more appropriate in estimating halibut bycatch mortality for the 1995 BSAI hook-and-line gear fishery for Pacific cod than the 12.5 percent rate established in the final 1995 groundfish specifications (February 14, 1995, 60 FR 8479).

At its June 1995 meeting, the Council reviewed the IPHC's analysis and recommended that NMFS take appropriate action to reduce the halibut discard mortality rate specified for the BSAI Pacific cod hook-and-line gear fishery. A fuller discussion of the IPHC's analysis and justification for the proposed reduction in this discard mortality rate assumption was presented in the August 22, 1995, Federal Register publication of the proposed change.

Upon reviewing the reasons for the proposed change to the halibut discard mortality rate specified for the BSAI Pacific cod fishery and public comments received on this action, NMFS revises Table 9 of the final 1995 groundfish specifications published February 14, 1995 (60 FR 8479), as follows: TABLE 9.—ASSUMED PACIFIC HALIBUT MORTALITY RATES FOR THE BSAI FISHERIES DURING 1995

	Assumed mortality (percent)
Hook-and-Line Gear Fisheries:	
Rockfish	24.0
Pacific cod	11.5
Greenland turbot	19.0
Sablefish	17.0
Trawl Gear Fisheries:	
Midwater pollock	89.0
Non-pelagic pollock	77.0
Yellowfin sole	76.0
Rock sole, flathead sole,	
other flatfish	75.0
Rockfish	69.0
Pacific cod	65.0
Atka mackerel	59.0
Arrowtooth	49.0
Greenland Turbot	48.0
Pot Gear Fisheries:	
Pacific cod	8.0

NMFS will recalculate the 1995 halibut bycatch mortality for the BSAI Pacific cod hook-and-line gear fishery using the 11.5 percent assumed discard mortality rate.

Response to Comments

One letter was received within the comment period that ended September

5, 1995. A summary of comments of the proposed action and NMFS's response follows.

Comment. An adjustment of the halibut discard mortality rate assumption for the BSAI Pacific cod hook-and-line gear fishery from 12.5 percent to 11.5 percent is appropriate based on the IPHC analysis of 1995 observer data. This action would encourage industry pursuit of further conservation efforts to reduce halibut mortality in the hook-and-line gear fisheries.

Response. NMFS concurs and has adjusted the halibut discard mortality rate specified for the BSAI Pacific cod hook-and-line gear fishery accordingly.

Classification

This action is authorized under 50 CFR 675.20 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.* Dated: September 22, 1995.

Richard W. Surdi,

Acting Director, Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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