

## **BSAI Groundfish Sector Progress Report for voluntarily implementing measures to minimize halibut PSC**

### **Applicability.**

BSAI groundfish sectors (American Fisheries Act (AFA) catcher/processors, AFA catcher vessels, Amendment 80, Freezer Longline, Western Alaska Community Development Quota) must submit to the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (Council) a progress report on voluntarily implementing measures in their cooperative and/or inter-cooperative agreements to minimize halibut Prohibited Species Catch (PSC).

### **Time limits and submittal.**

Each of the sectors is to report to the Council at the February 2015 Council meeting. The report may be provided by electronic or paper submittal, or oral presentation.

### **Information required.**

BSAI Groundfish Sectors must provide to the Council voluntary measures to be implemented in their cooperative and/or inter-cooperative agreements.

- ◆ Development and implementation of effective and verifiable measures for halibut avoidance
- ◆ Individual accountability and use of incentives to reduce halibut PSC
- ◆ Halibut reduction actions
- ◆ Effectiveness of those measures: how many absolute reductions in halibut mortality

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the report is for each sector in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area (BSAI) groundfish fisheries to inform the Council of its progress on voluntary, non-regulatory methods it is using within its fishery cooperative to avoid halibut bycatch in the BSAI groundfish fisheries. The Council is currently considering regulatory revisions to provide additional incentives for the fleet to reduce halibut bycatch in these fisheries, if voluntary measures are deemed insufficient in managing halibut PSC.

In February 2014, the Council received testimony from a number of BSAI groundfish industry participants describing measures their fleets or cooperatives are currently developing or have already undertaken to reduce halibut PSC. The Council would like to gather more information on these measures as it considers how it may best meet its objective to reduce halibut PSC to the extent practicable.

During its June 2014 meeting, the Council requested voluntary, non-regulatory reports from these same five groundfish fishing sectors on actions taken to reduce halibut mortalities in the BSAI from the use of halibut Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) as well as discards in the directed halibut fishery, including:

- ◆ Halibut reduction measures taken by the sectors
- ◆ Effectiveness of those measures in terms of absolute reductions in halibut mortalities.

Each of the sectors is to report to the Council at the February 2015 Council meeting.

### **Participants, BSAI Groundfish Sectors**

- ◆ AFA Catcher/Processor sector - 1 report
- ◆ AFA Catcher Vessel sector - from 1 to 7 reports (probably likely to do one, combined sector report, but there are 7 cooperatives within the sector)
- ◆ AFA Mothership sector - 1 report
- ◆ Amendment 80 sector - 2 reports
- ◆ Freezer longline sector - 1 report
- ◆ Western Alaska Community Development Quota (CDQ) sector - 1 report

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#### ***PUBLIC REPORTING BURDEN STATEMENT***

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 40 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to Assistant Regional Administrator, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region, NMFS, P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668.

#### ***ADDITIONAL INFORMATION***

Before completing this form please note the following: 1) NMFS may not conduct or sponsor this information request, and you are not required to respond to this information request, unless the form displays a currently valid OMB control number; 2) this information is used to manage commercial fishing effort in the GOA and BSAI under 50 CFR 679; 3) Responses to this information request are not confidential.

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