



# C1 BSAI Halibut Abundance-based Management (ABM) PSC Limits

October 2019 Council Meeting

## Action Memo

- Council Staff: Dr. Diana Stram, Sam Cunningham, Anna Henry
- Other Presenters: Dr. Mike Downs (Wislow Research Associates); AFSC - Dr. Carey McGilliard, Dr. Jim Ianelli, Dr. Dana Hanselman
- Action Required: 1. Initial review of preliminary Draft EIS, including alternatives, halibut simulation model, and performance metrics.  
2. Action as necessary

## BACKGROUND

The Council will review the preliminary draft EIS for the BSAI Halibut ABM PSC limits management action. This document analyzes proposed management measures to index Pacific halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) limits in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) groundfish fisheries to halibut abundance. PSC limit modifications are considered for various groundfish sectors including the BSAI trawl limited access (TLAS) sector, the Amendment 80 sector, longline catcher vessels (CVs), longline catcher processors (CPs), and the Community Development Quota (CDQ) sector (i.e., a reduction to the CDQ's allocated prohibited species quota reserve). The objective of modifying PSC limits is to index PSC limits to halibut abundance which may achieve the goals of providing flexibility to the groundfish fisheries in times of high halibut abundance, protecting spawning biomass of halibut at low levels of abundance, and stabilizing in inter-annual variability in PSC limits, all of which might indirectly provide additional harvest opportunities in the commercial halibut fishery.

Information posted to the Council's agenda includes the preliminary DEIS, the executive summary and Appendix 1 (appended separately) for the Social Impact Assessment (SIA). Two additional items include a list of errata for the DEIS and SIA and a compilation of tables and figures from the document (numbered according to where they are found within the preliminary DEIS document). These additional tables and figures include an updated version of Alternative 3.3a in which the secondary index is standardized to 2018 as was intended by the submitted stakeholder proposal.

## Halibut ABM Webinar

In order to assist the stakeholders with review of the major parts of this analysis, a webinar was held on September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The agenda from that meeting is attached as well as a summary of clarifying questions from the public submitted in person and online during the webinar and responses from analysts. Comments from stakeholders that were not seeking clarification are not included.

**Key discussions and decision points for this meeting include the following:**

- Review the suite of Alternatives and provide any revisions as desirable. Key considerations include:
  - Do the Alternatives as currently constructed meet the intent of the Council's action?
  - Could complexity and redundancy be reduced while still addressing the Council's intent?
- Review the halibut simulation model, including analytical assumptions and application for purposes of informing the Council's policy decisions for this analysis.
- Review the suite of draft performance metrics and revise as needed. Revised performance metrics may better characterize results across alternatives to indicate where they address conflicting Council objectives.

The analysts seek input from the stakeholders on the background information provided in Chapters 3 and 4 to best describe the operational and management issues within both the directed halibut fishery and directed groundfish fisheries, as well as the context within which this analysis is being considered among other Council BSAI groundfish analyses and priorities.

Earlier in 2019, stakeholders had requested an interactive spreadsheet of alternatives and indices to assist in explorations of how modifying Elements and options (starting point, ceiling, floor etc.) would have affected the historical PSC limit. Following possible Council action at this meeting, an Excel workbook will be produced by the workgroup and made available to the public; it will include an interactive spreadsheet for each alternative.