumptions used in the model and identification of areas in need of potential refinement will be important in the next iteration of the analysis to determine if, and to what degree, model outcomes could be impacted.*
- *Changes were made to the model late in the review process that did not allow for thorough SSC review at this meeting; however, some areas of concern and refinement were identified in the SCC discussion and from the public that should be further investigated.*
- *Halibut fishermen, dependent communities, and the Amendment 80 sector can remain economically viable in their respective fisheries as long as management is designed to reflect a sharing of conservation when halibut abundance declines.*

- *This motion addresses the national standards regarding optimum yield (NS1), the use of best scientific information (NS2), equity in allocations (NS4), sustained community participation (NS8) and reducing bycatch to the extent practicable (NS9).*
- *This motion is responsive to guidance in the National Standards, NEPA, and other federal laws regarding responsibilities to provide for the livelihood and well-being of Indian Tribes and aboriginal peoples. The 17 Bering Sea halibut-dependent communities highlighted by the DEIS Social Impact Assessment are overwhelmingly Alaska Native and their residents are members of federally-recognized Tribes. Indigenous people from the BSAI region have been using halibut for time immemorial. Halibut remains important to a way of life, cultural continuity, and economic livelihood of Native Alaskans in this region, and should be acknowledged in future analyses.*
- *The SIA references evidence supporting over 10,000 years of dependence on marine resources by the inhabitants of the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska, reflecting thousands of years of sustained participation in the halibut fishery.*
- *Abundance based management is consistent with the Council's management of other groundfish and bycatch species in the BSAI and should be adopted for halibut. The current management framework that allows for the prioritization of bycatch poses a real threat of the directed fishery in 4CDE being completely preempted if biomass continues to decline.*
- *Representatives from Native Alaska coastal communities and others referenced the environmental justice concerns related to this issue and how halibut dependent communities have been disproportionately impacted by reduced access to their fisheries. Federal law will require consideration for the environmental and economic impacts of this action on minorities and rural communities.*
- *Considerations for the cultural, social, and historical importance of this fishery on halibut dependent communities needs to be adequately considered. Due to the very distinct scales of the directed halibut and A80 fisheries a dollar to dollar comparison offers an inadequate lens to assess the full impacts of this action.*

Purpose and Need

- Changes to the Purpose and Need reflect: 1) the Council's decision to focus this action on A80, and 2) more broadly encompass that all sizes of halibut should be managed in a conservative and sustainable manner, not just the spawning biomass.

Objectives

- *The change to the objective of protecting the spawning stock biomass is reflective of the recommended change to the Purpose and Needs statement, speaking to the protection and conservation of all sizes of the halibut resource at extremely low levels of abundance which is a standard practice in management of all species by the Council and should include halibut allocated to Amendment 80 as PSC.*
- *The second change is designed to assist the Council in restoring an equitable share of the halibut resource. As abundance has declined, a larger share of a smaller pie has gone to the PSC users, resulting in an inequitable sharing of halibut mortality. As such, the directed fisheries historical dependence and use has been eroded to extremely low levels, causing instability and uncertainty in the sector and halibut dependent communities. A key component of this action is to address equitable use as outlined in NS 4.*
- *The directed fishery was nearly put out of business in 2014 and 2020, with much uncertainty in the intervening years, effectively arresting long-term investment in the fishery, diminishing values and equity in quota and vessel assets, risking the prehistoric use of halibut for Alaska Natives, and communities dependent on halibut. Many small boat fishermen in the BSAI region have*

folded and are no longer in operation. Many of the remaining participants are struggling to hang on while they await meaningful results from this action.

Alternatives

- *Removing non-A80 bycatch sectors from the analysis resulted in changes in the document that did not capture the original intent of the stakeholder's proposals. As such, this motion changes the two directed fishery proposals to their original intent by removing the floor from Alternative 3 and correcting the starting point and floor of Alternative 4 to reflect the A80 share of these parameters (971 mt and 496 mt respectively). Without these changes, the alternatives are severely weakened and cannot adequately respond to the Purpose and Need and Council objectives.*
- *Element 8 in Alternative 4 remains an important conservation component and is designed to go below the floor in extremely low abundance situations. All managed species fisheries in the Council purview operate with rules that include management responses to low levels of abundance.*
- *Alternative 5 was added to provide a different approach to meeting the objectives of Alternative 4 and element 8. Using a lookup table to arrive at abundance-based PSC limits is perceived by some to be more transparent and simplistic. However, the relative consequences of this alternative need further evaluation. The discussion paper highlights that a lookup table can be much coarser, and year on year changes in abundance that occur around a threshold value could make the PSC limit behave with volatility. Conversely, PSC may stay at a limit for long periods of time as abundance fluctuates, creating stability for A80 but potentially causing instability in directed fishery catch limits. The values identified in the lookup table will need further analysis and are an estimate of what PSC limits need to be at identified abundance levels to restore and provide equity to the directed fishery.*
- *The table includes a row to address times when the setline survey reaches a critically low point that reduces PSC to the (modified) floor. In addition, if the coastwide halibut spawning stock biomass reaches B30, Alternative 5 also encourages the council to consider further measures to address conservation and sustainability of the halibut resource.*

Abundance Based Performance Standards

- *A performance standard can be an important way to provide flexibility to the A80 fleet and additional benefits to directed users through potential bycatch savings.*
- *An additional performance standard is needed to address impacts on the spatial distribution of halibut PSC mortality in IPHC regulatory areas. Previous Council analyses have shown that under 70% of BSAI bycatch mortality was taken in area 4CDE between 1990 and 2005. Since this time, bycatch mortality has been increasing in this area, reaching a high of nearly 90% in 2019, compounding the already depressed fishery allocations in this area and leading to more instability in 4CDE communities and CDQ/IFQ fishers.*

Rationale in Opposition to Main Motion as Amended:

- *The analysis clearly demonstrates that the EBS bottom trawl and IPHC set line survey are not correlated with halibut PSC levels encountered by the Amendment 80 sector. As such, using them to establish PSC limits via a traditional control rule or via a lookup table will result in a PSC limit for the A80 sector that is not practicable for both unnecessarily constraining the A80 sector and minimizing halibut mortality. Such a PSC limit will often be opposite of what is occurring on the water with the A80 sector (i.e., increasing encounters with declining indices or decreasing encounters with increasing indices).*
- *It is unclear how the modified language of the Purpose and Need statement to focus on the conservation of halibut is measurable for comparison across the various Alternatives. Spawning*

stock biomass is the metric utilized by the Council for gauging the health of the majority of its groundfish fisheries. While the analysis shows that the current range of Alternatives have no significant positive impact on the halibut spawning stock biomass, it is necessary to retain this metric in both the Council's P and N and Objectives for this action in order to continue to be able to measure impacts across Alternatives.

- *The modified language under Objective 2, to protect and conserve the halibut resource by reducing halibut mortality, is unattainable. The intent of this modification is to address all halibut mortality across all users of the resource, but the Council has no control over or input into the fishing mortality rates or directed fishery catch limits established by the IPHC.*
- *Trying to return the directed fishery to 2002-2011 catch levels, as stated in the modified language of Objective 4, is unrealistic. During this time frame, a significant retrospective bias in the halibut stock assessment led to the realization that fishing mortality levels and the FCEY had been set at unsustainable levels for directed removals. As such, using this time frame to establish a proportional share results in the numerator being inaccurate. When the realized error was corrected and propagated throughout the assessment, halibut abundance during that time frame was significantly lower than originally thought. As such, the dramatic declines seen in directed fishery catch levels since that time are a combination of both this correction coupled with a declining biomass. Further, this proportional ratio is not reflective of the reality of the directed fishery and its population impacts (e.g., directed fishery removals are all 032 fish that are almost entirely females).*
- *Establishing a starting point PSC limit that is more than 500 mt below recent halibut usage in the A80 sector will shut down multiple vessels, thereby significantly impacting vessel crew, companies, and the communities providing a multitude of services to these vessels. Further, a performance standard only works (provides incentive) if the cap is set at or above usage. If the cap is set below usage there will be no room for additional (improved) performance because the A80 sector will be unable to catch their target species resulting in significant economic losses. Setting a PSC limit below actual usage while simultaneously asking for adherence to a performance standard to stay further below the already constraining limit is not practicable. A management program intended to reduce halibut bycatch to the greatest extent practicable needs to focus on what is achievable in the A80 fishery while also allowing this sector harvest their allocations.*
- *The analysis showed that a reduction in the halibut PSC limit does not equate to a direct 1:1 increase to the directed halibut fishery. Other mechanisms beyond PSC reductions (within the IFQ/CDQ fisheries themselves) should be explored for the goal of providing additional access to directed BSAI halibut users given that the available catch amount in Area 4CDE is not always fully harvested.*
- *The A80 sector has shared in the conservation burden for halibut over the years and is currently fully utilizing all the tools available to the fleet to reduce halibut PSC to the extent practicable. The sector has experienced multiple reductions in halibut PSC limits. In the past such reductions have been associated with additional regulatory changes to make the realized reduction practicable (e.g., the formation of cooperatives, deboardsorting). All of these changes come at a cost to the sector.*

Motion 2 - failed

The AP recommends that the Council integrate into the next Initial Review Draft the three major elements of the discussion paper as described in the “Approaches to Abundance-Based Halibut PSC Limits for the Amendment 80 Sector.”

- 1) A Performance standard with incentives to reduce halibut mortality to the extent practicable;
- 2) Additional PSC reductions in years of low halibut catch limits of the 4CDE FCEY; and
- 3) Community allocations in years of low halibut catch limits to the extent legally permissible.

Motion failed 9-13

Rationale in Opposition:

- *The intent of this motion is that it is not linked to halibut abundance, which is counter to this ‘Abundance-Based Management for PSC Limits’ action and its Purpose and Needs. While some aspects of this motion may have merit, such as a performance standard or additional consideration for PSC reductions at times of low abundance, these elements should be linked to a core management action tied to abundance.*
- *The FCEY aspect of the proposed A80 performance standard does not achieve an equitable sharing of the resource during times of low abundance for directed fisheries participants. If this concept is forwarded for analysis, reasonable values to achieve a fair historical percentage of the fishable biomass should be evaluated.*
- *As outlined in the discussion paper, the CDQ/community compensation element as proposed would require significant statutory changes and is not a concept supported by some Alaska Native representatives from within the region, as noted in public comment, testimony, and deliberations. Native communities are requesting an equitable sharing of the resource and responsible management of halibut PSC in the BSAI region. Additionally, this element ignores IFQ holders from within the region, state, and country and would further reduce the equity we are trying to restore through this action. This Halibut ABM action is not intended to be a specific CDQ or Western Alaska community action, rather its goals are focused around an abundance based approach to halibut PSC management for consistency with the way all other species are managed by the NPFMC, as well as providing for a directed fishery for all participants across the range of the halibut stock.*
- *The NPFMC does not set allocations, for PSC or otherwise, based on encounter rates in the groundfish fisheries, and do not use encounter rates to measure abundance. Numerous factors affect encounter rates, including operational decisions, gear selectivity, ocean temperatures and other spatial and temporal conditions. It is concerning that the abundance of halibut in 2019 decreased while encounters and mortality continue to increase. With proper abundance-based management, this would not be allowed to happen. Basing PSC limits on encounter rates could be very damaging to the halibut resource, or any other fishery managed in this way.*

Rationale in Favor:

- *Because of the concern that exists with the use of survey indices and the way in which they do not track with encounters of halibut in the Amendment 80 fleet, a performance standard approach for managing halibut PSC in the Amendment 80 fleet is a more tenable approach with a proven track record in other fisheries in both the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska. A performance standard for annually setting the A80 halibut PSC limit would move it away from a static amount (meeting the Council’s P and N) and would better reflect the annual variability of halibut encounters, which are what actually dictate practicability in terms of halibut avoidance and NS 9.*

- *A performance standard is an adaptive management tool for dealing with the reality that in some years it can be easier or harder to avoid halibut for a variety of reasons that the survey indices are unable to track. Incentives of a possible performance standard approach can be two-fold: 1) more halibut PSC can be available to the sector for use at a later time if the sector remains below a certain level (carrot approach) and/or 2) the sector would be required to fish under a lower PSC amount for a specified time period if PSC levels are not achieved (stick approach). Specific numbers associated with a performance standard were intentionally not included as a part of the motion as it was felt that signaling support for the overall approach was most important at this time.*
- *While not a strict abundance-based approach, Area 4CDE FCEY is connected to abundance through the IPHC stock assessment and management process. The FCEY reflects the amount of fish that's available in 4CDE and, at levels the Council determines to be low, additional reductions in the A80 sector halibut limit could help achieve the Council's objectives of providing for a directed fishery. Under this component, both the directed fishery and A80 sector would be impacted by the FCEY if it is low. However, in a year where the FCEY is stable or increasing, it doesn't make sense to have the A80 sector have further reductions based on the indices or a lookup table.*
- *While there may be some concerns with tying Council management triggers to the IPHC decision-making process, this component is reflective of the reality of the two differing management structures. It is recognized that there are political considerations that go into the IPHC's determination of area-specific FCEYs each year. However, modification to the Council's fourth ABM objective in the motion above is based on historic FCEYs so use of FCEY in the second component of this motion is in line with that approach.*
- *A legal mechanism for granting a portion of the FCEY, made available by a reduction in halibut PSC by the A80 sector, to benefit halibut dependent communities in the BSAI should be explored. Communities in the BSAI could benefit from some entity able to hold quota. Future analysis should provide potential options for establishing an entity with the singular focus of holding halibut quota specifically for directed halibut fishing by people living in AK communities.*

D1 Survey Planning

The AP recommends that the Council prioritizes ~~surveys in~~ **includes** the Gulf of Alaska in **the list of surveys priorities in 2021.**

Amendment passed 21-1

Motion as amended passed 17-5

Rationale:

- *This request is not intended to prioritize the GOA survey above the other surveys listed by the AFSC. It is intended to highlight the importance of maintaining the schedule for having a GOA survey in 2021.*
- *2020 was an off survey year for the GOA. If this survey was to also be missed in 2021, resulting in two consecutive years of missing survey data, there will likely be additional constraints placed on the GOA fisheries from the increase in uncertainty due to this missing data. Maintaining the 2021 GOA survey will help to ensure that GOA fisheries can operate and be maintained to the greatest extent possible.*

E Staff Tasking

AP Motion 1

Sablefish pot 3-year review

The Advisory Panel recommends that the Council move forward during the 2021 meeting cycle with the previously scheduled and tabled “GOA sablefish pots: 3-year review” process.

Motion passed 22-0

Rationale:

- *The Council specifically requested a review paper on the functioning of the GOA sablefish longline pot gear fishery be conducted after three years following implementation of the program.*
- *The GOA sablefish pot fishery was implemented for the 2017 fishing year, so it was anticipated for the review to cover 2017 through 2019. As such, the review is now over a year late.*
- *Given that this action was somewhat controversial at the time of adoption and some concerns with the program were signaled in public testimony (e.g., small boat fishermen are now experimenting with different pot types (slinky pots) and the lack of including jig gear as a legal gear for sablefish), it is important to initiate the review as soon as possible.*

AP Motion 2

Processing B and C Sablefish IFQ Onboard

The AP recommends that the Council consider a discussion paper that analyzes the allowance of onboard processing of sablefish B and C shares as an amendment to the Halibut and Sablefish IFQ program. All vessel length restrictions and owner-onboard provisions would remain unchanged within the B and C class designations, and this discussion paper would only analyze the effects of removing the processing-at-sea restriction.

Motion passed 15-7

Rationale in Favor:

- *Currently, only A-share sablefish IFQ quota is allowed to be processed onboard at sea. There are also no leasing or vessel length restrictions on A-share quota. As a result of this, A-share quota is much more valuable on the IFQ market and does not change hands very often. Instead, a large majority of A-share quota is leased to catcher-vessels and not processed onboard.*
- *Current market conditions for sablefish prices have seen a dramatic decrease as a result of increased TACs and large amounts of smaller grade fish on the market. As an example, October 2017 fixed-gear sablefish prices in the CG area averaged \$7.35/lb while October 2020 prices are averaging \$2.65/lb.*
- *Allowing the directed sablefish fleet the option to freeze B and C shares onboard will provide them flexibility in their marketing, if they so choose. Limited markets for dockside sablefish deliveries have become more drastic in recent years, from Western Alaska to Southeast Alaska, and will continue to be drastic in the future.*
- *Maintaining vessel length and leasing restrictions for B and C shares, but allowing the option to process onboard will not alter original IFQ program objectives.*
- *The State of Alaska currently has no restrictions on processing onboard, and many vessels that participate in the SE freezer salmon troll sector could benefit from this motion, especially in this time of near market collapse.*

- *It will be important for the discussion paper on this issue to address potential impacts and benefits to communities, processors, and permit holders, by area, as impacts may be different by area and the IFQ program was intentionally set up to provide for shoreside processing and community benefits.*

Rationale in Opposition:

- *Initial consideration of this proposal would be better suited for the Council's IFQ Committee. In this way, the IFQ Committee could not only discuss the merits of the proposal itself, but also its relative priority amongst the various other IFQ issues identified for consideration.*
- *CDQ entities can't own B or C share sablefish quota, therefore it is unclear how this proposal would provide a benefit to them.*
- *It was acknowledged during discussion that this proposal, if allowed, would likely only be taken advantage of by a very few people. As such, given the scheduling restrictions and workload considerations currently being faced by the Council, this issue should not be a priority for action.*