

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON PROPOSED PROCEDURES
FOR ESTIMATING PACIFIC HALIBUT BYCATCH IN
THE GROUND FISH SETLINE FISHERIES

Dr. Jim Hastie described the rationale behind the recommended reduction in the estimated halibut discard mortality rate in the fixed gear fishery. Halibut bycatch occurs primarily in the sablefish longline fishery. Rates are set in consultation with the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC). Initially the IPHC recommended a 25 percent mortality rate based on the misperception that Council sablefish fisheries were managed as a derby. With a better understanding of Council fisheries, the IPHC now recommends a 16 percent mortality rate consistent with similar fisheries in Alaska.

The left four columns in the table in agenda item D.1.b report halibut discard estimates calculated by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) and compare mortalities using both the 25 percent and 16 percent mortality rates for the years 2002 to 2007.

The SSC understands that the NWFSC is continuing to refine these estimates. The discard estimate for 2006 is about three times higher than estimates for the other years in this time series. The reason for this is not understood, and is under investigation by the NWFSC.

The SSC supports the use of the 16 percent discard mortality rate in this fishery, although it would be helpful to see documentation of the methods used by the IPHC to arrive at this rate. Further development and documentation of this analysis by the NWFSC is anticipated in September.

PFMC
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