

# C4 REQUEST FOR A YEAR-ROUND HALIBUT AND SABLEFISH IFQ SEASON

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MAY SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING



# PROPOSED EMERGENCY ACTION

Extend the halibut and sablefish commercial IFQ season to a year-round fishery

- *Typical seasons run late February/March – mid-November*
- *For 2020: March 14<sup>th</sup> – November 15<sup>th</sup>*
- Proposal may be asking to extend the 2020 season to December 31, 2020
- May also be asking for season to restart January 1, 2021 or continue into the 2021 winter



# PROPOSED EMERGENCY ACTION

Extend the halibut and sablefish commercial IFQ season to a year-round fishery

- Proposal highlights the market challenges that have arisen due to COVID-19
  - Limited markets
  - Low prices
  - Processors limiting deliveries
  - Challenges with foreign trade
- The proposal also highlights potential future market opportunities for protein substitution given the struggling beef and pork industries



# REGULATORY PROCESS FOR CHANGE

- Different regulatory authority for halibut seasons versus sablefish seasons
- However, typically set simultaneously to reduce waste and discards

## For halibut:

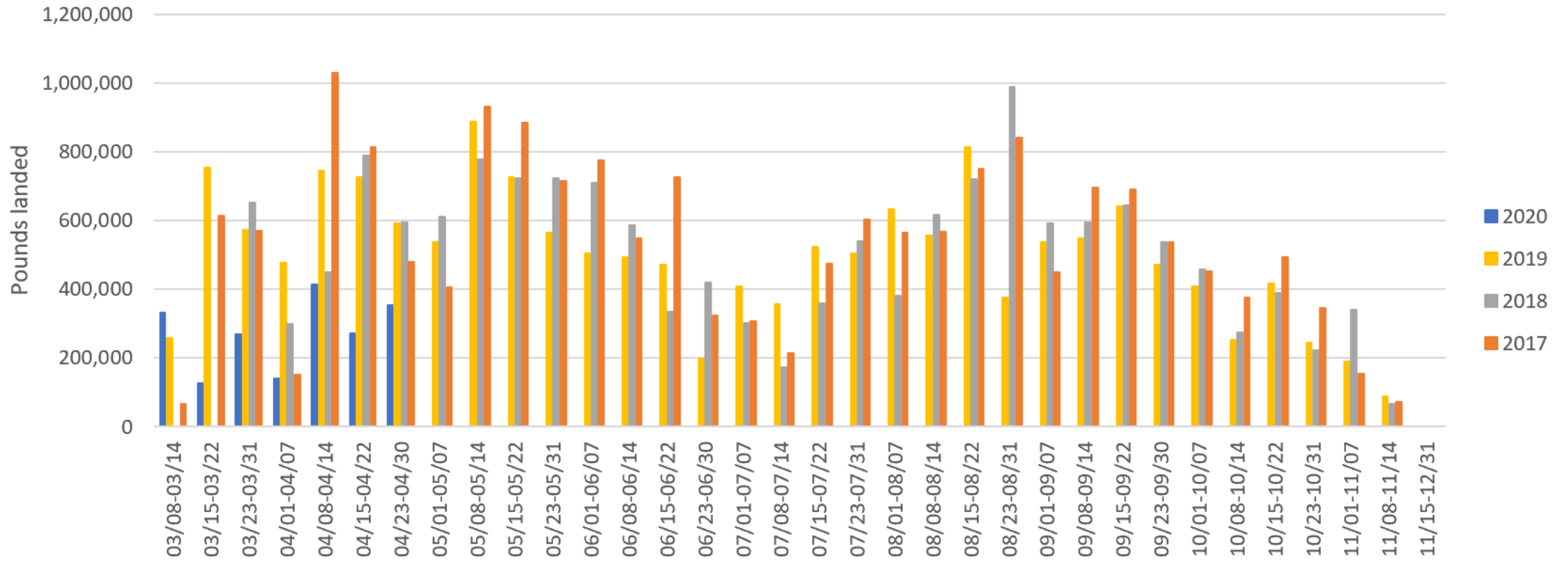
- Season dates set during the IPHC's annual meeting
- Recommended to the Secretary of State, and with concurrence of the Secretary of Commerce, NMFS will publish a Final Rule which will give effect to these regulations
- For an emergency rule change, this process would need to reoccur through an intersessional IPHC meeting

## For fixed gear sablefish IFQ fishing:

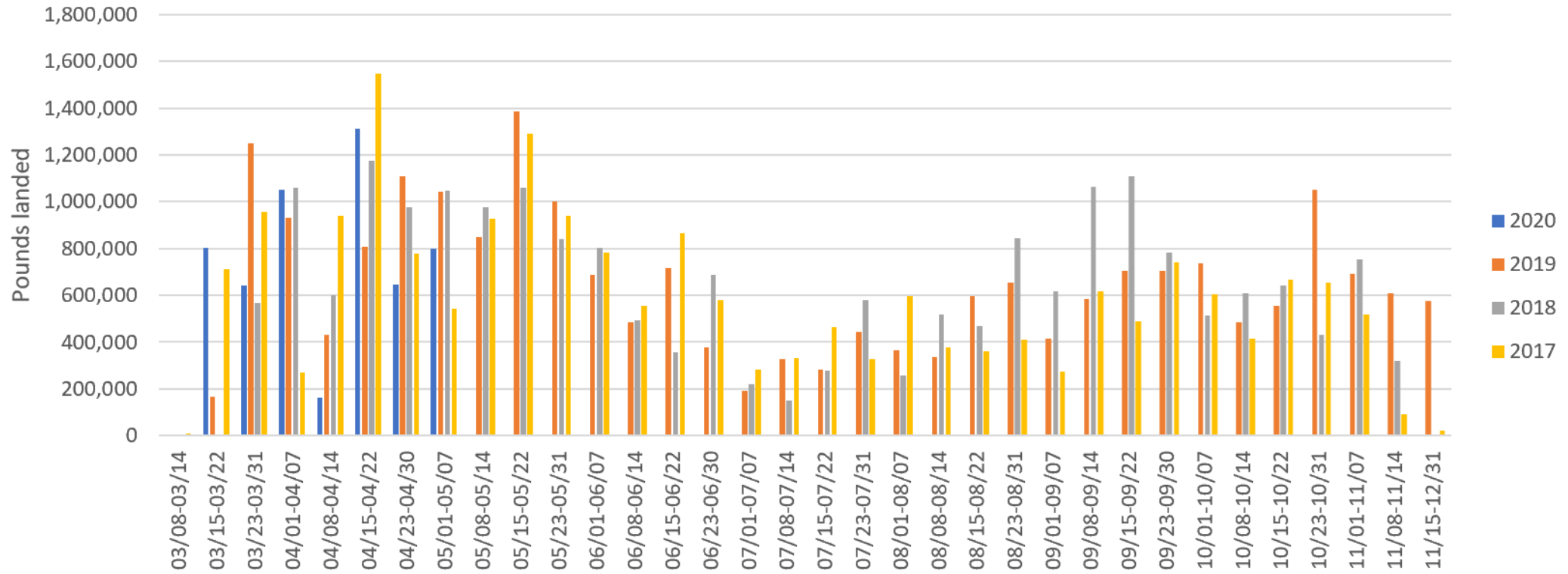
- Seasons are specified by the Regional Administrator and announced by publication in the Federal Register
- This process occurs after the IPHC sets the halibut seasons so they may be set concurrently
- An emergency extension of the season could be set through a notice in the Federal Register
- Extending the season through Dec 31 or into 2021 would require additional Federal reg changes that would need to be part of the emergency rule



### Halibut pounds landed by week



### Sablefish pounds landed by week



# IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

## Biological implications

- May not be substantial biological concerns about winter fishing for halibut or sablefish
- Managed and monitored on an annual basis
- Catch and effort would need to be projected for both species
- Could coincide with spawning but may not be a concern for either species
  - But likely low fishing effort in a winter fishery due to unfavorable ocean and weather conditions
- May be an opportunity for cooperative research to improve data on sablefish spawning movements



# IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

## Harvester impacts

- Harvesters with vessels equipped to fish in the winter would have additional flexibility presuming they have open markets
- Take advantage of any improved market opportunities
- Would not *require* winter participation



## Processor impacts

- Unclear whether processors would benefit
- IFQ Program Review notes limited margins on halibut after implementation of the IFQ Program
- May not be worthwhile to keep the plant open
- Unless COVID-19 presents new market incentives, processors may not benefit





# IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

## Recent discussion from the IPHC's Conference Board discussion

- The CB was interested in maximizing season dates
- Recommended an ad hoc stakeholder group form to continue discussions and work with IPHC Secretariat and contracting party staff
- To date, the group has met once

## IPHC's Processor Advisory Board response to season dates

- The PAB generally recommends a shorter seasons for a host of market and practical considerations
- For 2020 they recommended March 21 to October 31



# IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

## Management challenges

- The extent of logistical challenges and regulatory changes that would need to occur to accommodate the request depend on the extend of the season's extension.
- An extension several weeks after the established close date may not require substantial changes
- If the seasons were extended to December 31, there would be a suite of regulatory changes that would need to be addressed in addition to seasons date changes
- The expanded memo includes examples such as:
  - Cost Recovery: Fed regulations state it is NMFS duty to publish the standard price in the last quarter of the calendar year. Total landings would not be available at that time, thus standard price would not reflect total landings.
- A fishery that continues over to 2021 or restarts on Jan 1 would likely require bigger changes to the way the catch limits are set and IFQ is issued and managed.
- This change would be difficult under an emergency rule for 2021.



# COUNCIL DECISION POINTS

## Policy question for Council members:

- Is this action warranted? And should it be pursued as an emergency regulatory change for the 2020 and/ or 2021 fishing year?
  - If not, no action at this time
  - If so, the Council could make recommendation that the IPHC hold an intersessional meeting to change the halibut seasons.
  - Also, the Council may wish to make a recommendation for sablefish based on the outcome of the IPHC's determination to ensure consistent seasons among IFQ species.



# QUESTIONS?

*Presentation prepared with input from:*

- *Rachel Baker, ADF&G*
- *Obren Davis, NMFS*
- *Mary Furuness, NMFS*
- *Suja Hall, NMFS*
- *Kurt Iverson, NMFS*
- *Glenn Merrill, NMFS*
- *Ian Stewart, IPHC*
  
- *Linda Behnken, Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association*
- *Nicole Kimball, Pacific Seafoods Processors Association*
- *John Scoblic, Trident Seafoods*
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