

## UPDATE ON THE ON THE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY EVALUATION PROCESS FOR PACIFIC HALIBUT

In 2014, the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) created a Management Strategy Advisory Board (MSAB) comprised of a broad group of fisheries managers, scientists, harvesters (commercial, sport, and subsistence), and processors. The MSAB's charge is to advise IPHC on the Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) process, which includes proposing fishery objectives, evaluating management procedures, and proposing performance measures to develop and recommend management strategies. This report is a summary update on the MSAB's progress, more detailed information can be found on the IPHC's website at <http://www.iphc.info/msab>.

An MSE process is meant to take a long-term view towards achieving sustainability, fishery stability, and profitability. Using a simulation model, the MSAB can evaluate management procedures (i.e., measures that can be controlled by IPHC) to determine how best to achieve the fishery goals and objectives, and assess the trade-offs associated with competing objectives. Currently, only a coast-wide simulation model is available and most of the management procedures that stakeholders and managers are interested in are at a management-area-specific level (e.g., Area 2A-specific). An area-specific model is under development, but will not be ready for use for 2018 fisheries.

The MSAB has two-day meetings twice a year (May and October) in Seattle, Washington and has met eight times. The first few meetings focused on achieving a common understanding of MSE processes, followed by discussions relative to data availability and modelling capabilities. Progress has been slow, primarily due to changes in staff and structure, but has rapidly gained speed over the past year.

At the October 2016 meeting, the MSAB discussed what had been characterized as a "harvest policy," which the IPHC has not followed for several years in setting catch limits for various management areas. As part of that discussion, IPHC staff conveyed that there were problems associated with "E-bio," which is meant to be an estimate of "exploitable biomass." E-bio relies on selectivity curves that are outdated and inconsistent with those from the assessment. Additionally, it was noted that the current harvest policy does not account for mortality of all sizes of fish (namely under 26 inches, or U26).

Based on that information, the MSAB recommended that alternative harvest policy approaches that address these shortcomings and take into account all sizes of fish (including a Spawning Potential Ratio (SPR) based harvest policy) be evaluated. The IPHC adopted this recommendation at the annual meeting and the MSAB will be examining alternative harvest policies at its meeting in May. This will hopefully lead to a recommendation for a revised harvest policy for the 2018 halibut fisheries.