

SUMMARY OF INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION MEETING

The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) held their annual meeting the week of January 14, 2008, in Portland, Oregon. The meeting was well attended by Area 2A representatives, including tribal council members and staff from coastal and Puget Sound treaty tribes, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Washington and Oregon Departments of Fish and Wildlife, and commercial and recreational fishers. The primary discussion points at the meeting were the new stock assessment methodology and the allocation of the coastwide stock among the different regulatory areas.

IPHC staff recommended a new stock assessment methodology that focused on the stock abundance from a coastwide perspective (Alaska to northern California), rather than summing the regulatory area-specific assessments to project a total stock biomass. IPHC convened an external technical review workshop in June 2007 whereby two representatives from the Center for Independent Experts (CIE) reviewed the draft assessment. Representatives from the NMFS, treaty tribes, the Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee, state fish and wildlife agencies, and the public attended the workshop. The CIE reviewers endorsed the new assessment methodology and recommended, among other things, the incorporation of IPHC's harvest policy (i.e., slow up, fast down) into the assessment.

In addition to state presentations made by Don Bodenmiller (ODFW) and Michele Culver (WDFW) to the IPHC during their executive session, Phil Anderson and Jamie Goen addressed the IPHC on behalf of the Pacific Fishery Management Council and NMFS. The IPHC adopted the Council's 2008 Halibut Catch Sharing Plan and accepted the halibut bycatch report provided by the Northwest Science Center. The Area 2A managers, tribal, state, and federal, once again received high marks from the Commissioners and the IPHC for the manner in which we manage the halibut fishery in our area.

With regard to the apportionment of the coastwide quota, the Conference Board and Processor Advisory Group provided different recommendations for the different regulatory areas—Alaska, Canada, and Area 2A. In general, all areas agreed that the apportionment for 2008 would be interim and recommended that IPHC convene a comprehensive workshop dedicated to halibut allocation in the fall of 2008.

Area 2A representatives were able to caucus a few times to discuss different alternatives and settled on recommending that the percentage of halibut allotted to Area 2A in 2007 be carried forward in 2008. As the overall coastwide quota decreased from 65.17 million lbs to an initial staff recommendation of 59.24 million lbs, this represented a reduction of approximately 9.1 percent. Therefore, Mark Cedergreen, on behalf of Area 2A, presented a recommendation to the Conference Board that the Area 2A quota be reduced from 1.34 million lbs to 1.22 million lbs, consistent with the overall 9.1 percent coastwide reduction. The Conference Board unanimously adopted this recommendation, which was then submitted to the IPHC for approval. IPHC took into consideration the management performance of the different regulatory areas and the potential effects of the proposed quotas and adopted the Area 2A recommendation for 2008 of 1.22 million lbs (and an overall coastwide quota of 60.4 million lbs).

IPHC was also receptive to convening a workshop in the fall to fully discuss the long-term apportionment of halibut amongst the regulatory areas. It would be important for the Pacific Fishery Management Council to engage in that discussion.

PFMC
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