

CQE vessel use caps

In October, the Council reviewed an analysis (GOA FMP Amendment 94) evaluating the impacts of revising the vessel use caps for halibut and sablefish IFQ derived from quota share held by Gulf of Alaska Community Quota Entities (CQEs). The overall intent of the CQE Program is to allow community non-profit organizations representing small, rural communities in the Gulf of Alaska to purchase catcher vessel quota share (QS), in order to lease the annual IFQ to community residents and maintain long-term access to the halibut and sablefish fisheries.

The existing CQE Program limits the annual amount of halibut IFQ that can be fished on a vessel to 50,000 lbs of IFQ halibut, if that vessel is used to harvest any amount of IFQ halibut derived from QS

held by a CQE. Similarly, it limits the annual amount of sablefish QS that can be fished on a vessel to 50,000 lbs of IFQ sablefish, if that vessel is used to harvest any amount of IFQ sablefish derived from

QS held by a CQE. The vessel use caps for IFQ derived from CQE held QS are inclusive of any individually-held IFQ being used on the vessel, on an annual basis, and are not based on a percentage of the IFQ TAC. These vessel use caps are much more restrictive than those applicable to IFQ held by any other entity in the IFQ Program.

The Council took final action in October, recognizing that the current vessel use caps are unnecessarily restrictive and may reduce the flexibility that small communities need to develop long-term plans for using the potential opportunities afforded by the CQE Program. The current vessel use caps may discourage vessels from using IFQ derived from CQE held QS onboard, as the vessel would otherwise be subject to the higher individual vessel use caps for the IFQ Program in general. The Council approved a problem statement and Alternative 2 for recommendation to the Secretary of Commerce:

Alternative 2. Revise current regulations such that:

No vessel may be used, during any fishing year, to harvest more than 50,000 lbs of IFQ halibut derived from quota share held by a CQE; and no vessel may be used, during any fishing year, to harvest more than 50,000 lbs of IFQ sablefish derived from quota share held by a CQE.

The vessel would also be subject to the same vessel use caps applicable in the overall IFQ Program.

The final motion is on the Council website. Staff contact is Nicole Kimball.

The Council took no action on a 2009 IFQ proposal to allow Area 4B IFQ category "D" quota shares to be fished on category "C" vessels. The Council cited several reasons for not scheduling final action on this topic: 1) the presence of Icicle Seafoods in Adak, 2) a potential for a newly created market for "D" class QS through an action to allow the community of Adak to purchase QS, and 3) the low amount of "D" class QS available for new entrants in Area 4B and the impact on the price of D class QS if it could be fished on C class vessels. The Council identified that it could schedule final action on this analysis in the future if conditions warrant it. Contact Jane DiCosimo (excerpt from the October 2011 Council Newsletter)