

REPORT ON
INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION ANNUAL MEETING
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON
JANUARY 22 - 25, 2002

January 22nd was primarily devoted to International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) staff presentations to the Commissioners and the public on the following items:

- The Pacific halibut fishery in 2001
- Chalky halibut research
- Tagging of Pacific halibut to determine distribution and recruitment patterns
- Season extension (12 months) reports
- Evaluation of alternate harvest rates
- Summary of the 2001 stock assessment
- Staff regulatory proposals for 2002

The afternoon of January 22nd and the day of January 23rd included meetings of the Conference Board (Exhibit E.2, Attachment 2) and Processor Advisory Group (Exhibit E.2, Attachment 3). Additionally, Area 2A participants had an opportunity to provide information to the Commissioners in the administrative sessions.

Mr. Phil Anderson, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, made a presentation to the Commissioners on the following items:

- Washington's recreational fishery in 2001
- Puget Sound recreational catch estimate
- Canadian halibut landed into Neah Bay
- Incidental halibut catch in the sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, Washington

Many of the Area 2A participants spoke with U.S. Commissioners about the manner in which Area 2A estimated legal size halibut bycatch mortality was calculated.

Participants came to the meeting expecting the legal size bycatch mortality for Area 2A to be 220,000 pounds (Scientific and Statistical Committee Report 9/01). On the first day of the meeting, the IPHC technical documents indicated 540,000 pounds was the deduction from the allowable catch in 2002, and bycatch estimates from the previous six years had been revised. Participants found themselves in a reactive mode on an important issue.

The reason given by the Commission as to the discrepancy between the estimates of bycatch, was there were problems with the technical information provided to the Commission by the National Marine Fisheries Service Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NMFS -NWFSC); and efforts to reconcile the difficulties proved fruitless, as repeated attempts to contact NMFS-NWFSC staff by phone and email were not returned or answered. As time ran out on the deadline, Commission staff were left to use the only number they could replicate: their estimate of 540,000 pounds. Further, no one alerted anyone in the Area 2A delegation the problem of this gap existed.

The Pacific Fishery Management Council will forward a letter to IPHC and NMFS-NWFSC describing a procedure to avoid a similar problem in the future.

The 2002 catch limits and regulatory changes are in Exhibit E.2, Attachment 4.

Area 2A participating entities:

Makah Tribal Council
National Marine Fisheries Service
Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Pacific Fishery Management Council
Quilute Indian Nation
Quinalt Indian Nation
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Washington Recreational Fishing Industry Association
Washington Trollers
Westport Charter Boat Association

PFMC
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