

SCIENTIFIC AND STATISTICAL COMMITTEE REPORT ON PROPOSED  
PROCEDURES FOR ESTIMATING PACIFIC HALIBUT BYCATCH IN THE  
GROUNDFISH FISHERIES

Dr. Jim Hastie (NWFSC) briefed the Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) on Pacific halibut bycatch estimates for the 2008 groundfish bottom trawl fishery. The SSC also received a document on September 13 pertaining to halibut bycatch in the longline fishery. However, SSC comments are limited to the trawl bycatch estimates because the longline estimates arrived too late for the SSC to review

The catch weight of halibut taken in the trawl fishery was estimated on the basis of bycatch rates provided by the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP), stratified by season, depth, latitude, and arrowtooth flounder catch rate categories. Each bycatch rate was multiplied by the corresponding stratum estimate of 2008 trawl effort, as determined from Oregon and Washington trawl logbooks.

Bycatch mortality is based on WCGOP observer data pertaining to the viability of discarded halibut, which uses a condition key originally developed by the International Pacific Halibut Commission for observers in North Pacific fisheries. The bycatch mortality rates associated with each condition (“dead”, “poor”, “excellent”) are 90 percent, 55 percent and 20 percent respectively. A sensitivity analysis was conducted using alternative methods of stratification, but it did not isolate the effects of viability and bycatch on aggregate halibut mortality.

The SSC endorses the Pacific halibut bycatch mortality estimate (280,515 pounds) for the 2008 trawl fishery. The SSC recommends that in next year’s analysis of alternative approaches to stratification, the effect of viability alone on aggregate halibut mortality be distinguished.

PFMC  
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