



New England Fishery Management Council

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 18, 2017
TO: Whiting Committee
FROM: Whiting Plan Development Team (PDT)
SUBJECT: **Amendment 22 triggered possession limit adjustment**

As you know, the Committee recommended and the Council approved an additional possession limit alternative that would trigger a whiting and red hake possession limit reduction. The trigger, mechanism, and possession limits were not specified and the alternative was sent back to the Committee and Advisory Panel (AP) for further development.

Additionally, the Council approved No Action (now in Section 4.1) as the preferred alternative and added an alternative to Action 3 (now in Section 4.5) that would create a limited access exemption for vessels fishing for whiting and red hake in Exemption Areas that require a raised footrope trawl. The rationale is that the more selective gear is adequate to manage bycatch, particularly if it is coupled with other measures to keep bycatch at acceptable levels.

The draft document has been revised and restructured to be more consistent with the Council's choices and improve the rationale and justification for the preferred alternative, as well as insert the additional alternatives. The alternatives related to a triggered possession limit reduction (now in Section 4.4) have been drafted, but they are merely a place holder until the specifics are identified and approved by the Committee.

The PDT views this triggered possession limit alternative as fitting into a limited access program, with triggers and tiers associated with each permit type: Category I, Category II, and Incidental. It makes less sense to associate this approach with an open access fishery, because a tiered approach would not be possible and would be much less effective due to an unknown or growing number of fishery participants. It also would be confounded by the existing in-season and post-season accountability measures.

Within a limited access framework, the PDT envisions a tiered approach that would trigger a whiting AND red hake possession limit reduction for the northern or southern management area. Possession limit reductions for vessels with incidental permits would happen first and would have the most reduction, followed by Category II vessels. Category I vessels would have the existing mesh-size dependent possession limits by management area, subject to the in-season accountability measure (triggering an incidental whiting OR red hake limit for all vessels using any size mesh).

Table 1 outlines a potential approach and suggests some possession limit amounts. At the beginning of a fishing year a permit category would start out with the same whiting and red hake possession limits that apply to Category I vessels, unless specific conditions are met.

For non-qualifying vessels with incidental permits, the directed fishery would close and vessels would be subject to an incidental limit of 2000 lbs. of whiting AND 400 lbs. of red hake when a) catches exceed the previous year's sub-ACL¹ (for stocks caught as bycatch) or b) the previous year's catch of whiting or red hake stocks (managed stocks in the fishery) exceed 90% of the current year's ACL (accounting for changes in the ABC through specification adjustments).

For Category II vessels, the possession limit at the beginning of a fishing year would be reduced to 15,000 lbs. of whiting AND 3,000 lbs. of red hake when the previous year's catch exceeded 90% of the current year's ACL. A larger possession limit reduction to 8,000 lbs. of whiting AND 1,500 lbs. of red hake would apply if the previous year's catch of whiting OR red hake exceeds 100% of the current year's ACL. The possession limit reduction is intended to apply to both species if triggered by either species catch exceeding its ACL.

Starting from before the Council meeting through the October 10 PDT conference call, the PDT has been analyzing landings per trip data for potential qualifiers and non-qualifiers for each alternative.

¹ An annual catch limit, or ACL, is specified for whiting, red hake, and Georges Bank yellowtail flounder. Other bycatch limits may be set in the future by the NE Multispecies or another management plan.

Table 1. Triggered possession limit framework for an Amendment 22 alternative.

Area	Trigger	Possession limit, for vessels using 3-inch or larger mesh trawls		
		Category I	Category II	Incidental
Northern management area	Catch (y-1) ≤ 90% of ACL for year y	30,000 lbs. whiting; 3,000 lbs. red hake	30,000 lbs. whiting; 3,000 lbs. red hake	30,000 lbs. whiting; 3,000 lbs. red hake
	Catch (y-1) > 100% of sub-ACL for year y-1	30,000 lbs. whiting; 3,000 lbs. red hake	30,000 lbs. whiting; 3,000 lbs. red hake	2,000 lbs. whiting; 400 lbs. red hake
	Catch (y-1) > 90% of ACL for year y	30,000 lbs. whiting; 3,000 lbs. red hake	15,000 lbs. whiting; 3,000 lbs. red hake	2,000 lbs. whiting; 400 lbs. red hake
	Catch (y-1) > 100% of ACL for year y	30,000 lbs. whiting; 3,000 lbs. red hake, subject to AMs	8,000 lbs. whiting; 1,500 lbs. red hake	2,000 lbs. whiting; 400 lbs. red hake
Southern management area	Catch (y-1) ≤ 90% of sub-ACL for year y	30,000 lbs. summer/fall; 50,000 lbs. winter/spring; 5,000 lbs. red hake	30,000 lbs. whiting; 5,000 lbs. red hake	30,000 lbs. whiting; 5,000 lbs. red hake
	Catch (y-1) > 100% of sub-ACL for year y-1	30,000 lbs. summer/fall; 50,000 lbs. winter/spring; 5,000 lbs. red hake	30,000 lbs. whiting; 5,000 lbs. red hake	2,000 lbs. whiting; 400 lbs. red hake
	Catch (y-1) > 90% of ACL for year y	30,000 lbs. summer/fall; 50,000 lbs. winter/spring; 5,000 lbs. red hake	15,000 lbs. whiting; 3,000 lbs. red hake	2,000 lbs. whiting; 400 lbs. red hake
	Catch (y-1) > 100% of ACL for year y	30,000 lbs. summer/fall; 50,000 lbs. winter/spring; 5,000 lbs. red hake, subject to AMs	8,000 lbs. whiting; 1,500 lbs. red hake	2,000 lbs. whiting; 400 lbs. red hake

Landings per trip data from 2014-2016 vessel trip reports (VTRs) are summarized in Figure 1 to Figure 4. Figure 1 and Figure 2, respectively, summarize landings and trips by vessels using small-mesh trawls, classified according to their estimated limited access qualification for Alternatives 1 to 5 in Amendment 22. Qualification for these alternatives were estimated from the permit/MRIs fleet history landing whiting and red hake, each alternative with varying qualification thresholds and qualification periods (see Draft Amendment 22 document for more details).

Data for each qualification category and for non-qualifiers were binned into six classes of whiting landings per trip: <2K, 2-5K, 5-10K, 10-15K, 15-30K, and 30K+ lbs. Figure 3 and Figure 4 summarize the same information for vessels using large-mesh trawls and other gears, according to their VTR data. The small-mesh data show that relatively few trips by non-qualifying vessels using small-mesh trawls exceeded 5,000 lbs. of whiting landings in for any alternative (Figure 2) and that few trips by Category II vessels exceeded 10,000 lbs. of whiting landings for any alternative (Figure 2). In Alternative 3, very few trips by non-qualifying vessels exceeded 2,000 lbs. of whiting landings. Whiting landings per trip for large-mesh were typically lower, with relatively few trips exceeding 2,000 lbs. for any limited access category or non-qualifying vessel (Figure 4) The cut points may be different than the chosen classes used for the analysis.

Although these data summarize don't line up exactly with our proposed triggered possession limit amounts, the PDT's intention was that the possession limits should be consistent with the typical landings per trip for Category II and non-qualifying vessels, reducing the potential for expansion of fishing effort while minimizing discards.

Figure 1. Total landed weight (million lbs.) of whiting during 2014-2016 on small-mesh trips, by landings group for 5 alternatives and qualification status.

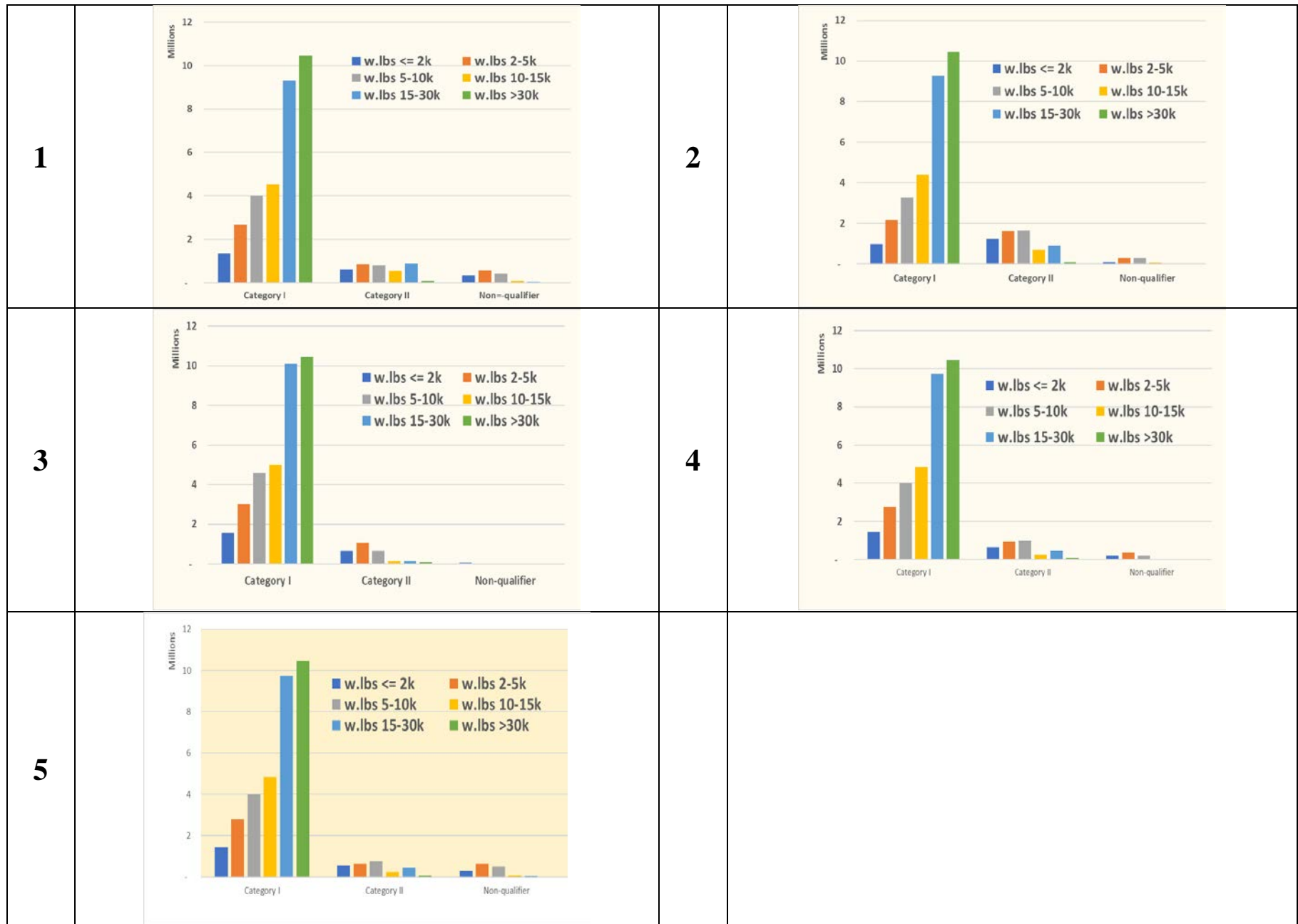


Figure 2. Total trips during 2014-2016 on small-mesh trips, by whiting landings group for 5 alternatives and qualification status.

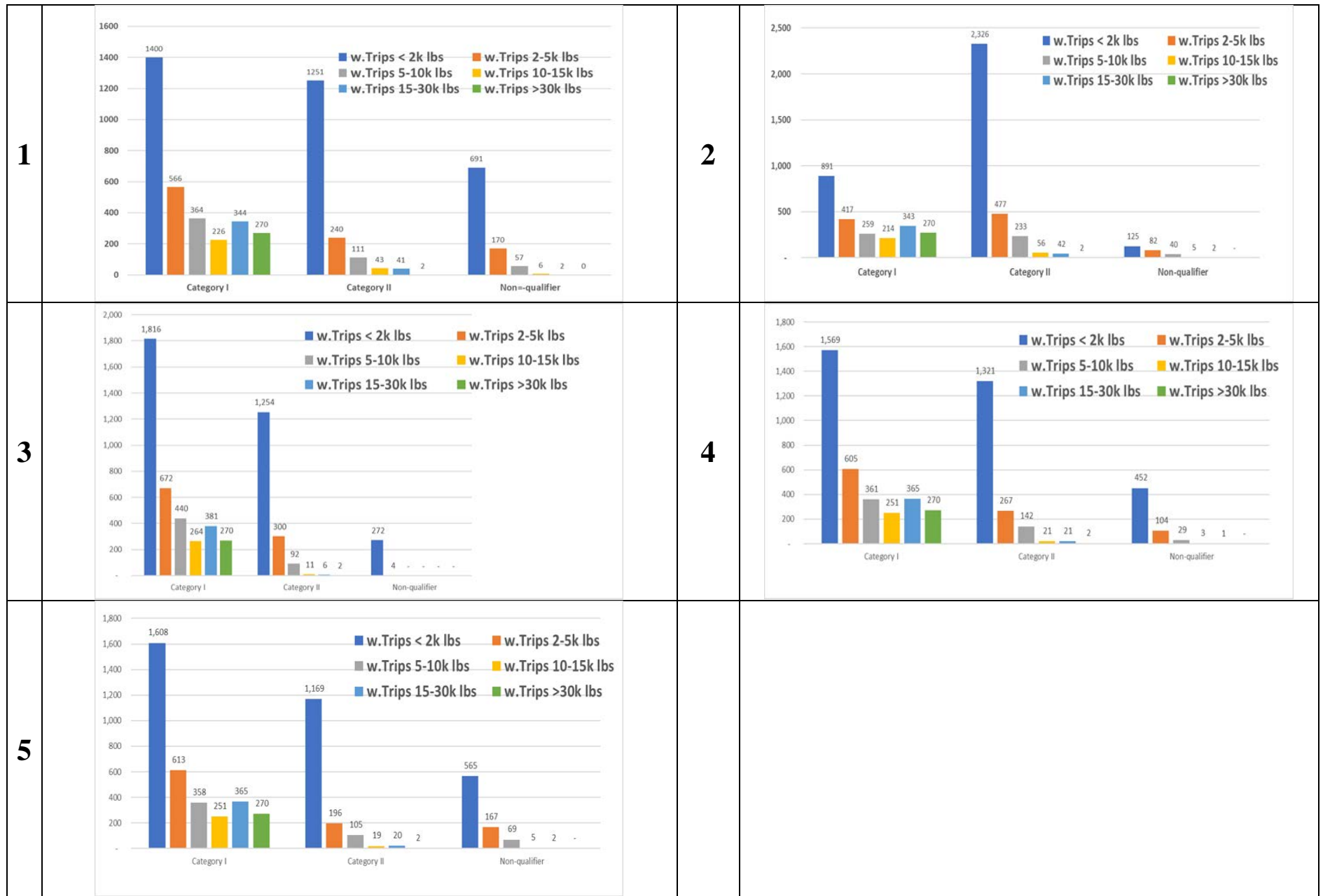


Figure 3. Total landed weight (million lbs.) of whiting during 2014-2016 on trips using large-mesh or other gears, by landings group for 5 alternatives and qualification status.

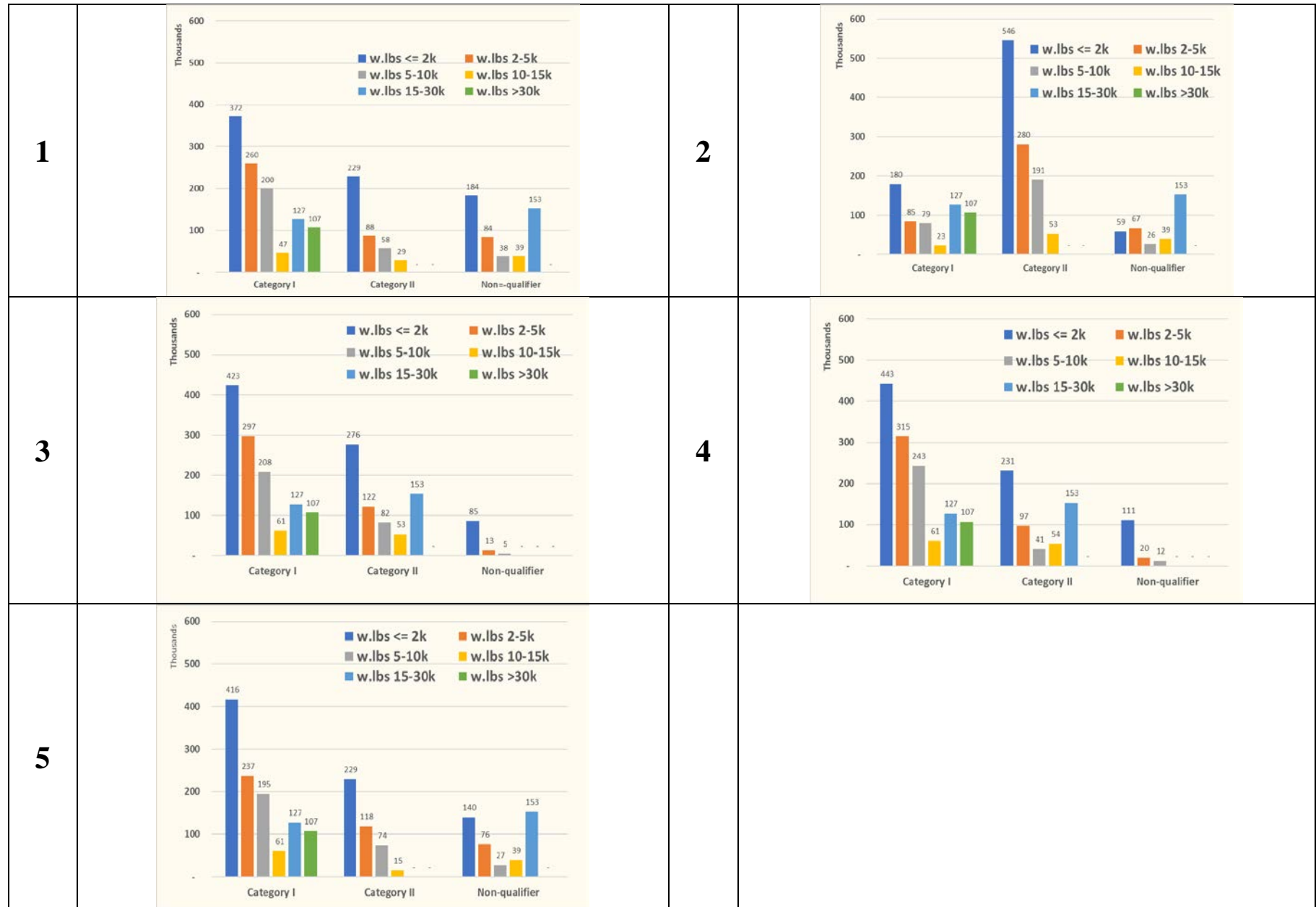


Figure 4. Total trips during 2014-2016 on trips using large-mesh or other gears, by whiting landings group for 5 alternatives and estimated qualification status.

