

Status of analytical projects related to the Halibut & Sablefish IFQ Program

Updated March 2022

| | Description | Status / Target Date |
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| <i>Projects in Council Review (Council has tasked staff and scheduled review at a future meeting)</i> | | |
| IFQ/CQE Omnibus Amendment Package | The alternatives before the Council include changes to pot gear requirements, authorizing jig gear for IFQ sablefish, and removing the residency requirement for the Adak community quota entity (CQE) for a period of five years. The changes to pot gear requirements relate to biodegradable panels, gear configuration (maximum tunnel width; buoy, radar reflector, flagpole), gear retrieval, and pot limits. The purpose is to increase operational efficiency and reduce administrative burden and cost. Authorizing jig gear for sablefish would be intended to increase entry-level access. The Adak residency moratorium is intended to provide more opportunity for the CQE to fully harvest its allocation. | Review for Final Action April 2022 |
| Recreational Quota Entity (RQE) Fee Collection Program | The Council took action to allow the formation of an RQE in December 2016. The RQE may purchase commercial halibut IFQ on behalf of charter halibut anglers in Areas 2C and 3A to augment the apportioned pounds of halibut for the charter catch limit in an area. Additional pounds could relax the annual charter management measures (e.g., bag limits and size restrictions). The analysis considers the administrative requirements to implement a fee collection mechanism for charter vessel operators that could be used by the RQE to fund administrative costs and purchase of halibut quota share as specified in the RQE program. | Review for Final Action April 2022 |
| IFQ Temporary Transfer Provisions: Emergency Rule | In February 2022, the Council requested emergency regulations to allow the temporary transfer of catcher vessel halibut and sablefish IFQ for all individual quota share holders for the 2022 fishing season. If approved, the effective duration of the rule would be tied to the determination by the Secretary of Health & Human Services that the COVID-19 pandemic is a public health emergency, as opposed to a 366-day limitation that capped the duration of previous emergency IFQ transfer provisions. | Under review by Secretary of Commerce (updates and FAQ) |
| IFQ Halibut Area 4ABCD Vessel Use Caps: Emergency Rule | In February 2022, the Council requested emergency regulations to remove vessel use caps for IFQ halibut harvested in IPHC regulatory areas 4A, 4B, 4C, and 4D for the 2022 fishing season. | Under review by Secretary of Commerce (updates and FAQ) |

| | Description |
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| <i>Projects not yet scheduled (**order does not reflect priority**)</i> | |
| Small Sablefish Release | Analysis of alternatives to allow discarding (careful release) in the IFQ sablefish fishery. The Council is motivated by low commercial value and high survival rates for small sablefish, with potential for positive effects on stock biomass and future value. Alternatives include voluntary release of sablefish and a range of discard mortality rates for pot and hook-and-line gear. Voluntary release is preferred over a size limit because it maximizes flexibility. There are two options to address catch accounting: observer-based and survey-based discard estimation. Total discard mortalities would be estimated in the stock assessment. The analysis will explore how voluntary release would be accounted for in stock assessments and in setting catch limits. Monitoring and enforcement provisions that could improve discard estimation will also be evaluated. The accounting system for the IFQ fishery would need to be overhauled since IFQ discards could reduce allocations to trawl and IFQ vessels. Because IFQ is assigned to an individual and discards might be attributed based on observer estimates, individual liability may need to be addressed. |
| Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) Revised Allocations: Initial Review | Analysis of revised halibut CSP sector allocations for IPHC regulatory areas 2C and 3A at different levels of abundance. The Council noted that the CSP did not anticipate the current and continued low levels of halibut abundance and is concerned about increased annual uncertainty in charter management measures and the socioeconomic impacts of reduced demand for charter trips. The Council's preferred mechanism for dealing with CSP allocations is compensated reallocation via the Recreational Quota Entity (RQE). If the RQE funding mechanism becomes law and the Council takes final action on an RQE funding mechanism then the Council intends to table or refine this action. |

Stakeholders who are interested in the IFQ Program may also wish to keep for reference a summary of all IFQ amendments.
This document was published by NPFMC staff in June 2021: [LINK](#)
