

TABLE 6.—PROPOSED SEASONAL APPORTIONMENTS OF THE 1996 PACIFIC HALIBUT BYCATCH ALLOWANCES FOR THE BSAI TRAWL AND NONTRAWL FISHERIES—Continued

	Seasonal bycatch allowances (mt halibut)
Pacific cod:	
Jan. 20–Jun. 30	1,487
Jul. 1–Dec. 31	103
Total	1,590
Pollock/Atka mackerel/"other species":	
Jan. 20–Apr. 15	455
Apr. 16–Dec. 31	100
Total	555
Total Trawl Halibut Mortality	3,775
Fishery Nontrawl Gear:	
Pacific cod:	
Jan. 1–Apr. 30	475
May. 1–Aug. 31	40
Sep. 1–Dec. 31	210
Total	725
Other nontrawl	175
Sablefish hook-and-line	(1)
Groundfish pot	(1)
Groundfish jig gear	(1)
Total Nontrawl Halibut Mortality	900

¹ Exempt.

Preliminary assumed halibut mortality rates recommended by the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) for the 1996 BSAI groundfish fisheries are listed in Table 7. These mortality rates are based on an average of mortality rates determined from NMFS observer data collected during 1993 and 1994, except for the BSAI trawl arrowtooth flounder fishery, which is based on data from 1991 and 1992, the 2 most recent years the fishery operated. The Council proposed that revised halibut discard mortality rates recommended by the IPHC be adopted for purposes of monitoring halibut bycatch mortality limits established for the 1996 groundfish fisheries.

For most fisheries, the 1993–94 averages, on which the 1996 recommendations are based, are somewhat lower than the actual rates used in 1995. After the December 1995 Council meeting, NMFS will consider all available data and public comments and will publish preseason assumed halibut mortality rates in the Federal Register as part of the final 1996 initial specifications of groundfish TAC amounts. However, the Council noted that the sablefish hook-and-line halibut fishery bycatch mortality rate is based on the fishery before the IFQ program was initiated and that the IPHC may have new data at the December 1995

meeting that would help reassess the halibut mortality rate in this fishery.

TABLE 7.—ASSUMED PACIFIC HALIBUT MORTALITY RATES PROPOSED FOR THE BSAI FISHERIES DURING 1996

	Assumed mortality (percent)
Hook-and-Line Gear Fisheries:	
BSAI sablefish	27
BSAI rockfish	24
BSAI Greenland turbot	18
BSAI Pacific cod	13
Trawl Gear Fisheries:	
midwater pollock	86
Rockfish	77
bottom pollock	77
Pacific cod	77
yellowfin sole	74
rock sole/flathead sole/other flatfish	74
Atka mackerel	61
Greenland turbot	51
arrowtooth	49
Pot Gear Fisheries—Pacific cod	7

Groundfish PSC Limits

Section 675.20(a)(6) authorizes NMFS to specify PSC limits for groundfish species or species groups for which the TAC will be completely harvested by domestic fisheries. These PSC limits

apply only to JVP or TALFF fisheries. At this time, no groundfish are allocated to either JVP or TALFF and specifications of groundfish PSC limits are unnecessary.

Classification

This action is authorized under 50 CFR 611.93(b), 675.20, and 676.20 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

A draft environmental assessment (EA) on the allowable harvest levels set forth in the final 1996 SAFE Report will be available for public review at the December 4–8, 1995, Council meeting. After the December meeting, a final EA will be prepared on the final 1996 TAC amounts recommended by the Council.

Consultation pursuant to section 7 of the Endangered Species Act has been initiated for the 1996 BSAI initial specifications.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: December 1, 1996.

Gary Matlock,

Program Management Officer, National Marine Fisheries Service.

[FR Doc. 95–29722 Filed 12–5–95; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510–22–W