

HALIBUT AND SABLEFISH IFQ PROGRAM
AMENDMENT PROPOSAL
North Pacific Fisheries Management Council
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Brief Statement of Proposal: Increase the Halibut Vessel IFQ Cap in Area 4.

Objectives of Proposal (What is the problem?): A significant percentage of Area 4 IFQ is not harvested each year. (Example: 18% in 4B and 8% in 4C/D in 2009; 10.9% in 4B and 23% in 4C in 1996) Among the reasons may be: 1) Far fewer vessels operate in Area 4 than in other areas. 2) Of the limited number of vessels that fish the western areas, most are capped-out so it is difficult for IFQ holders to match up with harvesting vessels. 3) Weather conditions tend to limit harvesting vessels to the summer months – creating a shorter season in Area 4. 4) Processing plants in Area 4 typically do not buy halibut early in the season and most stop processing earlier than in the Gulf areas due to other processing priorities and sparse halibut deliveries. For these reasons, Area 4 is a logistically tougher area to conduct a viable commercial halibut fishery.

The objective of the proposal is to increase the vessel IFQ cap in Area 4 to provide IFQ holders with more vessel harvesting options. This should result in a larger percentage of the Area 4 allocation being harvested thereby reducing the amount of un-harvested IFQ that could be due to the unavailability of harvesting vessels.

Our request is to have the Council analyze the problem of un-harvested IFQ and determine if the vessel IFQ cap is contributing to the problem in Area 4.

The vessel IFQ cap is calculated annually based on a percentage of ALL IFQ TAC (except for Area 2C). Developing a separate and increased vessel IFQ cap for just Area 4 halibut areas is complicated. Therefore, we would like the proposed vessel IFQ cap increase for Area 4 to be analyzed and developed by the Council process.

Foreseeable Impacts of Proposal (Who wins, who loses?): Most foreseeable impacts will be positive. 1) A larger percentage of the Area 4 quota will be harvested-resulting in increased income to IFQ holders and vessel owners. 2) IFQ holders will have more competitive harvesting options that should increase the income derived from their IFQ holdings. 3) Vessels operating in these geographically remote areas with extreme weather conditions are mainly larger vessels of a limited number.

4) Increasing the vessel IFQ cap will allow more of these same vessels to be available for hire - currently many of these vessels are capped-out.

Statistically, increasing the vessel cap should not reduce harvesting opportunities of vessels currently operating in Area 4. Instead, it will increase the harvesting percentage, harvesting options, and the income of IFQ holders and also the harvesting vessels.

Are there Alternative Solutions? An alternative solution may be to increase the vessel IFQ cap for all areas. As Bering Sea and Aleutian Island fishermen, we feel the vessel IFQ cap/un-harvested quota issue is more applicable to Area 4, but if there is enough support, we could endorse the change statewide which would also fix our problem. But, our concern is that a statewide change may create too much opposition due to potential fleet consolidation or other concerns that could threaten the success of our proposal. We are not speaking for fishermen from the other halibut areas.

Supportive Data and Other Information: (What data are available and where can they be found?): The Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Allocations and Landings reports can be found on the NMFS website.



Signature: _____