

Preliminary Report on Yelloweye Rockfish Catch Reduction in the Makah Halibut Fishery for 2002 and 2003

In the past two halibut seasons (2002 and 2003) the Makah Tribe has taken steps to reduce the bycatch of yelloweye rockfish during halibut openings. The majority of yelloweye catch in tribal fisheries is in the halibut fishery.

In 2002 we reduced our trip limit for yelloweye during the latter part of the restricted (trip limit) fishery to avoid any targeting on yelloweye and to encourage avoiding yelloweye hot spots. Full retention of rockfish was required and overages were forfeited to the Tribe. As a result the Makah harvest of yelloweye was reduced in the restricted halibut fishery and our catch was less than projected for 2002.

Prior to the 2003 halibut season, the Makah Tribe proposed two actions to reduce yelloweye bycatch: an earlier opening date (March 1) to allow fishing while halibut are in deeper water, and use of bait that is less selective for rockfish.

Because the IPHC adopted a March 1 opening date, Makah vessels were able to target halibut in deeper water (average depth of about 200 fm) than in previous years when the unrestricted fishery opened later in March. Halibut begin moving into shallower water (i.e. 100 fm or less) by late March. The majority of Makah vessels used Pacific cod for bait, with some herring also used. Little or no squid or octopus was used.

Port sampling was conducted by Makah Fisheries, NWIFC, IPHC, and WDFW staff. No yelloweye were landed or reported to be taken by Makah fishermen in the March 1 opening (a 48 hr unrestricted fishery). In addition, catch of all rockfish except thornyheads was reduced from previous years.

A second unrestricted opening was held April 15 and 16. Makah vessels fished in shallower water than in the March 1 opening. Fishing depths ranged from 200 fm to less than 100 fm. Also some mixed bait was used including squid, octopus, herring, and Pacific cod. Overall rockfish harvest increased from the March 1 opening including about 400 lbs of yelloweye.

The preliminary results from the 2003 unrestricted fishery will be applied to management of both the restricted and unrestricted fisheries in 2004.

Preliminary 2003 Unrestricted Halibut Results

1st opening March 1-3 48 hrs		
2nd opening April 15-16 36 hrs		
	1st opening	2nd opening
No. vessels	25	25
Avg. depth	200 fm	70-200 fm
Bait	P.cod herring	P.cod herring squid octopus
Catch (lbs)		
halibut	141,356	133,115
lingcod	705	4,112
canary	219	617
shortspine	1,919	1,446
minor slope	2,198	2,779
yelloweye	0	400*
*C&S landings		