

UPDATE ON THE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY EVALUATION PROCESS FOR PACIFIC HALIBUT

In 2014, the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) initiated a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) process and created a Management Strategy Advisory Board (MSAB) comprised of a broad group of fisheries managers, scientists, harvesters (commercial, sport, and subsistence), and processors. The MSAB is in the process of evaluating fishing intensity in support of developing a long-term plan focused on the harvest strategy policy with the intent of providing a recommendation to IPHC in 2021. This report is a summary update on the MSAB's progress; more detailed information can be found on the IPHC's website at: <https://iphc.int/management/science-and-research/management-strategy-evaluation>

In its deliberations about a long-term harvest strategy policy, the MSAB discussed what should be the target timeframe for "long-term." The MSE model runs simulations that result in equilibrium over time (i.e., slightly more than 100 years); however, it is challenging to relate to model results over such a long time scale. In response, the MSAB also suggested evaluating results for shorter time periods, which included very short (1-3 years from current), short (3-10 years), and medium (11-20 years) timeframes, and there seemed to be agreement by the IPHC Commissioners on the short- and mid-term periods.

Additionally, in 2016, IPHC asked the MSAB to investigate addressing stock and total constant exploitation yield (TCEY) distribution. There has been considerable discussion amongst IPHC Commissioners and MSAB members relative to the scope of "distribution," and whether it is strictly how the stock distributes itself within the available habitat or if it also includes allocation of the stock amongst regulatory areas. In general, the MSAB wants to be responsive to IPHC direction and guidance, but believes that allocation (or "apportionment") decisions are policy-driven and the responsibility of the IPHC Commissioners.

At the end of the IPHC Annual Meeting, there had been some discussion about potentially directing the MSAB to evaluate a short-term "interim" allocation strategy to bridge the gap between 2019 and when the MSAB intends to bring its long-term harvest strategy plan to IPHC in 2021. Canadian Commissioner Ryall suggested using 2013-2017 fishery constant exploitation yields (FCEYs) as the basis for the interim allocation; however, U.S. Commissioners were not prepared to agree to that without knowing what the resulting allocations would be. U.S. Commissioner Behnken also indicated her desire for the MSAB to bring forward a range of alternatives, rather than limit the scope to the suggested years. In the end, the Commissioners agreed to have a conference call with MSAB representatives to clarify what the task is and when it could be completed.

That conference call has yet to be scheduled; however, in the absence of further guidance, the MSAB intends to discuss principles and guidelines to help shape its work on long-term TCEY distribution at its next meeting, which will be on May 7-10, 2018, in Seattle, at the IPHC office.