

IPHC Media Release 2020-006

DETAILED OUTCOMES OF THE 96th SESSION OF THE IPHC ANNUAL MEETING (AM096)

14 February 2020

SEATTLE – The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) completed its 96th Annual Meeting (AM096) in Anchorage, Alaska, USA on 7 February 2020 with decisions on fishery limits, fishing period dates, and regulatory changes. A total of 216 Pacific halibut stakeholders attended the meeting in person, with another 128 participating via the web broadcasts of the meeting.

Meeting information, documents, presentations, recordings of the sessions, and the report of the meeting are available on the AM096 meeting page at the IPHC website: <https://www.iphc.int/venues/details/96th-session-of-the-iphc-annual-meeting-am096>.

IPHC Media Release 2020-004 reported the initial results of AM096. Selected additional elements of the [Report of the 96th Session of the IPHC Annual Meeting](#) are highlighted below.

The 2019 stock assessment and 2020 harvest advice

The 2019 stock assessment produced the following scientific advice regarding the Pacific halibut stock:

1. Fishing intensity: The IPHC does not have an explicit coastwide fishing intensity target or limit reference point, making it difficult to determine if current levels of fishing intensity are consistent with the interim harvest strategy policy objectives. The 2019 mortality corresponded to a point estimate of SPR = 42%; there is a 59% chance that fishing intensity exceeded the IPHC's reference level of 46%

Although the stock is projected to decline over the next three years, the estimated probability of dropping below the SB20% limit reference point remains less than 23% for all levels of mortality less than or equal to the status quo, the stock is therefore classified as **not subject to overfishing**. However, at current catch limits, there is a 1 in 2 chance that the stock will be below the SB30% fishery trigger in each of the next 3 years, and a 1 in 5 chance of being below the SB20% biological limit in 2023.

2. Spawning biomass: Based on the dynamic reference point calculations, female spawning stock biomass of Pacific halibut at the beginning of 2020 was estimated to be 32% (22–46%) of the SB0 (unfished levels). The probability that the stock is below the SB30% level (IPHC trigger) is estimated to be 46%, with less than a 1% chance that the stock is below SB20% (IPHC limit reference point). Thus, on the weight of evidence available, the Pacific halibut stock is determined to be **not overfished** (SB2020 > SB20%).
3. Outlook. The stock is projected to decrease over the period 2021-23 for all TCEYs greater than 18.4 million pounds (~8,350 t), corresponding to a Spawning Potential Ratio (SPR) of 63%. At the reference level (SPR of 46% and a TCEY of 31.9 Mlbs or ~14,500 t) the probability of a decrease in stock size decreases over time from 89% (2021) to 75% (2023). There is a 43% chance that the stock will decline below the threshold reference point (SB30%) in one-year at the reference level of fishing intensity and a 49% chance at the status quo TCEY.

Regulatory changes: fishery limits and fishing periods

The Commission approved a series of regulatory changes, including fishery limits and fishing periods. In accordance with the IPHC Convention¹, the fishery regulations approved by the IPHC have been recommended to the Contracting Parties for implementation according to their domestic law and regulation. The complete [IPHC Regulations \(2020\)](#) approved by the Commission are available at the IPHC website.

Fishery limits

The Commission adopted the TCEY (Total Constant Exploitation Yield) limits for each IPHC Regulatory Area as shown in Table 1. These limits include a variety of estimated sources of mortality which are detailed in Table 2.

¹ *The Convention between Canada and the United States of America for the Preservation of the [Pacific] Halibut Fishery of the Northern Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea.*

Table 1. TCEY limits by IPHC Regulatory Area

IPHC Regulatory Area	TCEY limits (net weight ²)	
	Metric tons (t)	Pounds (Mlb)
Area 2A (California, Oregon, and Washington)	748.43	1.65
Area 2B (British Columbia)	3,098.04	6.83
Area 2C (southeastern Alaska)	2,653.51	5.85
Area 3A (central Gulf of Alaska)	5,533.83	12.20
Area 3B (western Gulf of Alaska)	1,415.21	3.12
Area 4A (eastern Aleutians)	793.79	1.75
Area 4B (central/western Aleutians)	594.21	1.31
Areas 4CDE (Bering Sea)	1,769.01	3.90
Total	16,601.48	36.60

Table 2. Mortality table projected for the 2020 mortality limits (in millions of pounds, net weight) by IPHC Regulatory Area.

Sector	IPHC Regulatory Area								
	2A	2B	2C	3A	3B	4A	4B	4CDE	Total
Commercial discard mortality	0.03	0.13	NA	NA	0.16	0.09	0.04	0.08	0.52
O26 non-directed discard	0.12	0.24	0.07	1.29	0.53	0.22	0.16	2.06	4.69
Non-CSP recreational (+	NA	0.05	1.15	1.66	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	2.88
Subsistence	NA	0.41	0.37	0.19	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.04	1.03
Total non-FCEY	0.15	0.82	1.59	3.14	0.71	0.34	0.20	2.17	9.12
Commercial discard mortality	NA	NA	0.07	0.29	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.36
CSP recreational (+ discards)	0.61	0.88	0.78	1.71	NA	NA	NA	NA	3.98
Subsistence	0.03	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.03
Commercial landings	0.87	5.12	3.41	7.05	2.41	1.41	1.10	1.73	23.11
Total FCEY	1.50	6.00	4.26	9.06	2.41	1.41	1.10	1.73	27.48
TCEY	1.65	6.83	5.85	12.20	3.12	1.75	1.31	3.90	36.60
U26 non-directed discard	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.29	0.12	0.14	0.01	1.02	1.60
Total Mortality	1.65	6.85	5.85	12.49	3.24	1.89	1.32	4.92	38.19

² net weight" of a Pacific halibut means the weight of Pacific halibut that is without gills and entrails, head-off, washed (without ice and slime). If a Pacific halibut is weighed with the head on or with ice and slime, the required conversion factors for calculating net weight are a 2 percent deduction for ice and slime and a 10 percent deduction for the head.

Fishing periods (season dates)

The Commission recommended a fishing period **14 March to 15 November 2020** for all commercial Pacific halibut fisheries in Canada and United States of America. All commercial fishing for Pacific halibut in all IPHC Regulatory Areas may begin no earlier than noon local time on 14 March and must cease by noon local time on 15 November 2020.

In IPHC Regulatory Area 2A, the Commission adopted three-day (58-hour) fishing periods for the non-tribal directed commercial fishery in place of the previous 10-hour fishing periods. The first fishing period will begin at 0800 on 22 June 2020 and end at 1800 on 24 June 2020. Additional openings will take place at two-week intervals as allocation allows, to be determined and communicated by the IPHC Secretariat.

Other actions

Fishery-independent setline survey (FISS)

The Commission provided direction to the IPHC Secretariat regarding the IPHC's 2020 fishery-independent setline survey (FISS), in particular:

- The 2020 FISS shall employ the proposed subarea design for Regulatory Areas 2A, 4A, 4B, 4CDE, and an enhanced randomized subsampling FISS design in Regulatory Areas 2B, 2C, 3A, and 3B to meet the primary FISS design objective, while also considering secondary and tertiary FISS design objectives.
- The IPHC Secretariat shall make the following specific additions to the new 2020 FISS design, on the basis of the tertiary objective, on a cost-recovery basis:
 - Regulatory Area 2A: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife rockfish sampling;
 - Regulatory Area 2B: DFO-Canada rockfish sampling.

Upcoming IPHC meetings

Meeting	Date	Location
Interim Meeting (IM096)	18-19 November 2020	Seattle, WA, USA
Annual Meeting (AM097)	25-29 January 2021	Victoria, BC, Canada
Annual Meeting (AM098)	24-28 January 2022	Seattle, WA, USA

Commission membership

The Commission elected Mr Paul Ryall (Canada) as Chairperson of the IPHC, and Mr Chris Oliver (USA) as Vice-Chairperson of the IPHC. The other Canadian Commissioners are Mr Neil Davis and Mr Peter DeGreef. The other US Commissioners are Mr Robert Alverson and Mr Richard Yamada.

For further information please contact the IPHC Secretariat at secretariat@iphc.int or 206.634.1838.

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