

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON
STATUS OF PACIFIC HALIBUT BYCATCH ESTIMATES FOR USE BY THE
INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION

The Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) heard a presentation from Mr. John Wallace concerning the 2002 estimate of Pacific halibut bycatch in groundfish trawl fisheries in the International Pacific Halibut Catch Area 2A (Exhibit G.2, Situation Summary, September 2003).

For the first time, the estimate of halibut bycatch is based on bycatch rates obtained from the groundfish observer program (data from September 2001 -- August 2002). Previously Area 2A Pacific halibut bycatch in the groundfish fishery was calculated using information from the Enhanced Data Collection Program (EDCP).

The new analysis indicates a substantial drop in Pacific halibut bycatch mortality in Council-managed fisheries. Results show a 36% reduction in the total estimated bycatch mortality from 2001 to 2002 (796,000 pounds to 512,000 pounds). This drop is due to the combined effects of (1) generally lower observed halibut bycatch rates in the observer data in comparison with the EDCP data, and (2) a drop in trawling effort and/or a change in its spatial distribution.

The SSC reviewed these new results and endorses their use in estimating the impacts of Council-managed fisheries on the Pacific halibut stock.

PFMC
09/10/03