

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON PACIFIC HALIBUT  
BYCATCH ESTIMATE FOR INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION  
ADOPTION

Dr. Jim Hastie (NWFSC) briefed the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) on estimates of halibut bycatch for 2005 as described in the report by Wallace and Hastie (August 2006). Estimated total halibut discard mortality increased by 46% from 2004 to 2005. The increase may be an unintended consequence of liberalized trip limits and expanded fishing opportunities shoreward of the Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) that were made possible in 2005 by mandatory use of selective flatfish gear. Although total trawl effort increased by only 5%, trawl effort inside 150 fm increased by almost 50%. The SSC endorses the use of the report's bycatch estimates in evaluating the impact of Council-managed fisheries on the Pacific halibut stock.

Halibut bycatch varies by season, depth, latitude, and the proportion of arrowtooth flounder in the catch. Halibut bycatch rates were estimated by strata defined by these factors. Further analyses should be based on strata definitions that also reflect prevailing spatial management measures. For example, seasonal changes in the shoreward limit of the RCA would provide a basis for corresponding seasonal strata for bycatch estimation. The SSC again requests that 1) variance estimates of total bycatch be provided, and 2) observer data for other Council-managed fisheries be evaluated. In particular, halibut bycatch estimates for the fixed gear fleet should be considered.

The SSC has reviewed the Pacific halibut bycatch report each year now for several years. If estimation methods continue to be routine, additional review by the SSC may not be needed.

PFMC  
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