

# Information regarding halibut and sablefish vessel use caps

February 2021 Council meeting<sup>1</sup>

The Council addressed the issue of vessel caps<sup>2</sup> for the 2020 IFQ season at a special meeting held in May 2020 and passed a motion requesting that the Secretary promulgate emergency regulations to remove vessel use cap regulations for IFQ halibut harvested in IPHC regulatory Areas 4B, 4C, and 4D for the remainder of the 2020 IFQ fishing season. An expanded action memo<sup>3</sup> was prepared for that meeting to inform the Council process. This document includes the tables and figures from that action memo, updated with data from the 2020 fishing season.

Vessel caps from 2013-2020 are listed in Table 1 for halibut and Table 2 for sablefish. At this time, the final 2021 IFQ allocations and vessel use caps have not been calculated and published by NMFS RAM. However, based on IPHC published 2021 commercial catch limits, we can provide a general description of potential changes to vessel caps and impacts by halibut regulatory area relative to 2020. IPHC limits include both IFQ and CDQ allocations while IFQ TAC and vessel caps are calculated solely from IFQ, therefore annual changes are not directly comparable. However, given the annual change in the overall commercial catch limits (IFQ and CDQ) within Alaska, from 17.1 million pounds in 2020 to 19.6 million pounds in 2021 (an increase of 14.6%) it is likely there will be an increase of an approximately similar proportion in the overall vessel cap. Comparing this increase to the relative magnitude of changes in area catch limits in halibut area 4 it is likely that in areas 4A and 4B the minimum number of vessels required to catch 100% of the area IFQ allocation would remain approximately the same as in 2020 (see Table 3, column 4 for 2020 comparison). In area 4CD the 2021 IPHC commercial catch limit declined relative to 2020 therefore it is likely that fewer vessels would be needed to fully harvest the area 4CD IFQ allocation as compared to 2020 if those vessels were harvesting at the vessel use cap. This could provide additional options for QS/IFQ holders who are seeking vessels to harvest their IFQ allocations under the existing vessel use caps.

Tables 3- 4 display the 2015-2020 annual allocations for each regulatory area for halibut and sablefish, the minimum number of vessels required to harvest 100% of the area allocation given vessel limitations, and the percent of the allocation that was harvested, and the number of vessels harvesting IFQ for both the entire fishing year and each fishing year through May 3.

Table 5 displays annual nominal (not adjusted for inflation) price per pound as calculated by the total ex vessel value and total net landed weight. The prices reported in this document are only for the purpose of estimating annual differences and do not reflect final pricing. Final annual prices are adjusted by

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<sup>2</sup> Federal Regulations specify that "No vessel may be used, during any fishing year, to harvest more IFQ halibut than one-half percent of the combined total catch limits of halibut for IFQ regulatory areas 2C, 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, and 4E." For sablefish, the limit is "one percent of the combined fixed gear total allowable catch (TAC) of sablefish for the GOA and BSAI IFQ regulatory areas" (50 CFR § 679.42(h)). Areas in the southeast have separate limits for both halibut and sablefish. Halibut area 2C and sablefish east of 140 degrees W. long (the SE subdistrict) are subject to vessel caps of one percent of the area TAC.

<sup>3</sup> <https://meetings.npfmc.org/CommentReview/DownloadFile?p=dd3491e0-6c93-4e58-94a8-19794f381fe5.pdf&fileName=C2%20Action%20Memo.pdf>

Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) to include contracts and Commercial Operator's Annual Reports (COAR) information at the end of the year.

Figure 1 displays the annual percentage of vessels that have harvested up to 50%, 75%, 90% and 100% of the vessel cap in each regulatory from 2015-2020. Vessels that harvest IFQ in multiple regulatory areas are included in each area and their percentage of vessel cap is calculated from the total IFQ harvested regardless of area. Vessels are included in each % threshold for which they qualify (a vessel that harvested 100% of the cap is included in the bar graph at 50%, 75%, 90% and 100%).

**Table 1. Annual catch limits and vessel caps for halibut, 2013-2020.**

Year	Halibut	Areas 3A, 4A, 4B, 4CDE	Area 2C	
	Total Catch Limit (lbs)	Vessel Cap (lbs)	Area Catch Limit (lbs)	Vessel Cap (lbs)
2013	21,810,800	109,054	2,970,000	29,700
2014	15,954,370	79,772	3,318,720	33,187
2015	17,136,920	85,685	3,679,000	36,790
2016	17,152,320	85,762	3,924,000	39,240
2017	18,295,400	91,477	4,212,000	42,120
2018	16,630,200	83,151	3,570,000	35,700
2019	17,710,000	88,550	3,610,000	36,100
2020	16,079,200	80,396	3,410,000	34,100

Source: NMFS Restricted Access Management (RAM).

**Table 2. Annual catch limits and vessel caps for sablefish 2013-2020.**

Year	Sablefish	Areas AI, BS, WG, CG, WY	Area SE	
	Total Catch Limit (lbs)	Vessel Cap (lbs)	Area Catch Limit (lbs)	Vessel Cap (lbs)
2013	28,013,851	280,139	7,032,674	70,327
2014	23,679,609	236,796	5,941,397	59,414
2015	23,569,378	235,694	5,912,737	59,127
2016	20,352,867	203,529	5,108,058	51,081
2017	22,577,309	225,773	5,745,188	57,452
2018	25,800,434	258,004	6,556,480	65,565
2019	25,967,983	259,680	6,578,526	65,785
2020	31,708,762	317,088	8,075,450	80,754

Source: NMFS Restricted Access Management (RAM).

**Table 3. Halibut annual area allocation, and minimum number of vessels required to harvest 100% of IFQ in each area under the vessel cap.** Annual totals and totals each fishing year through May 3 of percent of allocation landed, and number of vessels harvesting IFQ.

Area	Year	Allocation (pounds)	Minimum no. of vessels to harvest 100%	Annual Total		Fishing Year to Date (May 3)	
				No. of vessels harvesting IFQ	Percent landed	No. of vessels harvesting IFQ	Percent landed
2C	2015	3,679,000	100	439	96%	164	37%
	2016	3,924,000	100	433	97%	173	41%
	2017	4,212,000	100	423	96%	164	36%
	2018	3,570,000	100	402	95%	127	30%
	2019	3,610,000	100	406	94%	146	33%
	2020	3,410,000	100	376	94%	81	17%
3A	2015	7,790,000	91	441	99%	168	28%
	2016	7,336,000	86	431	99%	164	25%
	2017	7,739,000	85	415	98%	145	25%
	2018	7,350,000	89	401	98%	138	24%
	2019	8,060,000	92	408	98%	142	26%
	2020	7,050,000	88	374	97%	81	13%
3B	2015	2,650,000	31	196	98%	30	11%
	2016	2,710,000	32	194	97%	41	16%
	2017	3,140,000	35	192	96%	34	12%
	2018	2,620,000	32	182	93%	25	9%
	2019	2,330,000	27	169	94%	37	15%
	2020	2,410,000	30	144	93%	11	4%
4A	2015	1,390,000	17	68	95%	5	3%
	2016	1,390,000	17	69	97%	2	*
	2017	1,390,000	16	65	91%	5	2%
	2018	1,370,000	17	67	89%	6	4%
	2019	1,650,000	19	63	83%	10	6%
	2020	1,410,000	18	58	81%	6	2%
4B	2015	912,000	11	33	93%	2	*
	2016	912,000	11	34	94%	4	11%
	2017	912,000	10	30	91%	3	*
	2018	840,000	11	27	98%	6	13%
	2019	968,000	11	24	76%	6	20%
	2020	880,000	11	23	78%	3	*
4CD	2015	715,920	9	38	96%	0	*
	2016	880,320	11	36	96%	2	*
	2017	902,400	10	38	96%	1	*
	2018	880,200	11	38	90%	1	*
	2019	1,092,000	13	42	82%	1	*
	2020	919,200	12	33	99%	0	*

\* Data cannot be reported due to confidentiality.

Source: NMFS Restricted Access Management (RAM) division IFQ landings database sourced through AKFIN.

**Table 4. Sablefish annual area allocation, and minimum number of vessels required to harvest 100% of IFQ in each area under the vessel cap.** Annual totals and totals each fishing year through May 3 of percent of allocation landed, and number of vessels harvesting IFQ.

Area	Year	Allocation (pounds)	Minimum number of vessels to harvest 100%	Annual Total		Fishing Year to Date (May 3)	
				Number of vessels harvesting IFQ	Percent landed	Number of vessels harvesting IFQ	Percent landed
AI	2015	2,383,173	11	26	37%	2	*
	2016	2,059,096	11	21	32%	3	*
	2017	2,294,989	11	19	30%	5	7%
	2018	2,630,088	11	22	27%	6	7%
	2019	2,656,543	11	21	29%	6	10%
	2020	2,696,226	9	14	22%	5	14%
BS	2015	1,177,256	5	34	27%	3	*
	2016	1,014,116	5	28	39%	1	*
	2017	1,124,346	5	25	54%	5	12%
	2018	1,291,896	6	26	48%	7	11%
	2019	1,313,942	6	24	60%	10	24%
	2020	1,640,222	6	24	64%	7	14%
CG	2015	8,214,340	35	157	96%	69	23%
	2016	7,094,403	35	153	98%	67	18%
	2017	7,960,811	36	148	96%	62	19%
	2018	9,096,180	36	145	82%	67	15%
	2019	9,131,453	36	131	87%	64	17%
	2020	11,366,918	36	118	73%	36	9%
WG	2015	2,599,223	12	54	78%	5	5%
	2016	2,244,283	12	61	89%	10	8%
	2017	2,378,763	11	60	95%	8	10%
	2018	2,722,681	11	60	87%	10	11%
	2019	2,788,819	11	52	86%	9	6%
	2020	3,425,948	11	45	79%	2	*
WY	2015	3,282,649	14	99	100%	55	57%
	2016	2,832,911	14	103	99%	55	50%
	2017	3,073,212	14	103	99%	45	52%
	2018	3,503,109	14	95	96%	46	39%
	2019	3,498,700	14	90	97%	43	31%
	2020	4,503,998	15	82	79%	27	29%
SE	2015	5,912,737	100	177	99%	97	41%
	2016	5,108,058	100	176	100%	96	39%
	2017	5,745,188	100	170	99%	85	35%
	2018	6,556,480	100	173	95%	82	29%
	2019	6,578,526	100	168	96%	96	31%
	2020	8,075,450	100	161	81%	72	23%

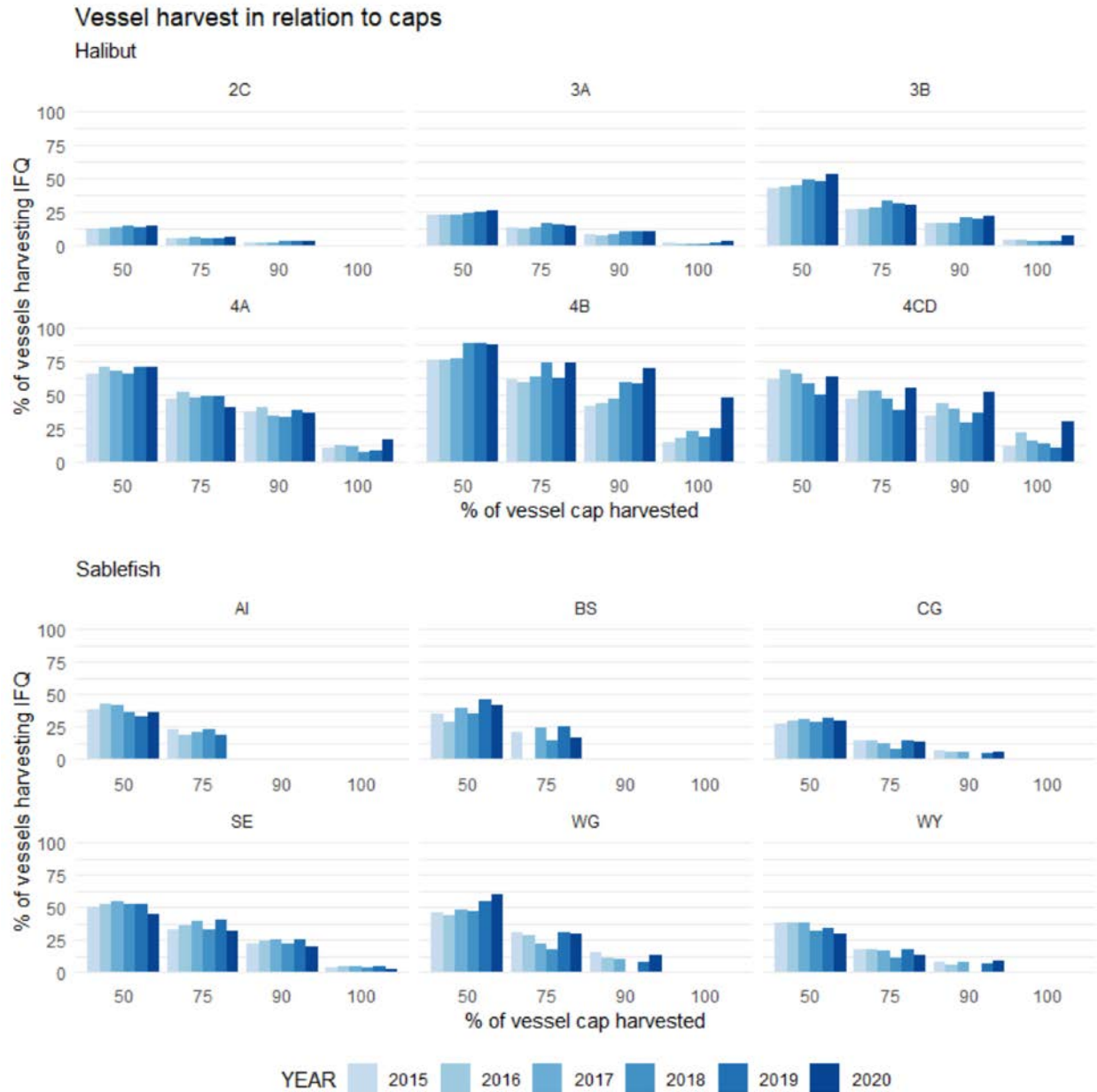
\* Data cannot be reported due to confidentiality.

Source: NMFS Restricted Access Management (RAM) division IFQ landings database sourced through AKFIN.

**Table 5. Annual nominal price per pound and percent change of halibut and sablefish prices in the BSAI and GOA region.** Prices are only for the purpose of estimating annual differences and do not reflect final pricing. Final prices are adjusted by CFEC to include contracts and COAR information at the end of the year.

Year	Region	Halibut price per pound	% change from previous year	Sablefish price per pound	% change from previous year
2015	BSAI	5.80		4.46	
2016	BSAI	5.98	3%	5.28	18%
2017	BSAI	5.62	-6%	4.41	-16%
2018	BSAI	4.52	-20%	3.33	-24%
2019	BSAI	4.48	-1%	2.81	-16%
2020	BSAI	3.77	-16%	1.81	-36%
2015	GOA	6.48		5.71	
2016	GOA	6.72	4%	6.42	12%
2017	GOA	6.34	-6%	7.43	16%
2018	GOA	5.38	-15%	5.41	-27%
2019	GOA	5.51	2%	4.25	-21%
2020	GOA	4.28	-22%	2.71	-36%

Source: NMFS Restricted Access Management (RAM) division IFQ landings database sourced through AKFIN



Source: NMFS Restricted Access Management (RAM) division IFQ landings database sourced through AKFIN.

**Figure 1. Percent of vessels harvesting IFQ in each regulatory area with total landings within 100%, 90%, 75% and 50% of the vessel cap.** Percent of vessel cap harvested is calculated by total IFQ regardless of area of harvest (with the exception of 2C and SE). Vessels harvesting in multiple areas are included in every area IFQ is harvested.