



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Action Memo

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Dan Hull, Chairman
Chris Oliver, Executive Director

SUBJECT:
Halibut Discard Mortality Rates (DMRs) - Discussion Paper

STAFF CONTACT: Jim Armstrong

ACTION REQUIRED:
Review alternative estimation and application methods-modifications to DMR calculation procedures, aggregation and estimation methods-make recommendations to working group for application of alternative DMRs in 2017.

BACKGROUND:
In April, the Council reviewed a discussion paper on potential modifications to halibut discard mortality rates (DMRs). At that meeting, the Council directed the working group to develop alternative DMR methods with the potential for application of revised DMRs starting in 2017. The attached "Modifications to DMR Calculation Procedures" document (**attached**) was prepared by the Halibut DMR Working Group for this meeting.

The proposed DMRs are more statistically consistent with observer program sampling design, and are estimated from 2013 forward data, with some exceptions, which reflect the current restructured observer program. Additionally, the proposed DMRs are applied to fisheries based on operational differences, rather than fishery target, which is more consistent with the fundamental causes of variation among DMRs within the groundfish fleet.

At its September meeting, the Joint Groundfish Plan Teams, as well as members of the public, reviewed the proposed changes to DMR methods. The Plan Teams were supportive of the general approach taken by the working group as well as the specific operational groupings identified for application. Industry representatives at the meeting were also supportive of the general approach and offered recommendations on further developing the rationale for differentiating among fishery operations. Both groups were supportive of application of revised methods for specification in 2017.

The working group is asking the SSC, AP, and Council for additional feedback on the current proposal in order to identify further work or refinement necessary to support final specification of the proposed DMRs for 2017, which would occur at the December Council meeting.