



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Action Memo

File Number: Cons 16-019

Agenda Date 10/3/2016

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Dan Hull, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director

SUBJECT:
BSAI Halibut Abundance-based PSC Limits - Discussion Paper

STAFF CONTACT: Diana Stram

ACTION REQUIRED:
Review discussion paper and workshop report; action as necessary.

BACKGROUND:
The Council is examining abundance-based approaches to establishing halibut prohibited species catch (PSC) limits in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) because current halibut PSC limits are a fixed amount of halibut mortality in metric tons. When halibut abundance declines, halibut PSC becomes a larger proportion of total halibut removals and can result in lower catch limits for directed halibut fisheries. Both the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) and the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) have expressed concern about impacts on directed halibut fisheries under the status quo and identified abundance-based halibut PSC limits as a potential management approach to address these concerns.

The Council tasked an inter-agency workgroup of NMFS AKR, NMFS AFSC, IPHC, UW and Council staff to develop abundance-based approaches for BSAI halibut PSC limits, building upon previous work by IPHC staff. An initial discussion paper was provided by the group at the April 2016 Council meeting. The Council's motion from that meeting including direction to the workgroup as well as a Purpose and Need statement for the analysis is attached (**Item 1**). This inter-agency group have met several times in person as well as via teleconference and via electronic collaboration since that time to coordinate efforts and provide the additional information and recommendations contained in this paper. The discussion paper is attached (**Item 2**) and was posted September 9th in order to be available per request prior to a public workshop held by the Council.

The Council held a public workshop to provide a presentation on the discussion paper on September 12th. The purpose of the workshop was to provide a public preview of the discussion paper prior to the Council's review at the October 2016 Council meeting, to receive feedback on this discussion paper, to better inform the public of the progress on this initiative, and to better facilitate input from the public to the Council. A report from the workshop characterizing the presentations and discussion and feedback from the workshop is attached as **Item 3**. A correction to Table 14 is posted as **Item 4** and was provided to workshop participants as well.

Members of the inter-agency workgroup from the Council, AFSC, AKRO, UW and IPHC will be available to present the discussion paper. Council action and next steps for continued development of alternatives are contained in the discussion paper.