



North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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IFQ Committee Report

March 25-26, 2021, Webconference

On March 25 & 26, 2021 the IFQ Committee held a meeting online via the Adobe Connect meeting platform. All meeting materials are available on the IFQ Committee eAgenda:

<https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/1853>.

Members in attendance: Cora Campbell (Chair), Michael Offerman, Linda Kozak, Peggy Parker, Natasha Hayden, Craig Evens, Bob Linville, Erik Velsko, Jeff Peterson, Buck Laukitis, Jeff Farvour, Dave Fraser, Matt Robinson

Members absent: Jeff Kauffman, Shawn McManus, Jerry Dahl

Staff: NPFMC: Sam Cunningham (coordinator), Diana Evans, Sarah Marrinan, Sara Cleaver, Anna Henry, Mike Fey (AKFIN)
NMFS AKRO: Alicia Miller, Suja Hall, Charmaine Weeks

Others in Attendance:

Abby Jahn	Alex Perry	Alexander Stubbs	Alexus Kwachka	Anne Marie Eich
Andy Mezirow	Angel Drobnica	Angela Forristall	Ben Cheeseman	Brian Garber-Yonts
Barbara Hutniczak	Bob Alverson	Bob Foy	Chris Lunsford	Dan Goethel
Brian Ritchie	Cara Rodgveller	Daniel Falvey	Danielle Ringer	David Witherell
Dan Lesh	Dana Whiteley	Ian Knuckey	James Johnson	Jeff Stephan
Jim Armstrong	Doug Duncan	John Jensen	Jane Sullivan	Julie Bonney
Kathy Hansen	Joe Krieger	Kelly Cates	Kenny Down	LCDR Jed Raskie USGC
Linda Behnken	Karla Bush	Maria Davis	Marysia Szymkowiak	Megan Mackey
Megan O'Neil	Maddie Lightsey	Theresa Peterson	Nicole Kimball	Paul Clampitt
Rachel Baker	Michael Kohan	Tad Fujioka	Scott Miller	Stephanie Warpinski
Shawn Carey				

The Committee Chair, Cora Campbell, opened the meeting with introductions and an overview of the agenda. During the first day, the Committee received several presentations on items of interest to the IFQ fleet and reviewed analytical documents for two Council actions that are currently in the review process. The Committee also discussed proposals for new IFQ-related Council actions. Two proposals had been referred to the Committee by the Advisory Panel; the others were submitted by Committee members prior to the meeting. On the second day, the Committee provided input on the relative priority of all IFQ-related actions, either tasked or proposed. This report is organized by topics. Proposals for which the relative merits were discussed on the first day are summarized in this report under the discussion of prioritization that occurred on the second day. A poll (Appendix 1) was used to canvas Committee members on relative prioritization. The poll was followed by a discussion where members offered different perspectives. The Committee received oral public testimony on both days. Written public comments submitted prior to the meeting are available on the IFQ Committee eAgenda.

Review and prioritization of tasked and proposed IFQ management actions

IFQ access expanded discussion paper

Anna Henry, Council staff, presented an expanded discussion paper on an IFQ Access pool of halibut and sablefish quota share that would facilitate entry level opportunities for crew and owner-operators. The discussion paper will be presented to the Council under the D2 agenda item. In the proposed action, the access pool would target entry level fishermen, defined as those owning less than 5,000 pounds of combined QS in 2019 values (QS:IFQ ratio). Participation in the access pool would be temporary, access pool QS units could not be sold, and fishing of the annual IFQ would be subject to observer and cost recovery fees. The QS in the access pool would be sourced from either: (1) newly created QS units equal to 1% of 2019 QS for halibut and sablefish in all IFQ areas, or (2) a deduction of 0.5% or 1% on all QS transfers. An entity such as a Regional Fishery Association or other existing or newly formed regional association would receive and distribute the access pool allocation based on criteria established by the entity and approved by the Council.

The Committee focused most of the discussion on the Entry Level Quota Entity (ELQE) as proposed in the [written public comment](#) submitted by Theresa Peterson and less on the suite of options covered in the discussion paper.

The Committee discussed various funding mechanisms and eligibility requirements for an access pool. There was some interest in developing more exclusive entry-level criteria - such as IFQ participants who are second generation QS holders, who hold QS representing less than 3,000 pounds of 2020 IFQ, who hold a Transfer Eligibility Certificate, or are from a CQE community. The Committee did not make final recommendations on eligibility criteria; it was noted that if the action moves forward it is likely to include a range of options. The Committee also discussed funding quota shares for the program through bycatch reductions but recognized that there is not a 1:1 correlation between bycatch savings and IFQ fishery quota or annual catch limits. Some Committee members felt that a more centralized management entity that randomly selects eligible recipients on a rolling basis would be simpler and would reduce administrative burden as well as cost recovery (which is already at the 3.0% cap).

The Committee received comment from the public and from Committee members both for and against creation of an IFQ access pool. Comments in favor included concerns about sustaining participation from small communities and creating opportunity and diversification for entry level fishermen. Committee members and testifiers spoke to how this program would align with the IFQ Program goals of encouraging an owner/operator fleet and community participation. Concerns about this type of action included potential distributional impacts on existing QS holders, many of whom are paying back loans from purchased QS. There were also comments regarding the relative accessibility of the fishery now given the current affordability of QS and low interest rates (relative to when the 20-Year IFQ Program Review was conducted in 2016). Some of the participants in the program purchased their QS and would be adversely affected by the distribution of those shares to individuals who did not make a similar investment or face equivalent financial exposure. The Committee did not discuss the type of entity that could hold access pool QS but it was noted that any regionally-based entity (or entities) should be structured in acknowledgement of the fact that not all QS are held by Alaska-based individuals and not all potential entrants would reside in Alaska.

Most IFQ Committee members felt this issue is worth considering further, but there was a mix of responses to the relative priority (see appendix to this report). **The Committee members generally agreed that the issue may be complex and would require substantial time from staff and dedicated effort from the public.** Given this workload, some members felt that there are more pressing issues in the fishery that should be the Council's priority. They felt this action may only help a few, whereas other priorities would reach a wider array of stakeholders. Others felt that this program had been requested for

quite some time and should be a priority moving forward. It was noted that this was a different *type* of priority; current participants in the fishery would likely prioritize other issues but those outside or less heavily invested in the fishery felt this to be their highest priority. Committee members noted that the proposal for this discussion paper had been passed out of the IFQ Committee before and was identified as a specific deficiency in the 20-Year IFQ Program Review.

The Committee made a few specific recommendations for future analyses addressing this issue. The Committee recommended that any future work include specific discussion of the impacts of an access pool on existing QS holders who have mortgaged their quota. Committee members requested that staff continue to seek information on results from Norway’s recruitment quota program. The Committee recommended that if this action moves forward, the access pool should be funded by newly created QS units as this implementation would be more expedient and less complex than a deduction on QS transfers.

GOA sablefish pot fishery review

Sara Cleaver and Sam Cunningham, Council staff, provided a report on the GOA sablefish IFQ pot fishery review that will be presented to the Council under the D1 agenda item. GOA Amendment 101 was implemented in 2017 and allowed for sablefish IFQ fishing with pot longline gear in the GOA. The action was taken in response to increased whale depredation on the IFQ hook-and-line (HAL) fishery. The review offered information based on the 3-4 years of available data and discussions with fishery participants, enforcement officials, and managers. Staff described the increase in the use of this gear type, particularly in 2020. The development of the new “slinky pot” design has increasingly allowed smaller vessels to participate in the fishery to a degree that was not anticipated during the development of Amendment 101. Pot gear adoption by larger vessels has also increased, possibly as individuals see successes by early-adopters. The review provided information on how stock assessment authors are handling the inclusion of data from the pot fishery; for example, the assessment (SAFE) reports observer length data for both gear types but the assessment model’s CPUE is still only indexed to HAL gear. Staff also noted the cost and administrative challenges that the Agency has experienced in issuing pot tags, and NMFS’ recommendations for the program.

The Committee heard comments both for and against changes to gear retrieval/tending requirements, gear marking requirements, and changes to - or removal of - area pot limits. Some participants who fish primarily in the EGOA (SE/WY) felt their area should be treated differently due to an increased potential for gear conflicts on a narrower shelf. Several testifiers and the Committee noted that some concerns held during the development of Amendment 101 were not realized to the extent they had anticipated. This was mainly regarding smaller HAL vessels being excluded from the fishery due to the deck space, stability, and power needed to convert a vessel to pots, and the magnitude of grounds preemption issues between pot and small HAL vessels. Some of these concerns were alleviated after more experience with a dual-gear fishery. Stakeholders explained how some of the regulatory requirements that they thought would be important might not be essential (e.g., pot tags, two-end marking). However, some participants noted their desire for changes to loosen regulations, such as pot limits, be made incrementally, and for the Council to proceed with caution to continue mitigating the likelihood of gear conflicts and grounds preemption issues. Stakeholders and Committee members noted that a key challenge is the ability to contact a vessel whose gear is on the grounds over radio; this concern is associated with the Committee’s eagerness for AIS technology to be authorized for fishing gear.

The Committee heard testimony on the continuing development and innovation in pot designs and some of the challenges of the current gear specification requirements, such as the biodegradable panel. One testifier stated that slinky pots, as they are currently designed, would not be legal under OLE’s interpretation of the “biodegradable panel.” The Committee highlighted the potential magnitude of impacts of that determination on the fishery. Several fishery participants explained how removing the 9” tunnel requirement would allow them to shift towards targeting halibut, and that it is important to be

proactive because whale depredation of halibut may continue to increase and pot gear may become more effective for targeting halibut.

The Committee received comments on the need to consider whether the shift of catch towards pot gear should have any effect on the sablefish survey, which is executed with HAL gear only, or its use. **The Committee recognized the need to consider the effects of gear switching (HAL to pot) on the survey.**

The following potential management actions were proposed as a result of the review. The Committee discussed bundling several of these actions into an omnibus amendment package. The relative priority of these actions, according to the Committee poll taken on Day 2, is reflected in the appendix to this report.

Pot limits

The Committee received a proposal from a Committee member and two letters from the public proposing modifications to pot limits.¹ Currently, the pot limit for SE and WY is 120 while the limit in Western GOA and Central GOA is 300 pots. Two of the proposals recommended uniform pot limits across the GOA. The third proposal requested reconsidering the 120 pot limit in SE and WY (the proposer stated that the limit in those areas is too small but did not specify an alternative limit). Members in support of changing pot limits suggested that this could increase efficiency and flexibility within the fishery. Several testifiers and a Committee member noted that they would not necessarily fish as many pots as the pot limit allows, but that an increased limit would enable them to carry spare gear that could allow them to continue a trip in the unexpected event of losing a string. It was noted that lower pot limits in the EGOA sometimes results in vessels setting pots and then fishing HAL gear – which they think to be less efficient in the context of whales – while the pots soak and sort.

Other Committee members felt that there may still be a need for different pot limits in the CGOA and WGOA than in SE and WY. These Committee members felt that concerns about gear conflicts still warrant pot limits and would prefer that any changes to pot limits occur incrementally (i.e., not all the way to 300 pots at this time).

There was discussion about whether there is any need for pot limits in a rationalized fishery. Unless the Council recommends the total removal of pot limits, most testifiers and Committee members agreed that the pot limit of 300 pots for CGOA and WGOA was appropriate for those areas at this time.

While most Committee members agreed that it is an issue worth exploring, there was diversity in the level of priority, with half of committee members indicating it as a lower priority.

Gear tending/pot retrieval requirements

The proposals the Committee considered regarding pot limits also included recommendations to change gear tending requirements in SE and WY. Currently, gear cannot be left for more than five days in the CGOA or WY without being moved; the limit is seven days in the WGOA. Gear cannot be left on the grounds in SE for any length of time when the vessel goes to make a delivery. One proposal suggested increasing the gear tending length to seven days in SE and WY, while another suggested raising the time limit to seven days GOA-wide. One proposal suggested a nine-day requirement (presumably GOA-wide). The proposers suggested that gear tending requirements create a safety concern if they require harvesters to retrieve their gear during bad weather. Concern was expressed that enforcement is citing fishermen for violating the gear tending requirements in cases of extreme weather or mechanical failure. It was requested that enforcement be able to use of reasonable discretion. The Committee agreed that revisions to these regulations could be explored to possibly extend the number of days for gear to be left on the grounds.

¹[Proposal - McManus](#), [Letter - Clampitt](#), [Letter - Alverson](#)

The Committee heard two schools of thought on maintaining the gear retrieval requirements in SE. Some Committee members felt vessels “getting in and getting out” after catching their quota would open up grounds more quickly. They felt pot limits and gear tending requirements slowed down the fishery and kept the grounds congested. Others felt that, given the narrow shelf, it is important to allow for a rotation of effort from different vessels to mitigate grounds preemptions. These members were also concerned about the potential for gear competition and conflict. It was noted that this issue is intertwined with the AIS issue – AIS marking would make it easier to avoid gear conflicts. **Most Committee members felt the issue of gear retrieval requirements is worth exploring but there was divergence on the level of priority to assign it** (see appendix).

Pot tags

The Committee recommended the requirement for pot tags be removed to address an unnecessary burden and cost. The majority of members felt this was a non-controversial/non-complex action that would be considered a high priority (see appendix). The review document highlighted a number of concerns with the current system of pot tags, and several IFQ Committees members had experienced issues as well. For example, if a pot or pot tag is lost and a fisherman needs to order another from NMFS, many stakeholders explained that it is not practical to know which tag (#) was on the lost pot without doing a total re-stacking. One member noted that fishermen might, for expediency, order an entire new set (serial numbers) of pot tags when only a few are lost, thus increasing program costs. The review document notes that NMFS Enforcement and the USCG do not find pot tags to be an effective or practical way to enforce pot limits. Committee members and stakeholders observed that tags are not used in other pot fisheries such as for Pacific cod and crab (crab pots initially had tag requirements that were eventually removed). The Committee discussed the possibility of amending the current system of pot tags to make it less onerous but determined through consensus that the preferable approach would be to remove the requirement altogether. Pot tags are a record-keeping and reporting requirement; it was suggested by NMFS staff that, if taken alone, a regulatory amendment to remove the requirement might be relatively quick. Several Committee members and fishery participants highlighted the value of tracking the number of lost pots and stated that logbooks may be an alternative approach to both enforce a pot limit and track lost gear.

Pot configuration requirements

There was consensus from the Committee to recommend the Council revisit pot configuration requirements – especially the definition of biodegradable “panel”. This was given a high priority due to the fast pace of gear innovation. Two of the previous proposals requested removing the configuration rules for what a sablefish or halibut pot must look like. Committee members and testifiers highlighted the importance and the urgency of revisiting configuration requirements given the recent investment and reliance the fleet has put into “slinky pots”. This new type of pot has allowed for more diversity in the vessels that can viably utilize pot longline gear, thus this action would affect many participants.

The removal of the 9” tunnel requirement would allow pots to be designed so that legal-size halibut could be targeted. Two of the proposals submitted by stakeholders requested the Council allow targeting of halibut in pots. **The Committee was not opposed to allowing the retention of halibut taken with pots to get ahead of the whale depredation issue but noted that they might not want to tie halibut retention to the biodegradable panel issue if it could slow down ensuring slinky pots are able to meet legal gear specifications.**

Gear end-marking requirements

In an effort to avoid gear conflicts and lost gear, Amendment 101 required both ends of the sablefish pot longline set to be marked with a 4-buoy cluster including a hard ball with “PL” (pot longline) marking on

one buoy, flagpoles, and radar reflectors, including ADF&G number or Federal fisheries permit number on buoys. Some members stated they felt that this element may have been over-prescribed in an effort to be cautious. There was consensus that the existing requirements were overly burdensome and resulted in too much drag on gear. Some members stated that four buoys on each end seems excessive.

Committee members had mixed views about whether to continue requiring both ends to be marked. Some felt strongly that both ends should be marked to avoid gear conflicts while others expressed a desire to set short sets with one end marked. Marking both ends of a set requires additional buoy line and other gear that must be stowed on-deck and can be burdensome to smaller vessels that want to fish pots. Committee members emphasized a desire for AIS as a primary solution to gear marking; however, AIS is not currently permitted for use on fishing gear according to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). **The committee strongly recommended the Council send a letter to the FFC with a copy to USCG in favor of allowing AIS to be used to identify gear locations**, noting that it plays into a number of other issues including end-marking and avoiding gear conflicts. The review paper notes that recent Congressional action requires the FCC to *consider* approving the use of AIS on fishing gear through a process that must begin no later than June 2021.

New proposals

Allow jig gear for sablefish IFQ

The IFQ committee considered the merits and relative priority of a [proposal](#) to consider identifying jig gear as legal gear for sablefish IFQ. This proposal was forwarded by the Council's Advisory Panel. At the time that this motion passed, the only rationale in opposition was AP members that indicated this issue should first be considered by the IFQ committee.

The IFQ committee members agreed that the proposal is useful and non-controversial. No opposition was voiced. Members stated that the action could be helpful to small boat fishermen who could deploy gear quickly and potentially outrun whale predation. It may also benefit those who hold small amounts of sablefish quota. Staff stated that this change would require a regulatory amendment (which would go through the Council and rulemaking process); however, Committee members expect it would be relatively simple to analyze and implement. It was also thought that this action could be included in any omnibus sablefish action which may streamline the workload. **While supportive of the concept, a few IFQ members listed this as a low priority item.**

Allow processing of sablefish B and C shares onboard CVs

The second [proposal](#) the IFQ Committee considered was also recommended through the AP, to prepare a discussion paper that analyzes the allowance of onboard processing of IFQ sablefish B and C shares.

Most committee members agree that this action would be useful and non-controversial, but the majority of members felt it was not a high priority relative to some of the other actions. Committee members cited the merits of this proposal, with several experiencing limited market opportunities when fishing out of their home communities (e.g. Homer, Seward, Cordova) at certain times of year. Members expected this proposal would benefit those with limited markets and freezer trollers (for instance in Southeast) that wanted to get involved with direct marketing sablefish. One member noted there might be opportunities for addressing low harvest rates and the decrease in buyers in the Aleutians. Committee members noted that A shares are valuable and difficult to acquire not because of the processing ability, but because of the full flexibility and lease-ability they have. The Committee was not able to hear the shoreside processor perspective on this issue.

In terms of prioritization, similar to what was expressed by the AP, some Committee members thought this flexibility would probably not be taken advantage of by a large group of people.

Lift Adak CQE Residency Requirement for 3 to 5 years

The IFQ Committee considered a [proposal](#) from Committee member Dave Fraser specific to the Adak CQE. to suspend the Adak CQE residency requirement for a period of 3 to 5 years. Dave Fraser explained that the ability of local resident small boat operators to harvest CQE is closely tied to having a stable processor operating in Adak. Likewise, the ability to place local non-vessel owners as crew is dependent on having vessels that base their fishing out of Adak. The closure of the Adak processing plant has led to outmigration of residents and a small pool of eligible residents to fish this quota. The Adak CQE residency requirement was waived up until 2019; however, the CQE prioritized resident harvesters. In 2020, 94% of the allocation was left unharvested (for a number of reasons) and for 2021, the CQE group has requested an emergency exemption. This proposal is seeking additional flexibility for Adak; to establish a rebuilding period to get back to a fully resident-harvested fishery.

Most Committee members agreed that this is a useful and non-controversial proposal but there were a variety of views on the level of priority/complexity. The rationale for this action would use much of the same justification as highlighted in the emergency rule request. The Committee expressed a desire to see this pass as a regulatory change that would be in place for a specified period of time rather than have repeated emergency rule requests. Implementing a regulatory change would be a longer process than an emergency rule request but would provide more certainty to Adak. Some members felt that the remote nature of the community and the unique situation warrants this flexibility for the CQE in Adak.

Other Council actions not discussed in detail, but included in prioritization

Small Sablefish Release

In February, the Council asked the IFQ Committee to include this ongoing Council action, to allow voluntary release of sablefish by fixed gear sablefish IFQ vessels, in its prioritization exercise. As a result, the Committee did not receive a presentation on the analysis or agenda a discussion on the merits of the action, but rather focused on how to prioritize it among other IFQ actions. **The majority of the Committee thinks this action is a high priority** that is worth the time to work through the stock assessment and catch accounting issues that were highlighted in the initial review draft, citing concerns about harvesting immature fish and the economic impacts of a full retention requirement with so many small fish being caught. Individual Committee members have differing perceptions about how complex it should be to implement, given that it is a tool that is already in sablefish fisheries elsewhere and used in other target fisheries in Alaska. At the very least, Committee members favor the development of a discard mortality rate specifically for small sablefish, and likely differing by pot- versus longline-caught. The Committee acknowledged as excellent a presentation provided in public testimony which estimated the potential levels of discarding and mortality of released fish resulting from this action in the context of overall sablefish removals in Alaska.

Use of hired masters (from the 'batter's box', i.e., previously tasked but not yet scheduled)

Committee members' responses varied as to the priority of this action, which was initiated by the Council in February 2018 following IFQ Committee deliberations, however over half agreed it should at least **stay on the Council's list but not be tasked for further staff work at this time**. Some of the data requests from the motion have been included in the new Report to the Fleet and the Committee has requested additional trends be reported there to distinguish those who must use hired masters from those who choose to do so. There was little enthusiasm for reopening this issue at this time, with a preferred focus on

the access pool and noting that the quota shift from first generation to second generation is happening slowly every year.

IFQ Transfer mechanisms (from the Council's 'batter's box')

This refers to a discussion paper tasked by the Council in June 2018 to scope out potential options to promote willing transfers of QS from initial recipients to hired masters and crew. Staff noted some overlap of issues with the IFQ access pool paper, although it was noted that this paper's focus is transfers more generally, not limited only to entry-level. **Most Committee members listed this as a low priority and recommend keeping it on the list but not tasking staff work at this time.** While some ideas in the motion are outside the Council's direct authority, the discussion highlighted that there is still value in considering how to consider transfer mechanism options for elderly owners with larger chunks of QS.

Other presentations and review items

IPHC economic impact survey

IPHC economist, Dr. Barbara Hutniczak, briefed the Committee on ongoing research aimed at assessing the broad economic impact of halibut related to different sectors (e.g., commercial halibut harvesters, commercial halibut processors, and charter business owners). Dr. Hutniczak intends to use a multi-regional social accounting matrix-based model to describe the economic interdependencies between sectors and regions. Lack of primary data to inform these types of models has been an impediment to their inclusion in Council analyses in the past. Thus, collecting primary data is an important component of this project. Dr. Hutniczak has designed a web-based survey to collect the information needed to inform this assessment and is requesting participation from each sector.

Some IFQ Committee members had experience with this survey and noted it took a lot of time and resources to respond to some of the detailed questions. Dr. Hutniczak noted that survey responses do not need to be offered in exact amounts and that best estimates from individual operators, when taken in aggregate across a sector, provide sufficient information to inform the model.

The Committee recommended the IPHC clarify that the survey will accept estimates in lieu of exact numbers, and that such a clarification could increase survey participation.

IFQ cost recovery update

Alicia Miller, NMFS Sustainable Fisheries staff, provided an overview of how the cost recovery fee percentage is calculated and how 2020 compares to recent years. The fee percentage calculation combines cost data from NMFS, ADFG, and IPHC and relates them to the estimated total value of the IFQ fishery (ex-vessel) NMFS's standardized pricing methods. The 2020 timeframe for end-of-year fee percentage calculations and mailing invoices was shortened by the extension of the IFQ season under an emergency rule. Staff noted that the unique conditions of 2020, including increased use of medical and emergency transfers and a large jump in the issuance of pot tags, contributed to higher administrative costs. **The committee recommended that the Council request further detail on the methods used to allocate enforcement costs (NOAA OLE) to the IFQ program.** Suja Hall, NMFS Restricted Access Management staff, also reported that the entire division shifted rapidly from primarily paper-based in-office work environment to an online, telework environment during the 2020 pandemic response. This shift required significant effort and increased the amount of time required for many tasks. The committee appreciated the agency's recent and continuing efforts to streamline paperwork and adopt new technology.

The Committee asked about the effect of proposals for the IFQ fishery to operate with an extended or year-round season, which would likely require revisions to the existing regulatory dates for submitting buyer's reports, publishing prices, and sending out invoices. **The committee recommended that the**

Council request to receive ongoing updates on any changes NMFS would need to make regarding reporting and invoicing procedures in order to implement an extended or year-round fishery. Staff noted that any such change would likely require a regulatory amendment and the associated public review process.

Emergency Rules

The Committee received an update from Alicia Miller (NMFS) on the status and timing of the emergency rules requested during the Council's February 2021 meeting. Those requests entail four separate actions for the 2021 fishing season: (1) allowing temporary IFQ transfers of catcher vessel halibut and sablefish IFQ; (2) waiving the vessel use caps in Area 4 halibut IFQ fisheries; (3) temporarily suspending the residency requirements applicable to the Adak CQE; and (4) moving the start date of the Central GOA Rockfish Program fishery up to April 1. **The emergency rule for the Rockfish Program was published on 3/19/21 and is effective for an April 1 opener. The IFQ transfer emergency rule was published on 3/30/2021 and made effective on the same date.** The Area 4 vessel use caps issue is still under development as a proposed rule. This will have a shortened comment period in an effort to have the final rule effective as early in the fishing season as possible. The request to suspend the Adak CQE residency requirement is also still being analyzed.

NMFS has been providing status updates on these actions through its [website](#).

NMFS IFQ Report to the Fleet

Alicia Miller reported that at the request of the Council, NMFS (with considerable support from AKFIN) has developed a new iteration of the previously published annual IFQ Report to the Fleet, which she reviewed with the Committee. The last report to the fleet reported on the 2012 fishing year, since then much of the information it contained has been moved online to the NMFS website. In designing the new report, staff are aiming to provide something that is a useful reference tool for the public and managers, but that can also be automated so that its generation is not onerous or costly.

The Committee expressed appreciation to NMFS staff for preparing the report and clarified various data and interpretations with Alicia Miller and Mike Fey (AKFIN staff). The Committee noted that the report is useful – especially in the interim years between program reviews – noting that the last program review was in 2016 and the next will be in 2023. **The Committee provided the following recommendations for additions to the report's design.** The committee requested more information on hired master usage, especially delineating between those who must hire a skipper versus those who are choosing to hire a skipper. The committee requested a longer time series be provided and that more information be provided on the percentage of QS holders who are new entrants or second-generation. There was also a request for additional information on community ownership trends, transfer activity, and consolidation in both QS holders and vessels.

Public Testimony

In addition to written comments submitted in advance on the IFQ Committee eAgenda², several members of the public testified during the two separate opportunities during the meeting. The following captures brief elements of their testimony. This summary does not purport to detail question-and-answer with Committee members. The following persons testified about presentations and review documents presented to the Committee (Day 1):

- Paul Clampitt, Sablefish and Halibut Pot Association - changes to the GOA sablefish pot fishery regulations needed, including removal of pot configuration requirements and pot tags, and

² <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/1853>

standardizing pot limits and removal requirements across the GOA; support small sablefish release action to address whale depredation; also requested that effects of switching from hook-and-line to pot gear be addressed in the design of the survey.

- Alexander Stubbs, Stubbs Marine - update regulations on pot design to allow for slinky pots and other gear innovations, and eliminate the 9” tunnel requirement.
- Michael Offerman, self - regarding design of a new entrant program, if fish are reallocated then include compensation for second generation fishermen who have loans against purchased QS; consider a centralized process rather than regional entities.
- Dan Falvey, self - access pool is a high priority, design with clear Council objectives for entities to meet; re the GOA sablefish pot fishery, relax constraints to allow innovation, but recognize that grounds preemption is still an issue in parts of southeast Alaska and tools like AIS can help.
- Theresa Peterson, AMCC - written proposal on access pool to committee, with recommended options for seeding the entry level quota pool and how the distributing entity might work.
- Alexis Kwachka, Gulf Groundfish Fishermen’s Association - support for access pool and entry-level opportunities; sablefish pot fishery is working, but accountability needs to factor into consideration of changes (pot tags, gear marking, lost gear concerns); and need to talk about trawl bycatch.
- Linda Behnken, ALFA - entry level opportunities really important; ALFA helping but need a Council program. Support changes to end marking requirements for sablefish pot - AIS good option. Keep entry-level action on separate track than issues affecting current participants.
- Robert Alverson, FVOA - support sending letter to FCC on AIS use for gear marking. In report to fleet, add trends in number of vessels participating, how many QS units on a vessel (to show whether multiple owners on board). Remove gear retrieval and pot limit requirements in southeast to promote more efficient fishing time. Eliminate 9” tunnel and allow gear innovation; want development of a pot that can be used for both halibut and sablefish.

The following persons testified about prioritization of potential Council IFQ actions (Day 2):

- Paul Clampitt, Sablefish and Halibut Pot Association - all issues high priority, but especially small sablefish release, as well as GOA sablefish pot limits, pot tags, and gear tending issues. Support for Knuckey report.
- Ian Knuckey, Fishwell Consulting Pty - presentation on preliminary analysis of statewide sablefish discards, results posted on eAgenda.
- Robert Alverson, FVOA - support for Knuckey report and sablefish release analysis.
- Tad Fujioka, self - support jig gear for sablefish.
- Dan Falvey, self - omnibus package for low controversy proposals (AIS to mark gear, pot configuration adjustments (allowing room for innovation), jig gear for sablefish, small sablefish release). Second grouping of more controversial/benefit smaller groups of stakeholders - IFQ access pool, remaining GOA sablefish pot issues (pot limits, gear tending, potentially tags if adjust but not remove), and B&C shares. Support for Knuckey report.

Other Business - membership and future meetings

Prior to this meeting, a Committee member submitted a proposal to allow members to appoint alternates when they are not able to attend the Committee meeting, particularly when the meeting is occurring during the IFQ fishing season. The Chair explained that the policy of not allowing alternate members for committee meetings is a Council decision, and not within the purview of the Committee Chair. The Committee, however, discussed various ways to promote participation, include changes to the meeting timing and locations. The Chair noted the long gap in convening the Committee due to COVID-19 disruption; it is her interest for the Committee to meet with more regularity in future. It was noted that while the advantages of meeting in person are obvious, the virtual format for this meeting was remarkably successful (although some members would prefer a different meeting platform).

Appendix 1 IFQ Committee prioritization of possible Council actions

