



# NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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## Action Memo

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**Dan Hull, Chairman**  
**Chris Oliver, Executive Director**

**SUBJECT:**

EFP-1 - Interim report on halibut deck sorting (Industry report)

**STAFF CONTACT:** Diana Evans

**ACTION REQUIRED:**

Interim report on 2016-2017 halibut deck sorting EFP

**BACKGROUND:**

In February 2016, the Council reviewed and supported an exempted fishing permit (EFP) application to allow on-deck sorting of Pacific halibut on non-pelagic trawl catcher processor vessels, as a means of reducing halibut bycatch mortalities. NMFS granted the EFP to the Amendment 80 cooperatives and co-applicants, and it became valid in May 2016 for one year, expiring at the end of April 2017. Under the EFP, vessels are allowed to sort halibut removed from a codend on the deck, rather than routing halibut over the flow scale and below deck, and release those fish back into the water after sampling halibut for length and condition, using IPHC halibut mortality assessment methods. All groundfish and halibut harvested must be within existing allocations for groundfish and halibut mortality. The Council has indicated that once the experimental work is complete, the Council may initiate an analysis to implement deck sorting in regulation. The Council also anticipates that the applicants will submit a further application to extend deck sorting through 2017 and until a regulation (if approved) can be implemented.

Throughout the course of 2016, NMFS has continued to work with the fleet and EFP permit holders on implementation issues as they arise. At this meeting, Mr. John Gauvin, representing the permit holders, will provide a brief report on the scope of the EFP this year, and the estimated halibut savings it has conferred. Mr. Gauvin will discuss proposed changes to the EFP requirements which have been agreed with NMFS, and which involve a change to monitoring practices under the EFP. These changes would be part of the new EFP application, to become effective in May 2017. It is, however, preferable that any changes be made at the beginning of the fishing year, rather than midway, in order to avoid confusion to fishermen or observers. As a result, the Council is being consulted at this meeting, prior to NMFS authorizing changes to the requirements of the existing deck sorting EFP that may take effect for fishing occurring in 2017.

The 2016-2017 approved EFP is attached for background; Mr. Gauvin's powerpoint report will be posted during the Council meeting.