

North Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Halibut Management Committee

October 4, 2016

Hilton Hotel Anchorage

In attendance: Dan Hull (Chair), Simon Kineen, Jim Balsiger, Bob Alverson, Linda Behnken, Craig Cross, Chris Oliver (staff), John Lepore, (NOAA GC) by phone.

Public/agency in attendance: Glenn Merrill, Rachel Baker, Nicole Kimball, Arne Fuglvog, Stefanie Moreland, Chris Woodley, Jamie Goene, Alan Hicks, Claude Dykstra, David Wilson, Kotaro Ono, Brent Paine, Buck Laukitis, Mateo Paz-Soldan, Heather McCarty, Simeon Swetsoff, Gerry Merrigan, Theresa Peterson, Jan Jacobs, Todd Loomis, David Witherell, Elizabeth Wiley, Brent Paine, Julie Bonney,

Introductions/overview: Dan provided an overview of Committee purpose, based upon previous discussions and the report from the first meeting of the Committee.

Halibut Management Framework: Chris Oliver provided an overview of the revised document, noting that it remains a 'living' document subject to updating as appropriate.

Committee members noted the importance of the IPHCs SPR (Spawning Potential Ratio) based reference points on harvest policy initiatives as it may relate to abundance based PSC initiative and/or other aspects of halibut management, and that this should be specifically identified in the framework.

Halibut DMRs discussion paper: Jim Armstrong provided an overview of the DMR discussion paper and proposed changes for the 2017 specifications process. Committee members observed that the timeframe issue is important, and that instantaneous DMRs have incentivized halibut savings in Pacific coast fisheries (i.e., 3 or 10 year averages reduce such incentives). The Committee generally supports the work of the working group on DMRs.

Abundance-based PSC discussion paper: Diana Stram (along with Jim Ianelli, Alan Hicks, and Kutaro Ono) provided an overview of the discussion paper, including the workgroups recommendations for an abundance index, and options for different control rules. They identified the primary elements which the Council will need to further specify in order to proceed with more formal analysis, including prioritization of competing objectives.

The Committee discussed overarching objectives, and an attendant desire to have as many options (for control rules and starting points, for example) as possible for ultimate consideration. Noting that those represent the major policy decisions inherent in this initiative.

Future analyses can be more clear that bycatch is currently taken off the top, which could close directed fisheries (in the BSAI for example) – that would be clearly articulated in the description of the status quo. Precluding the loss of a directed fishery is also an example of a key objective to be defined and prioritized (as opposed to maintaining groundfish fisheries for example). Specific wording in the discussion paper should be compared to the Council’s P and N statement to help clarify objectives for future iterations (for example, again, the relative emphasis on objectives such as the need to maintain a directed fishery, or the need to not constrain groundfish fisheries). This will also depend on further policy direction from the Council regarding these objectives. It was noted that protection of the halibut stock is a primary responsibility shared by the Council and the IPHC.

IPHC letter: The Council received a letter from the IPHC prior to this meeting, urging that the Council and IPHC meet prior to the December meeting (prior to the Council identifying specific alternatives for analysis). Such a meeting would be intended to help inform the Council’s development of alternatives (and/or objectives) for analysis of the abundance-based PSC initiative. It was noted that there are several points of intersection currently ongoing between the two bodies (such as the abundance-based PSC, discard mortality rates, and Halibut Management Committee).