



NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

605 W. 4th Ave. Suite 306
Anchorage, AK 99501
(907) 271-2809
Fax (907) 271-2817

Action Memo

File #: BYC 18-008, **Version:** 1

Dan Hull, Chairman
David Witherell, Executive Director

SUBJECT:

Halibut Abundance-based PSC limits -Discussion Paper, Scoping Report

STAFF CONTACT: Diana Stram (NPFMC)

ACTION REQUIRED:

- Review discussion paper on control rule analysis
- Review scoping report
- Adopt a suite of alternatives for initial review analysis.

BACKGROUND:

In October 2017, the Council reviewed a discussion paper synthesizing staff work on establishing BSAI abundance-based management (ABM) prohibited species catch (PSC) limits for halibut. In October, the Council requested staff to develop a preliminary analysis of ABM control rules and their relative performance compared to Council objectives, using the Council's suite of elements and options to develop "strawman ABMs" (example ABM alternatives) based on various combinations of trawl and setline survey indices of halibut abundance.

This discussion paper sets out strawman ABMs as requested by the Council. The paper also evaluates how different control rules function, and the relative features of different control rules. We provide a preliminary analysis of the example ABMs that explores tradeoffs among the control rules with respect to setting PSC limits for BSAI groundfish fisheries (by gear type), using both historical data and contrasting scenarios of forward projections to understand how the control rules will function in the light of potential future halibut abundance trends.

In developing the strawman ABMs, analysts revised the Council's elements and options from October 2017 within the intent of the Council motion but restructured to better suit an analysis of different control rules moving forward and to provide contrast relative to the Council's objectives.

At this meeting the Council is scheduled to draft a suite of alternatives for an initial review analysis. Consequently, the revised elements and options provided here are intended to help guide the Council in specifying control rule options for alternatives to be analyzed. For clarity, the options for each element should be limited so as to avoid specifying attributes that achieve the same overall goal. This should help the analysts evaluate and present results to contrast among alternatives.

NMFS and the Council have determined that the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) may be required for this action because abundance-based halibut PSC limits may have effects on target and bycatch species and their users that are uncertain or unknown and may result in significant impacts on the human environment not previously analyzed. Thus, NMFS and the Council have initiated scoping for an EIS in the event an EIS is needed. NMFS published a notice of intent to publish an EIS on December 12, 2017.

NMFS invited the public to comment on the range of issues and alternative management measures that the Council and NMFS should consider in developing abundance-based approaches for halibut PSC limits in the BSAI groundfish fisheries. This report summarizes the comments received during the December 12, 2017, to February 16, 2018, scoping period for the BSAI Halibut Abundance-Based PSC EIS. The purpose of this report is to inform the Council and the public of the results of scoping and to assist in the development of the range of alternatives for analysis in the draft EIS.