

REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION MEETING

The 2009 Annual Meeting of the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) was held in Vancouver, B.C. January 12-16. The most significant outcome of the meeting was setting the 2009 harvest levels (Agenda Item F.1.a, Attachment 1), which involved discussions of how to apportion the total allowable catch (TAC) among the various catch areas. The Area 2A TAC was down from 1.22 million pounds in 2008 to 0.95 million pounds in 2009 (Agenda Item F.1.a, Attachment 2).

Ms. Michele Culver, Council representative to the IPHC, attended the annual meeting, along with numerous other interested parties from Area 2A. Ms. Culver has provided a brief summary of the results of the meeting (Agenda Item F.1.b, Meeting Summary).

Council Task:

1. Discuss information relative to Area 2A halibut fisheries.

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item F.1.a, Attachment 1: IPHC News Release.
2. Agenda Item F.1.a, Attachment 2: 2009 Area 2A Pacific Halibut Allocations.
3. Agenda Item F.1.b, Meeting Summary: Summary of International Pacific Halibut Commission Meeting.

Agenda Order:

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

Chuck Tracy
Michele Culver

PFMC
02/19/09

News Release

Agenda Item F.1.a

Attachment 1

March 2009

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

January 20, 2009

HALIBUT COMMISSION COMPLETES 2009 ANNUAL MEETING

The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) completed its Eighty-fifth Annual Meeting in Vancouver, B.C., with Dr. Laura J. Richards of Nanaimo, B.C. presiding as Chair. The Commission is recommending to the governments of Canada and the United States catch limits for 2009 totaling 54,080,000 pounds, a 10.4% decrease from the 2008 catch limit of 60,400,000 pounds.

The Commission staff reported on the 2008 Pacific halibut stock assessment which implemented a coastwide estimation of biomass, with apportionment to regulatory biomass based on the data from the annual Commission assessment survey. While the total of the staff catch limit recommendations arising from IPHC survey-based apportionment of the estimated coastwide biomass was accepted, there were differences from staff recommendations for most areas, and the Commission requested additional investigation of apportionment methods during 2009.

For 2009, the Commission recommended a 20% harvest rate for use in Areas 2A through 3B. However, the Commission staff expressed concern over continued declining catch rates in Area 4A and conducted an analysis of productivity in this area during 2008. The analysis recommended a reduction of the harvest rate for this area to 15%, similar to that for other areas of the Bering Sea (Areas 4B and 4CDE). Catch limits adopted for 2009 were lower for most regulatory areas except Area 3B where the Commission, with advice from its advisory bodies, recommends a catch limit the same as that in 2008. The Area 4B recommended catch limit increased slightly for 2009. Decreased catch limits reflect stock biomass declines as the exceptionally strong 1987 and 1988 year classes pass out of the fishery. Recruitment from the 1999 and 2000 year classes is estimated to be above average but is several years away from making major contributions to the exploitable biomass of the stock.

Seasons and Catch Limits

The Commission received regulatory proposals for 2009 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 2009 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):

2009 Catch Limits

Regulatory Area	Catch Limit (pounds)
Area 2A	
Non-treaty directed commercial (south of Pt. Chehalis)	166,385
Non-treaty incidental catch in salmon troll fishery	29,362
Non-treaty incidental catch in sablefish longline fishery (north of Pt. Chehalis)	11,895
Treaty Indian commercial	303,500
Treaty Indian ceremonial and subsistence (year-round)	29,000
Sport – North of Columbia River	214,110
<u>Sport – South of Columbia River</u>	<u>195,748</u>
Area 2A total	950,000
Area 2B (includes sport catch allocation)	7,630,000
Area 2C	5,020,000
Area 3A	21,700,000
Area 3B	10,900,000
Area 4A	2,550,000
Area 4B	1,870,000
Area 4C	1,569,000
Area 4D	1,569,000
Area 4E	<u>322,000</u>
Area 4 total	7,880,000
Total	54,080,000

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada (DFO) will allocate the 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 surveyed the Area 2A directed commercial/incidental halibut fishery license holders for their preferred starting date for the directed commercial fishery. There was a range of views on starting dates with most harvesters supporting opening during June and largest proportion favored June 24. In Area 2A, seven 10-hour fishing periods for the non-treaty directed commercial fishery are recommended: June 24, July 8, July 22, August 5, August 19, September 2, September 16,

September 30, 2009. 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 21 for the U.S. and Canadian Individual Quota fisheries, and Treaty tribal fisheries in Area 2A. The Saturday opening date is to facilitate marketing. Therefore, seasons will commence at 12 noon local time on March 21 and terminate at 12 noon local time on November 15, 2009 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 21 – November 15, 2009.

Regulatory Changes and Issues

For Alaska, the Commission revised the sport regulation that had stated 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 revision changes the reference from *fishing vessel* to *vessel*, and adds an exemption so that halibut in excess of the possession limit may be possessed on the vessel for transportation of halibut, when the vessel is not carrying gear.

The Commission approved a change to the 72-hour restriction prior to the Area 2A directed commercial fishery which would change the restriction to affect all vessels, not just setline vessels, and would require vessels and skippers fishing before the 72-hours immediately prior to the opening to offload their catch or submit to a hold inspection. Without this change, enforcement officers could not tell if fish was caught before or within the 72-hour period.

The Commission approved a regulation that allowed fishing in multiple regulatory areas (4A, 4B, 4C, or 4D), provided a certified observer is on board; or a Vessel Monitoring System is on board and the vessel does not possess at any time on board more halibut than the IFQ allowed for the area currently being fished. In both cases, the halibut needs to be identifiable by regulatory area. This is a regulation that was adopted in 2008 but was not recorded correctly as part of the IPHC regulations in the U.S. Federal Register.

Other Actions

The catch in sport fisheries and enforcement of sport fishing regulations, particularly for charter vessels, were discussed at length. There was support in concept for the development of a harvest tag or ticket for data collection in all recreational halibut fisheries in Alaska and for accurate and timely accounting. The Commission will send letters to the NPFMC and ADF&G acknowledging this support. In 2009, the Commission and agency staff will work with sport representatives to review IPHC Alaska sport regulations and determine if changes are necessary. The Commission staff will also work with ADF&G and NMFS staffs to provide clearer documentation of the Alaska sport regulations.

The Commission also considered the proposed NMFS one-fish bag limit for charter fisheries in Area 2C for 2009. The Commission expressed its desire to see implementation of effective management measures for this fishery, in consideration of the Guideline Harvest Level of 788,000 lb defined for this fishery. The Commission will therefore monitor the implementation of the NMFS proposed rule. In the event of conservation concerns, the Commission will be prepared to take extraordinary action at an intercessional meeting in 2009 to pass IPHC regulations commensurate with the intent to conserve the resource, should there be any delay or problem with the implementation schedule for the NMFS regulation.

An industry proposal to allow the retention of legal-sized Area 4A IFQ halibut during the Bering Sea sablefish pot fishery was discussed. Although the Commission determines the legal gear for the halibut fishery, the Conference Board requested that the NPMFC IFQ Implementation Team discuss this issue. Accordingly, the Commission will send a letter to the NPFMC to have their advisory body review this proposal.

An industry proposal to reduce the commercial size limit for halibut was reviewed but not adopted. The IPHC staff is continuing its investigation of how a reduced size limit would affect assessment, yield, and long-term productivity of the halibut stock and has not endorsed such a change.

The Commission's advisory bodies supported the coastwide assessment model but continued to seek additional discussion on the best method to apportion the coastwide biomass to regulatory areas. The Commissioners directed the staff to conduct additional consultation with industry in the late spring of 2009 to review apportionment procedures and identify preferred methods.

The Commissioners also directed the staff to conduct a workshop in the fall of 2009 to examine the estimation of sublegal-sized bycatch mortality and the methods by which this mortality is incorporated into the stock assessment and harvest policy. The Commission wishes to review these procedures and impacts during its review of the 2009 stock assessment.

The Commission honoured Mr. Joel Thomas of Port Townsend, WA as the seventh recipient of the IPHC Merit Scholarship. Mr. Thomas was unable to attend the meeting due to class requirements but was previously presented with 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 2009 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.

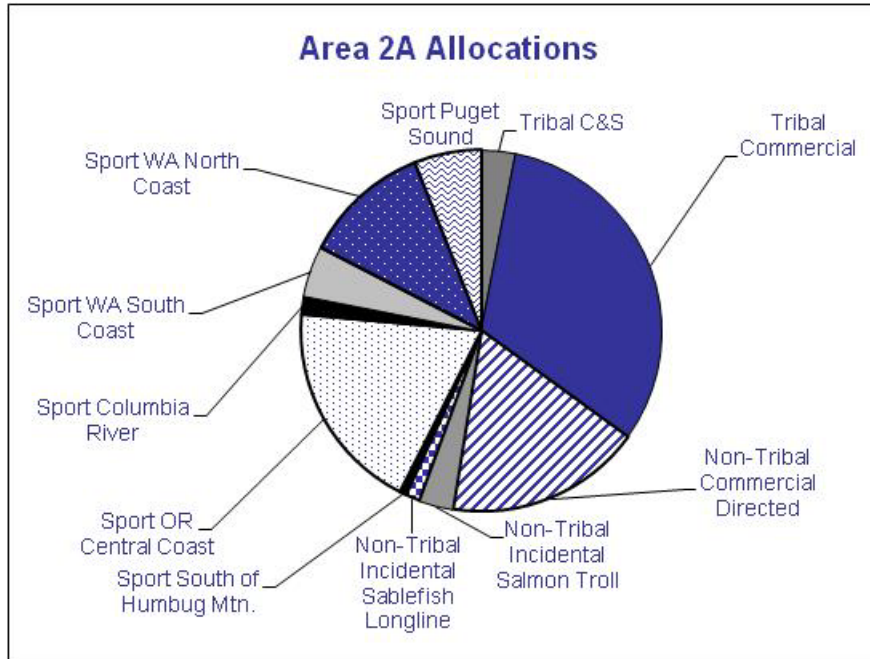
The next Annual Meeting of the Commission is planned for Seattle, WA from January 25-29, 2010. The United States Government Commissioner, Dr. James W. Balsiger of Juneau, AK, was elected Chair. The Canadian Government Commissioner, Dr. Laura J. Richards of Nanaimo, B.C., was elected Vice-Chair for the coming year. Other Canadian Commissioners are Larry Johnson (Parksville, 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 -

Bruce M. Leaman, Executive Director
Phone: (206) 634-1838
FAX: (206) 632-2983
Web: www.iphc.washington.edu

2009 AREA 2A PACIFIC HALIBUT ALLOCATIONS

Fishery	
Tribal C&S	29,000
Tribal Commercial	303,500
Non-Tribal Commercial Directed	166,385
Non-Tribal Incidental Salmon Troll	29,362
Non-Tribal Incidental Sablefish Longline	11,895
Sport South of Humbug Mtn.	5,872
Sport OR Central Coast	180,088
Sport Columbia River	15,735
Sport WA South Coast	42,739
Sport WA North Coast	108,030
Sport Puget Sound	57,393
Total	950,000



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.

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 percent 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 F.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 2009, only 11,895 pounds are available for this fishery. 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 F.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 F.2.a, Attachment 1: Summary of Pacific Halibut Incidental Catch Management.

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview
- b. Reports and Comments of Agencies and Advisory Bodies
- c. Public Comment
- d. **Council Action:** Adopt Public Review Options for 2009

Chuck Tracy

PFMC
02/13/09

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	55	60	4	16	135	37,707	16,685	1 + 1 per each 2	35
2009	-	-	-	-	-	29,362	-	-	-

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	39,729	2+100 lb per 1,000 lb	May 1-Oct. 31
2009	11,895	-	-	-

Thirty-six individual vessels made a total of 58 landings containing halibut in the 2008 directed tier-limit sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis. This compares with 2007 when 24 individual vessels made a total of 84 landings containing halibut. The total catch of dressed, head-off halibut in the directed sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis at the conclusion of the 2008 fishery on October 31 was 39,729 pounds, which was 56% of the established quota, and 13 percent below the 2007 catch.

PFMC
02/13/09

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

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) considered regulations involving incidental halibut harvest of the above fisheries.

After consideration of the overall situation for both the salmon troll and sablefish fisheries, the GAP recommends adopting the following options for analysis and public review:

A. Salmon troll fishery

1. 1 + 1 per each 2 salmon (status quo)
2. 3 + 1 per each 2 salmon

B. Sablefish fishery

1. Zero halibut retention
2. 2 + 17 lb per 1000 lb sablefish

Option 2 of the salmon troll fishery is designed to allow for the fact that the allocation has not been harvested recently due to salmon constraints.

Option 1 of the sablefish fishery is suggested as a possible scenario due to low allocation for 2009. Option 2 is calculated by reducing the 2008 allocation by the 80% reduction for 2009.

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 two 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 three Pacific halibut may be landed without meeting the ratio requirement, and no more than 35 halibut per open period.
- The SAS also recommends retaining the voluntary nature of the “C-shaped” yelloweye rockfish conservation area in the salmon troll fishery.

PFMC
03/9/09