

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE REPORT 1

On January 1, 2018, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) issued interim quota pounds (QP) to vessel accounts in the Shorebased Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Program for Pacific halibut Individual Bycatch Quota (IBQ), north of 40°10' N. latitude (hereafter “halibut” or “halibut IBQ”); that amount totaled 83,154 pounds for the fleet.

Each year, NMFS issues interim halibut QP to the IFQ program on January 1 to enable fishing until the final harvest specifications determined at the International Pacific Halibut Commission’s (IPHC) annual meeting (held January 22-26, 2018) have been released. Interim QP must be high enough to enable the fishery to proceed until it can be supplemented, yet low enough to prevent over issuance. Interim halibut quota pounds are lower this year than the typical interim amount; this directly reflects the value of Total Constant Exploitation Yield (TCEY) for Area 2A recommended by the IPHC at their *interim* meeting on November 28-29, 2017; it was much lower than in recent years.

This year, the IPHC did not agree upon 2018 Pacific halibut catch limits at its annual meeting (January 22-26, 2018). Given the absence of halibut harvest specifications, NMFS is working to make halibut harvest management decisions as soon as possible through the rulemaking process, and issue final quota pounds of halibut IBQ in the Shorebased IFQ Program.