

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

The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) held a stock assessment workshop June 27-28, 2007. Three members of the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) attended the workshop (Dr. Martin Dorn, Dr. Thomas Helser, and Mr. Tom Jagielo). The SSC expresses its strong support for this type of workshop and commends the IPHC for facilitating a greater understanding of their stock assessments and stock assessment process. However, this type of workshop does not provide a forum for the type of independent review that takes place during a Stock Assessment Review (STAR) Panel.

The SSC was not in a position to conduct a formal review of the Pacific halibut assessment. However, the following comments are intended to inform the Council about some key elements in the assessment.

1. There is more uncertainty in the assessment than is explicitly acknowledged in the assessment document.
2. There is evidence that survey catchability is not the same in all areas. This may be particularly true in Areas 2A relative to other areas. Area 2A survey catch per unit of effort (CPUE) could be weighted by depth to help alleviate this issue.
3. The Pacific halibut assessment has moved from a multi-area assessment to a single area assessment to better account for the evidence of movement of fish. The overall estimate of biomass is largely invariant to the choice of modeling frameworks. Although these frameworks represent the bounding conditions on movement (i.e., no movement and complete mixing), the truth is between these bounds. The IPHC has expressed their intention to investigate the explicit modeling of fish movement in future assessment work. The SSC agrees that this is an important area of research.
4. Given that the choice of a multi-area or single area assessment does not affect the overall biomass estimate, its main effect is distributional.
5. The IPHC assessments do not contain terms of reference. If the IPHC wishes to continue external review, terms of reference for the process would be helpful.