

## SUMMARY OF INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION MEETING

The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) held their annual meeting the week of January 12, 2009, in Vancouver, B.C. The meeting was well attended by Area 2A managers, including representatives from the Tribes, National Marine Fisheries Service, Washington and Oregon Departments of Fish and Wildlife; however, there were only a handful of 2A commercial and recreational fishers in attendance. There was general agreement from all areas to continue to use the coastwide stock assessment methodology that IPHC adopted in 2008. The primary focus of discussion at this meeting was the apportionment of the coastwide stock among the different regulatory areas. Prior to the annual meeting, IPHC staff developed recommended quotas for all regulatory areas using the coastwide assessment and the survey apportionment methodology. This produced a quota for Area 2A of 860,000 lbs and a coastwide quota of 54.08 million lbs.

During IPHC's executive session, Sarah Williams, NMFS, and Michele Culver, WDFW, addressed the Commission relative to the performance of the Area 2A halibut fisheries in 2008, the updated trawl bycatch report, and the proposed changes to the Council's Catch Sharing Plan for 2009. Don Bodenmiller, ODFW, and Michele Culver also provided the reports for the state fisheries. The Commission adopted the Council's Halibut Catch Sharing Plan and accepted the halibut bycatch report provided by the Northwest Fisheries Science Center.

With regard to the apportionment of the coastwide quota, some areas off Alaska favored the proposed apportionment developed by IPHC staff; other areas, including Canada and 2A, thought that the apportionment for 2009 should be interim and recommended that IPHC convene an interactive workshop dedicated to developing a long-term plan for halibut allocation.

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 be proportionately reduced in line with the total coastwide reduction. As the overall coastwide exploitable biomass decreased from 360 million lbs to 325 million lbs, this represented a reduction of approximately 10%. Joe Schumacker (Quinault Indian Nation) on behalf of Area 2A, recommended to the Conference Board that the Area 2A quota be reduced from 1.22 million lbs (the 2008 catch limit) to 1.098 million lbs, consistent with the 10% coastwide reduction. The Conference Board approved this recommendation, which was supported by Canada, but received some opposition from Areas 2C and 3B; this recommendation was then submitted to the IPHC for approval.

The Processor Advisory Group took a different approach and recommended that those areas facing a reduction take a 33% step down, rather than a 50% step down (as recommended by IPHC staff). This produced an Area 2A quota of 950,000 lbs.

IPHC took into consideration the need to reduce the harvest rate to 20% for Areas 2A through 3B and to 15% in Area 4, and the decline in overall exploitable biomass, and adopted the Processor Advisory Group recommendations for Areas 2A, 2B and 2C and lower limits for Areas 3 and 4, which maintained the recommended coastwide quota of 54.08 million lbs.

The Commissioners directed IPHC staff to consult with industry in the late spring of 2009 to review apportionment procedures and identify preferred methods. A workshop will also be held in the fall of 2009 to examine the estimation of sublegal-sized bycatch mortality and how this mortality is accounted for the stock assessment and harvest policy. It would be important for the Area 2A halibut managers to engage in both of those discussions.