

REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION
ANNUAL MEETING

The 2008 Annual Meeting of the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) was held in Portland, OR, January 14-18. The most significant outcome of the meeting was setting the 2008 harvest levels (Agenda Item G.1.a, Attachment 1), which involved approval of the new coastwide stock assessment methodology and discussions of how to apportion the total allowable catch (TAC) among the various catch areas. The Area 2A TAC was down slightly from 1.3 million pounds in 2007 to 1.22 million pounds in 2008 (Agenda Item G.1.a, Attachment 2).

The new stock assessment methodology was accepted for estimating total abundance; however, the IPHC staff-recommended apportionment methods were only partially approved. There was much debate about how to address the apportionment issue, resulting in a proposed workshop in 2008 to further investigate potential solutions. Area 2A participants have requested a working group be appointed to develop and review apportionment strategies prior to the IPHC sponsored workshop. The working group would include state, Federal, and tribal agency staff, Council members and staff.

Mr. Phil Anderson, Council representative to the IPHC, attended the annual meeting, along with numerous other interested parties from Area 2A. Mr. Anderson will provide a brief summary of the results of the meeting (Agenda Item G.1.b, Meeting Summary).

Council Task:

- 1. Discuss information relative to Area 2A halibut fisheries.**
- 2. Appoint representatives to an Area 2A working group, as appropriate.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item G.1.a, Attachment 1: IPHC News Release.
2. Agenda Item G.1.a, Attachment 2: Area 2A Pacific Halibut Allocations.
3. Agenda Item G.1.b, Meeting Summary: Summary of International Pacific Halibut Commission Meeting.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview
- b. Summary of Meeting
- c. Agency and Tribal Comments
- d. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- e. Public Comment
- f. Council Discussion

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PFMC
02/15/08

News Release

P.O. Box 95009, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98145-2009

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HALIBUT COMMISSION COMPLETES 2008 ANNUAL MEETING

The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) completed its Eighty-fourth Annual Meeting in Portland, OR, with Dr. James W. Balsiger of Juneau, AK presiding as Chair. The Commission is recommending to the governments of Canada and the United States, catch limits for 2008 totaling 60,400,000 pounds, a 7.3% decrease from the 2007 catch limit of 65,170,000 pounds.

The Commission staff reported on the 2007 Pacific halibut stock assessment which implemented a coastwide estimation of biomass, compared with previous assessments which assessed stock biomass for each individual IPHC regulatory area. This approach was introduced for the 2006 stock assessment but not endorsed by the Commission at its 2007 Annual Meeting. Following a June 2007 stock assessment workshop and external peer review of the assessment, the Commission and its advisory bodies endorsed the coastwide approach to the assessment of halibut stock abundance at the 2008 Annual Meeting. While the staff catch limit recommendations, arising from IPHC survey-based apportionment of the coastwide biomass estimated were accepted for most areas, the Commission requested additional investigation of apportionment methods during 2008.

For 2008, the Commission recommends a 20% harvest rate for use in Areas 2A through 4A. However, the Commission staff expressed concern over harvest rates in Area 4A and will conduct a comprehensive examination of optimum harvest rates for Area 4 as a whole during 2008. In addition, the IPHC standardized setline assessment survey will be extended into the eastern Bering Sea flats during 2008, repeating a survey first conducted in this area in 2006. Low levels of recruitment and lower estimated levels of productivity in Areas 4B and 4CDE continued to support harvest rates lower than 20% for these areas. Accordingly, the Commission adopted catch limits based on a harvest rate of 15% for Areas 4B and 4CDE. Catch limits adopted for 2008 were lower over the entire coast reflecting stock biomass declines as the exceptionally strong 1987 and 1988 year classes pass out of the fishery. Recruitment of the 1994 and 1995 year classes are above average and the 1999 and 2000 year classes are also estimated to be above average but several years away from making major contributions to the exploitable biomass of the stock.

Seasons and Catch Limits

The Commission received regulatory proposals for 2008 from the scientific staff, Canadian and United States harvesters and processors, and other fishery agencies. The Commission will recommend to the governments the following catch limits for 2008 in Area 2A (California, Oregon, and Washington), Area 2B (British Columbia), Area 2C (southeastern Alaska), Area 3A (central Gulf), Area 3B (western Gulf), Area 4A (eastern Aleutians), Area 4B (western Aleutians), Area 4C (Pribilof Islands), Area 4D (northwestern Bering Sea), and Area 4E (Bering Sea flats):

2008 Catch Limits

Regulatory Area	Catch Limit (pounds)
Area 2A	
Non-treaty directed commercial (south of Pt. Chehalis)	213,674
Non-treaty incidental catch in salmon troll fishery	37,707
Non-treaty incidental catch in sablefish longline fishery (north of Pt. Chehalis)	70,000
Treaty Indian commercial	397,000
Treaty Indian ceremonial and subsistence (year-round)	30,000
Sport – North of Columbia River	220,238
<u>Sport – South of Columbia River</u>	<u>251,381</u>
Area 2A total	1,220,000
Area 2B (includes sport catch allocation)	9,000,000
Area 2C	6,210,000
Area 3A	24,220,000
Area 3B	10,900,000
Area 4A	3,100,000
Area 4B	1,860,000
Area 4C	1,769,000
Area 4D	1,769,000
	<u>352,000</u>
Area 4E	8,850,000
 Area 4 total	
Total	60,400,000

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada (DFO) will allocate the adopted Area 2B catch limit between sport and commercial fisheries.

The IPHC sets biologically-based catch limits for Areas 4A, 4B, and a combined Area 4CDE. The catch limits for Regulatory Areas 4C, 4D, and 4E reflect the catch-sharing plan implemented by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC). The catch-sharing plan allows Area 4D Community Development Quota (CDQ) harvest to be taken in Area 4E and Area 4C Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) and CDQ to be fished in Area 4D.

The catch-sharing plan implemented by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) for Area 2A was adopted by the Commission and is reflected in the catch limits adopted for the Area 2A fisheries. The Commission received a request for an earlier starting date for the directed commercial fishery. The proposal was for mid-May, however Washington and Oregon Departments of Fish and Wildlife officials expressed concern over an earlier opening and requested that the proposal be reviewed more thoroughly during 2008. Therefore, the Commission adopted an Area 2A commercial fishery opening date two weeks earlier than in 2007. In Area 2A, seven 10-hour fishing periods for the non-treaty directed commercial fishery are recommended: June 11, June 25, July 9, July 23, August 6, August

20, September 3, and September 17, 2008. All fishing periods will begin at 8:00 a.m. and end at 6:00 p.m. local time, and will be further restricted by fishing period limits announced at a later date.

Area 2A fishing dates for an incidental commercial halibut fishery concurrent with salmon troll fishing seasons, and the incidental commercial halibut fishery during the sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, will be established under United States domestic regulations by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The remainder of the Area 2A catch-sharing plan, including sport fishing seasons and depth restrictions, will be determined under regulations promulgated by NMFS. For further information of the depth restrictions in the commercial directed halibut fishery, incidental halibut during the sablefish fishery, and the sport fisheries, call the NMFS hotline (1-800-662-9825).

After reviewing staff information and proposals from the harvesting and processing sector, the Commission approved a season opening date of March 8. The Saturday opening date is to facilitate marketing. Therefore, seasons will commence at 12 noon local time on March 8 and terminate at 12 noon local time on November 15, 2008 for the following fisheries and areas: the Canadian Individual Vessel Quota (IVQ) fishery in Area 2B, and the United States IFQ and CDQ fisheries in Areas 2C, 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, and 4E. All Area 2A commercial fishing including the treaty Indian commercial fishery will fall within March 8 – November 15, 2008.

Regulatory Changes and Issues

The current IPHC definition of net weight is halibut which are gutted, head-off, and without ice and slime. The Commission approved adding the conversion factors that will be required to be used if halibut is weighed with head-on and with ice and slime. The conversion factors will be defined in regulation as a 10% deduction for head and 2% for ice and slime.

The Commission approved adding the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) voluntary sablefish logbook as an acceptable logbook that can be used by U.S. operators in the commercial halibut fishery.

The Commission adopted a regulation that restricts tagging of halibut to IPHC-authorized programs, and by state and federal agencies. Individuals and organizations outside of state and federal agencies will be required to obtain a permit from IPHC for any halibut tagging program.

For Alaska, the Commission adopted a sport regulation that no person shall possess on board a fishing vessel, including charter vessels and pleasure craft, halibut that has been filleted, mutilated, or otherwise disfigured in any manner except that each halibut may be cut into no more than two ventral and two dorsal pieces and two cheeks, all with skin on. The change allows enforcement officers to count the number of fish possessed by an angler. Additionally, in Area 2C the NMFS regulation that requires charter vessels to retain halibut carcasses remains in effect unless superseded by new NMFS regulations.

Other Actions

A proposal to allow Pacific hake (whiting) shoreside trawl vessels operating in Area 2A to retain halibut until offloading was not adopted. This practice, which has been previously allowed through an IPHC permitting process, will continue in this manner while IPHC and NMFS staffs work on the development of U.S. domestic regulations for this program.

Commercial fishing vessels are not allowed to have fishing pots capable of catching halibut on board the vessel. A proposal to allow sport or personal use crab pots on board commercial halibut vessels was not adopted. The IPHC staff, enforcement agencies, and industry agreed to further discuss and review the proposal prior to the 2009 Annual Meeting.

The catch in sport fisheries and enforcement of sport fishing regulations, particularly for charter vessels, were discussed at length. For the 2009 Annual Meeting, the Commission will request reports from NMFS and Alaska State enforcement agencies concerning enforcement of regulations for the Alaska sport charter fishery.

An industry proposal to reduce the commercial size limit for halibut was reviewed. The IPHC staff was directed to review how a reduced size limit would affect assessment, yield, and long-term productivity of the halibut stock.

The Conference Board supported the coastwide assessment model but asked for a workshop on apportionment methods. The Commissioners directed the staff to conduct a workshop in early fall 2008 to review apportionment procedures, with special consideration of migration, updated PIT tag results, and harvest policy.

The Conference Board and the Processor Advisory Group asked the staff to host a workshop on bycatch programs and bycatch reduction strategies. The Commissioners directed the staff to assemble material reviewing bycatch reduction targets, reduction methodology, progress in other jurisdictions, and update the 1991 IPHC Bycatch Work Group results. This information will be made available and used in planning for a potential bycatch workshop in 2009.

The Commission honoured Mr. Myron Melovidov Jr. of St. Paul, AK as the sixth recipient of the IPHC Merit Scholarship. Mr. Melovidov was presented with a certificate and plaque, as well as the scholarship of \$2,000 (U.S.). The Commissioners expressed their continued support for the scholarship program and commended the Scholarship Committee for their efforts in assessing the candidates.

The recommended regulations for the 2008 halibut fishery will become official as soon as they are approved by the Canadian and United States Governments. The Commission will publish and distribute regulation pamphlets.

The Commission is pleased to announce that it has re-appointed Dr. Bruce M. Leaman as the IPHC Executive Director. Dr. Leaman was first appointed to this position in 1997 and the new appointment will expire in January 2013.

The next Annual Meeting of the Commission is planned for Vancouver, B.C. from January 13 to 16, 2009. The Canadian Government Commissioner, Dr. Laura J. Richards of Nanaimo, B.C., was elected

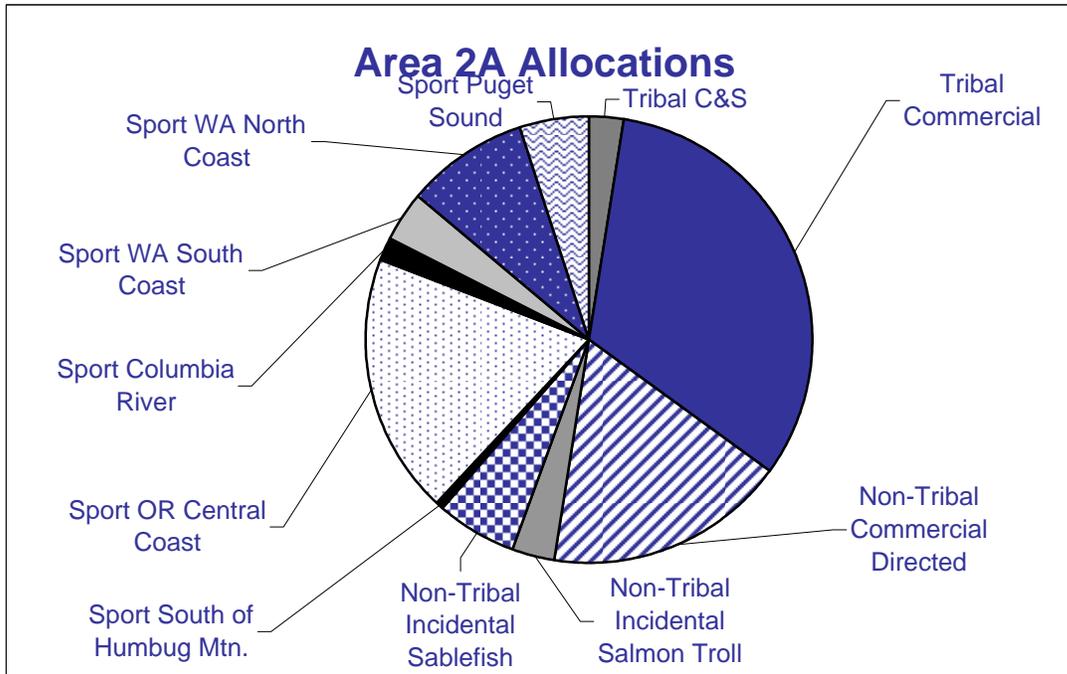
Chair. The United States Government Commissioner, Dr. James W. Balsiger of Juneau, AK, was elected Vice-Chair for the coming year. Other Canadian Commissioners are Clifford Atleo (Port Alberni, B.C.) and Gary Robinson (Vancouver, B.C.). The other United States Commissioners are Ralph Hoard (Seattle, WA) and Phillip Lestenkof (St. Paul, AK). Dr. Bruce M. Leaman is the Executive Director of the Commission.

- END -

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2008 Area 2A Pacific Halibut Allocations

Fishery	Pounds
Tribal C&S	30,000
Tribal Commercial	397,000
Non-Tribal Commercial Directed	213,674
Non-Tribal Incidental Salmon Troll	37,707
Non-Tribal Incidental Sablefish Longline	70,000
Sport South of Humbug Mtn.	7,541
Sport OR Central Coast	231,271
Sport Columbia River	18,762
Sport WA South Coast	44,700
Sport WA North Coast	109,991
Sport Puget Sound	59,354
Total	1,220,000



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
02/15/08

INCIDENTAL CATCH REGULATIONS IN THE SALMON TROLL AND FIXED GEAR SABLEFISH FISHERIES

Regulations governing incidental harvest of halibut in the salmon troll fishery and commercial sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis require the Council to adopt recommended halibut landing restrictions to allow incidental harvest while assuring quotas are not exceeded.

Salmon Troll Fishery

The halibut regulations allocate 15% of the non-Indian commercial halibut allocation in Area 2A to the salmon troll fishery as an incidental catch. Regulations (beginning in 2001) direct that the primary management objective is to harvest the incidental quota in the May/June salmon troll fishery with a secondary objective to harvest any remaining quota during July through September. The Council has successfully used landing ratios and a total trip limit to assure a manageable progression of the fishery in past years. A summary of management information for the incidental halibut fishery since the initial season in 1995 is provided in Agenda Item G.2.a, Attachment 1.

Commercial Sablefish Fishery North of Point Chehalis

The total Area 2A halibut quota is large enough this year (over 900,000 pounds) to provide for an incidental halibut harvest in the commercial sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis. This incidental fishery is allocated that portion of the Washington sport allocation in excess of 214,110 pounds, provided a minimum of 10,000 pounds is available, up to a maximum of 70,000 pounds. In past years, the Council has successfully used landing restrictions to maintain the harvest within the allocation. A summary of management information for the incidental halibut fishery since the initial season in 2001 is provided in Agenda Item G.2.a, Attachment 1.

Council Action:

- 1. Adopt for public review a range of landing restrictions for halibut caught incidentally in the non-Indian commercial troll season that comport with the troll salmon management options and assure a reasonable utilization of the incidental catch while not exceeding the quota.**
- 2. Adopt for public review, a range of landing restrictions, including season dates for incidental halibut harvest in the commercial sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, Washington.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item G.2.a, Attachment 1: Summary of Pacific Halibut Incidental Catch Management.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview
- b. State Proposals for the Salmon Troll Fishery
- c. State Proposals for the Fixed Gear Sablefish Fishery
- d. Tribal Comments
- e. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- f. Public Comment
- g. **Council Action:** Adopt Public Review Options for 2008

Chuck Tracy

PFMC
02/15/08

SUMMARY OF PACIFIC HALIBUT INCIDENTAL CATCH MANAGEMENT

Salmon Troll Fishery

The table below provides the number of licenses, allocation, harvest, and landing restrictions for the incidental halibut catch in the salmon troll fishery since the initial season in 1995.

Incidental Halibut Management in Area 2A Salmon Troll Fishery.

Year	Licenses Issued					Pounds of Halibut		Restriction	
	WA	OR	CA	AK-2A	Total	Allocation	Total Harvest	Halibut per Chinook	Trip Limit
1995	14	104	2	5	125	16,068	2,125	1 per each 20	None
1996	22	82	5	14	123	16,068	9,521	1 + 1 per each 15	20
1997	59	187	10	19	275	21,635	17,570	1 + 1 per each 10	20
1998	44	188	15	18	265	25,344	13,124	1 + 1 per each 8	25
1999	54	193	12	25	284	23,490	9,955	1 + 1 per each 5	35
2000	49	154	8	24	235	24,464	22,350	1 + 1 per each 3	35
2001	63	232	13	37	347	34,046	34,100	1 + 1 per each 3	35
2002	60	223	7	41	331	39,300	41,000	1 + 1 per each 3	35
2003	60	209	10	44	323	39,300	41,917	1 + 1 per each 3	35
2004	74	212	11	47	344	44,554	42,798	1 + 1 per each 3	35
2005	79	249	12	52	392	39,918	42,187	1 + 1 per each 3	35
2006	54	138	6	26	224	41,464	34,354	1 + 1 per each 3	35
2007	62	188	17	25	292	43,667 ^{a/}	24,126	1 + 1 per each 3	35
2008	-	-	-	-	-	37,707	-	-	-

a/ 40,227 preseason allocation plus 3,440 transferred inseason from directed halibut fishery.

Commercial Sablefish Fishery North of Point Chehalis

The table below provides the allocation, total harvest, landing restrictions, and season dates for the incidental halibut catch in the fixed-gear sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis since the initial season began in 2001.

Incidental Halibut Management in the Area 2A Sablefish Fishery North of Point Chehalis, Washington.

Year	Pounds of Halibut		Restrictions	
	Allocation	Total Harvest	Halibut per Sablefish (dressed weight)	Season Dates
2001	47,946	26,945	2+80 lb per 1,000 lb	Aug. 15-Oct. 31
2002	88,389	66,599	2+150 lb per 1,000 lb	May 1-Oct. 31
2003	70,000	65,325	2+150 lb per 1,000 lb	May 1-Oct. 31
2004	70,000	67,837	2+100 lb per 1,000 lb	May 1-Oct. 31
2005	70,000	68,013	2+100 lb per 1,000 lb	May 1-Oct. 23
2006	70,000	64,624	2+100 lb per 1,000 lb	May 1-Oct. 31
2007	70,000	45,780	2+100 lb per 1,000 lb	May 1-Oct. 31
2008	70,000	-	-	-

Twenty-four individual vessels made a total of 84 landings containing halibut in the directed tier-limit sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis. Of the 84 landings, 26 contained the full amount of halibut provided for in regulation, while the other 58 landings averaged 75 percent per landing of the potential amount of halibut allowed. This is very similar to the pattern that occurred in this fishery in 2006, indicating that the current regulation does a reasonable job of accommodating incidental halibut bycatch in the fishery.

PFMC

02/15/08

**GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON INCIDENTAL CATCH
REGULATIONS IN THE SALMON TROLL AND FIXED GEAR SABLEFISH FISHERIES**

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) recommends that the Council consider the suite of options reviewed prior to the 2007 season as the total allowable catch of halibut for area 2A is essentially the same as in 2007.

PFMC
03/12/08

SALMON ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON INCIDENTAL CATCH REGULATIONS
IN THE SALMON TROLL AND FIXED GEAR SABLEFISH FISHERIES

The Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS) recommends the following options for public review:

- Option 1: Status quo: Beginning May 1, license holders may land no more than one Pacific halibut per each three Chinook, except one Pacific halibut may be landed without meeting the ratio requirement, and no more than 35 halibut per open period.
- Option 2: Beginning May 1, license holders may land no more than one Pacific halibut per each two Chinook, except one Pacific halibut may be landed without meeting the ratio requirement, and no more than 35 halibut per open period.

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