

Table 4 - Final 2003 Seasonal Apportionments and Allocations of Pacific cod TAC Amounts in the GOA; Allocations for Processing by the Inshore and Offshore Components. (Amounts are in mt)

Regulatory area	TAC	Component Allocation	
		<u>Inshore</u> (90%)	<u>Offshore</u> (10%)
Western	15,450	13,905	1,545
A Season (60%)	9,270	8,343	927
B Season (40%)	6,180	5,562	618
Central	22,690	20,421	2,269
A Season (60%)	13,614	12,253	1,361
B Season (40%)	9,076	8,168	908
Eastern	2,400	2,160	240
TOTAL:	40,540	36,486	4,054

"Other Species" TAC

The FMP specifies that amounts for the "other species" category are calculated as 5 percent of the combined TAC amounts for target species. The GOA-wide "other species" TAC is calculated as 11,260 mt, which is 5 percent of the sum of combined TAC amounts for the target species.

Pacific Halibut PSC Mortality Limits

Under § 679.21(d), annual Pacific halibut PSC limits are established and apportioned to trawl and hook-and-line gear and may be established for pot gear. In December 2002, the Council recommended that NMFS maintain the 2002 halibut PSC limits of 2,000 mt for the trawl fisheries and 300 mt for the hook-and-line fisheries, with 10 mt of the hook-and-line limit apportioned to the demersal shelf rockfish (DSR) fishery in the SEO District and the remainder to the remaining hook-and-line fisheries. The DSR fishery is defined at § 679.21(d)(4)(iii)(A) and historically has been apportioned this amount in recognition of its small scale harvests. Although observer data are not available to verify actual bycatch amounts, given most vessels are less than 60 ft (18.3 m) length overall (LOA) and are exempt from observer coverage, halibut bycatch in the DSR fishery is assumed to be low because of the short soak times for the gear and the short duration of the DSR fishery. Also, the DSR fishery occurs in the winter when

less of an overlap exists in the distribution of DSR and halibut.

Regulations at § 679.21(d)(4) authorize exemption of specified nontrawl fisheries from the halibut PSC limit. The Council recommended that pot gear, jig gear, and the hook-and-line sablefish fishery be exempted from the nontrawl halibut limit for 2003. The Council recommended, and NMFS concurs with, these exemptions because of the low halibut bycatch mortality experienced in the pot gear fisheries (4 mt in 2001 and 2 mt in 2002) and because of the 1995 implementation of the sablefish and halibut Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program. The sablefish IFQ program requires legal-size halibut to be retained by vessels using hook-and-line gear if a halibut IFQ permit holder is aboard and is holding unused halibut IFQ. Halibut mortality for the jig gear fleet cannot be estimated because these vessels do not carry observers. However, halibut mortality is assumed to be very low given the small amount of groundfish harvested by jig gear (336 mt in 2001 and 277 mt in 2002) and the assumed high survival rate of any halibut that are incidentally caught by jig gear and released.

Under § 679.21(d)(5), NMFS seasonally apportioned the halibut PSC limits based on recommendations from the Council. The FMP and regulations require that the following information be considered by the Council and NMFS in seasonally apportioning halibut PSC limits: (1) Seasonal distribution of halibut, (2) seasonal distribution of

target groundfish species relative to halibut distribution, (3) expected halibut bycatch needs on a seasonal basis relative to changes in halibut biomass and expected catch of target groundfish species, (4) expected bycatch rates on a seasonal basis, (5) expected changes in directed groundfish fishing seasons, (6) expected actual start of fishing effort, and (7) economic effects of establishing seasonal halibut allocations on segments of the target groundfish industry.

The emergency interim rule establishing the final 2002 groundfish and PSC specifications (66 FR 956, January 8, 2002) summarizes Council findings with respect to each of the FMP considerations set forth here. At this time, the Council's and NMFS' findings are unchanged from those set forth in 2002. The opening date for the third seasonal allowance of the trawl halibut PSC limit and the start date for directed fishing for rockfish by trawl gear is June 29, 2003. This date will facilitate inseason management of the rockfish fisheries and reduce the effect of the rockfish fisheries on the annual NMFS sablefish survey which occurs later in July.

NMFS concurs with the Council's recommendations described here and listed in Table 5. Regulations at § 679.21(d)(5)(iii) and (iv) specify that any overages or shortfalls in a seasonal apportionment of a PSC limit will be deducted from or added to the following seasonal apportionment within the 2003 fishing year. The following types of