

January 9, 2014

RC submission - Rollback of unharvested GHL to federal fishery

Agenda Item: Miscellaneous Business

Board Action Requested

It is requested that a Board Generated Proposal be created for consideration at the March 2014 meeting for the purpose of granting authority to the ADF&G Commissioner to roll back unharvested Pacific cod GHL in the state waters of the Bering Sea (Area O) and the Aleutian Islands (Area R).

Issue

GHL allocation in the Area R AI P-cod fishery has not been fully harvested since 2008, a trend that is expected to continue. It is expected that a substantial amount of the GHL allocated to the newly created Area O BS P-cod fishery will likewise be unharvested. The Board needs to provide a mechanism to fully utilize this resource. This will help minimize stranded fish and maximize the economic benefits of the resource for the state.

Details of Proposed Action

Proposal to the Board

Grant authority to the ADF&G Commissioner to roll back unharvested GHL in the BS (Area O) and AI (Area R) state water "B" season P-cod fisheries from the State of Alaska to NMFS.

- This proposal would only pertain to unharvested GHL in the state waters "B" season. "A" season GHL would not be affected; unharvested "A" season GHL would continue to be rolled over to the state waters "B" season.
- This proposal would not result in any reduction of harvest opportunities in the state waters fisheries. Only GHL that the ADF&G Commissioner determines would not be harvested would be rolled back to the federal fishery. If the GHL is fully harvested, no allocation would be rolled back from the state.

Rationale

Reduce stranded fish: This proposal will provide a mechanism for the ADF&G Commissioner to reduce levels of stranded fish in the BS and AI state water P-cod fisheries.

- The Area O and Area R state water P-cod fisheries each receive 3% of the combined BSAI P-cod ABC. In 2014, the BSAI P-cod ABC is 270,100 MT. This amounts to a GHL allocation of 8,103 MT (~17.86 million pounds) to each state fishery, or a combined 16,206 MT (~35.73 million pounds) of the BSAI P-cod ABC.

- ADF&G reports that the GHL in the state AI P-cod fishery has not been fully harvested in 6 of the 8 years since the fishery was established in 2006, including the 2013 season.
 - 2012 and 2013 harvest numbers are confidential due to the small number of vessels fishing in the “B” season. However, ADF&G reports that the 2013 “B” season allocation in the AI totaled over 9.5 million pounds (4,309 MT). Similar numbers were reported in 2012. A large amount of the “B” season allocation is typically uncaught.
- It’s unknown how much of the GHL will be harvested in the new BS Area O P-cod fishery annually, but many suspect a substantial amount of the GHL allocation will initially go uncaught (similar to the Area R fishery).

Increase economic benefits to State: It’s in the economic interest of the State to maximize the harvest of P-cod in the BSAI. Fish left stranded in the state waters fisheries mean lower revenues for the State and Alaskan communities.

- If fully harvested, 2014 landing tax revenues for the nearly 36 million pounds of GHL allocated to the Area O and Area R fisheries will total nearly \$400K. Any that is not harvested, whether in state or federal fisheries, means lower revenues to the state.
- Rolling back unharvested GHL to the federal fishery will provide additional opportunities to participants in the federal BS and AI P-cod fisheries. This translates to economic benefits to Alaskan participants in the federal fishery and the many Alaskan communities and local companies supported by these businesses and jobs.
 - Additional revenues for communities and businesses to be realized in many ways, including the purchase of food, fuel, and transportation and maintenance/repairs of vessels.
 - In particular the freezer longline fleet that will harvest much of any roll over will do so with a fleet of vessels that are more than half Alaskan owned with many home ported in Alaska.

Sincerely,



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