

GOA hook-and-line gear fisheries other than sablefish.

At its December 1994 meeting, the Council recommended a hook-and-line PSC limit of 300 mt, based on the proposed exemption of the hook-and-line sablefish fishery. Until the regulatory amendment to authorize the exemption of hook-and-line sablefish is approved, NMFS is specifying the PSC limits of 750 mt for hook-and-line and 2,000 mt for trawl gear. The hook-and-line halibut PSC limit is further apportioned between the DSR fishery (10 mt halibut mortality) and all other hook-and-line fisheries (740 mt). The final rule to exempt hook-and-line sablefish, if approved, would establish the hook-and-line PSC limit at 300 mt, as recommended by the Council.

Regulations at § 672.20(f)(1)(i) authorize separate apportionments of the trawl halibut bycatch mortality limit between trawl fisheries for deep-water and shallow-water species. These apportionments are divided seasonally to avoid seasonally high halibut bycatch rates.

As in the proposed specifications, the Council recommended that pot gear be exempt from Pacific halibut PSC limits for the 1995 fishing year. The Council proposed this exemption after considering that the 1994 groundfish catch and associated halibut bycatch mortality (4 mt), which continues to be low relative to other groundfish operations. NMFS concurs with the Council's recommendation.

In making its determinations with respect to halibut PSC mortality limits, NMFS considered information presented in the 1994 SAFE report; in addition, information from Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) and public testimony also were considered. The proposed 1995 specifications discuss:

(1) Estimated halibut bycatch in prior years; (2) current estimates of halibut biomass and stock condition; (3) potential impacts of expected fishing for groundfish on halibut stocks and U.S. halibut fisheries; and (4) methods available for, and costs of, reducing halibut bycatches in groundfish fisheries. That discussion is not repeated here. The following information was also considered:

A. Expected Changes in Groundfish Stocks

At its December 1994 meeting, the Council adopted lower ABCs for pollock, deep-water flatfish, rex sole, flathead sole, sablefish, pelagic shelf rockfish, DSR, Atka mackerel, arrowtooth flounder, shortraker/rougheye, "other" rockfish, and northern rockfish, than those established for 1994. The Council adopted higher ABCs for Pacific cod, shallow-water flatfish, POP, and thornyhead rockfish than those established for 1994. More information on these changes is included in the Final SAFE Report dated November 1994 and in the Council and SSC minutes.

B. Expected Changes in Groundfish Catch

The total of the 1995 TACs for the GOA is 279,463 mt, a slight decrease from the 1994 TAC total of 304,595 mt. At its December 1994 meeting, the Council changed the 1995 TACs for some fisheries from the 1994 TACs. Those fisheries for which the 1995 TACs are lower than in 1994 are pollock (decreased to 65,360 mt from 109,300 mt), rex sole (decreased to 9,690 mt from 10,140), flathead sole (decreased to 9,740 mt from 10,000 mt), sablefish (decreased to 21,500 mt from 25,500 mt), shortraker/rougheye (decreased to 1,910 mt from 1,960 mt), northern

rockfish (decreased to 5,270 from 5,760 mt), pelagic shelf rockfish (decreased to 5,190 mt from 6,890 mt), DSR (decreased to 580 mt from 960 mt), and Atka mackerel (decreased to 3,240 mt from 3,505 mt). Those species for which the 1995 TAC is higher than in 1994 are Pacific cod (increased to 69,200 mt from 50,400 mt), arrowtooth flounder (increased to 35,000 mt from 30,000 mt), POP (increased to 5,630 mt from 2,550 mt), and thornyhead rockfish (increased to 1,900 mt from 1,180 mt).

10. Seasonal Allocations of the Halibut PSC Limits

Under § 672.20(f)(1)(iii), NMFS seasonally allocates the halibut PSC limits based on recommendations from the Council. The FMP requires that certain information be considered by the Council in recommending seasonal allocations of halibut. The publication of the final 1994 groundfish and PSC specifications (59 FR 7647, February 16, 1994) summarizes Council findings with respect to each of the FMP considerations. At this time, the Council's findings are unchanged from those set forth for 1994. Pacific halibut PSC limits, and apportionments thereof, are presented in Table 6. Regulations specify that any overages or shortfalls in a seasonal apportionment of a PSC limit will be deducted from or added to the next respective seasonal apportionment within the 1995 season.

As noted above, the Council requested a change in the hook-and-line PSC limit for 1995, which would be established in a separate rulemaking exempting the hook-and-line sablefish from the PSC limit. Until that final rule becomes effective, NMFS is establishing the same allowances for 1995 as were used in 1994.

TABLE 6.—FINAL 1995 PACIFIC HALIBUT PSC LIMITS, ALLOWANCES, AND APPORTIONMENTS. THE PACIFIC HALIBUT PSC LIMIT FOR HOOK-AND-LINE GEAR IS ALLOCATED TO THE DEMERSAL SHELF ROCKFISH (DSR) FISHERY AND FISHERIES OTHER THAN DSR. VALUES ARE IN METRIC TONS

Trawl gear		Hook-and-line gear			
Dates	Amount	Other than DSR		DSR	
		Dates	Amount	Dates	Amount
Jan 1–Mar 31	600(30%)	Jan 1–May 17	200(27%)	Jan 1–Dec 31	10(100%)
Apr 1–June 30	400(20%)	May 18–Aug 31	500(68%)		
Jul 1–Sep 30	600(30%)	Sep 1–Dec 31	40(5%)		
Oct 1–Dec 31	400(20%)				
Total	2,000(100%)		740(100%)		10(100%)

Regulations at § 672.20(f)(1)(i) authorize apportionments of the trawl

halibut PSC limit allowance as bycatch allowances to a deep-water species

complex and a shallow-water species complex. The deep-water species