

WORKGROUP REPORT ON THE COMMERCIAL DIRECTED FISHERY: TRANSITION PROCESS AND WORKSHOP PLANNING

Following the April Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting, representatives from Washington, Oregon, California, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and Council staff had conference calls to discuss next steps relative to considering transitioning the management of the directed commercial halibut fishery from the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) to the Council. The purpose of this report is to provide a brief summary of coordination efforts with IPHC and to identify several transition-related decisions that the Council should make at this meeting.

Preliminary discussions with the IPHC secretariat have been positive with regard to their willingness to work with the Council to develop a mutually agreeable transition plan. Such a transition plan could address the proposed timing of the transition, and a description of how issues such as licensing, data collection, and data access would occur in the interim.

Transition Timing

The IPHC secretariat has indicated their desire to move forward with a transition to Council management of the directed commercial fishery as soon as possible. IPHC initially raised their concerns relative to fishery management issues in June 2017, and the Council has engaged in discussions with IPHC relative to the annual regulations for the directed commercial fishery since then.

Transitioning the fishery from IPHC management to Council management could be relatively seamless, particularly if a new federal license does not need to be created in the near-term. NMFS has indicated that they currently have authority to promulgate halibut fishing regulations under the Halibut Act for the directed commercial fishery provided such regulations are consistent with broader IPHC regulations. As such, the fishery could transition to Council/NMFS management with little change to the fishery structure in the immediate future (i.e., it would remain an open access fishery managed by trip limits). This would be the quickest path forward.

This would not preclude the Council from revising the fishery structure in the future, which may include a permitting component. It would be helpful to understand from NMFS what their process and timing needs would be relative to any federal budgetary requests to facilitate changes in fishery structure. NMFS is scheduled to provide an initial report to the Council at the 2019 November meeting that would describe the process, timeline, and workload associated with transitioning the management of the commercial directed halibut fishery; this report will help the Council develop recommendations to IPHC for their interim and annual meetings.

Vessel Licenses

IPHC currently issues four types of annual halibut vessel licenses for IPHC regulatory area 2A (West Coast) for the following fisheries: 1) directed commercial, 2) incidental commercial during longline sablefish, 3) incidental commercial during salmon troll, and 4) recreational charter. IPHC does not issue licenses for any of their other regulatory areas. License applications must be submitted using an online form to IPHC by specified deadlines: March 15 for the incidental fisheries and April 30 for the directed commercial fishery. There is no deadline for the recreational charter vessel licenses. Attached at the end of this report is an IPHC document with a detailed description of these licenses.

IPHC secretariat has indicated that, while they are open to considering a continuation of issuing vessel licenses as an interim step, they would like to eventually discontinue their 2A vessel licensing system, so the timing of IPHC's withdrawal of issuing permits will likely be a key point of the transition plan.

Currently, there are no federal or state licenses for the 2A directed commercial halibut fishery. While the Council manages the longline sablefish, salmon troll, and recreational charter fisheries for groundfish; NMFS does not issue nor require licenses for all these federally-authorized fishing activities. The states of Washington, Oregon, and California license their respective salmon troll and charter/CPFV fisheries, as well as all vessels making commercial landings in each state, and NMFS permits the sablefish tiered fishery that has an incidental catch allowance north of Point Chehalis.

As part of the transition plan, the Council and NMFS should consider the pros and cons associated with creating a new federal permit specific to halibut fishing, or whether there are other means to identify and regulate participants. For example, one mechanism may be to include a vessel declaration requirement (e.g., similar to the VMS declaration system) whereby vessels must declare their intent to participate in the directed commercial or incidental commercial fisheries by specified deadlines. Although further exploration will be required, some sort of declaration system may help the Council assess anticipated effort and evaluate proposed regulations, and would assist enforcement efforts.

Key Questions for the Council

1. Does the Council want to commit to IPHC its intent to assume management of the directed commercial halibut fishery? If yes, then:
2. Does the Council see a need to create a federal license (permit) for the directed commercial fishery in the near-term (i.e., for the next 2-3 years), or does the Council prefer to continue the IPHC vessel license until implementation of a Council management regime?

3. Given that the directed commercial fishery will likely have a management structure in 2020 similar to status quo with potential minor changes (e.g., different fishing periods or trip limits), what method does the Council prefer to use to solicit input for 2020: a stakeholder workshop this year prior to the September Council meeting, or the existing Council two-meeting process (September and November)? (Note that this decision also relates to item #4 in this list.)

4. If the Council wants to have a workshop to solicit input for 2020, then should the workshop also include longer-term issues? Or, does the Council want to use the September/November 2019 meetings for the 2020 season, then potentially schedule a workshop next year to consider longer-term issues? In considering whether to begin work on long-term commercial halibut fishery issues this fall, the Council should consider the workload implications in conjunction with other processes (e.g., groundfish specifications and management measures) that would be ongoing at the same time.



How to apply for an IPHC Regulatory Area 2A (WA-OR-CA) license

LAST UPDATED: 23 JANUARY 2019

LICENSES ISSUED BY IPHC

The IPHC issues four license types to harvest Pacific halibut (*Hippoglossus stenolepis*) in the waters off of Washington, Oregon, and California (IPHC Regulatory Area 2A). These licenses are issued to vessels, not individual harvesters. Vessels bearing a valid IPHC license must also possess all federal and state licenses required for the waters in which they intend to fish.

Only one IPHC license per vessel will be issued, with the exception of Incidental Commercial Pacific halibut during Longline Sablefish Fishery (IS) and Directed Commercial (DC) licenses; a separate application must be submitted for each. The license number assigned will be the same as the Documentation Official No. provided on the license application. The Pacific halibut license must be carried on the vessel and be available for inspection while the vessel is engaged in the Pacific halibut fishery.

- **Recreational Pacific Halibut Charter**

(S) *Application deadline: none*

IPHC Regulatory Area 2A is divided into seven subareas, each with its own allocation and season structure. Seasons dates are set to not conflict with other fisheries, and may be open for only one to three days per week in some subareas. Opening dates, local area closures, and bag limits are determined by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries (NOAA Fisheries) and state fisheries departments.

Charter vessels retaining Pacific halibut in IPHC Regulatory Area 2A must be licensed by the IPHC. Federal and state licensing requirements may also apply. If a vessel has an IPHC Regulatory Area 2A (WA-ORCA) commercial license, the vessel cannot be used to fish recreationally for Pacific halibut in that same IPHC Regulatory Area.

- **Incidental Commercial Pacific Halibut During Salmon Troll (T)**

Application deadline: 15 March

The incidental commercial fishery during the salmon troll fishery operates off Washington, Oregon, and California. In-season actions may be taken by management agencies such as

landing restrictions and fishery dates. The season is typically open in May/June/July, or until the allocation has been attained (season opening date to be determined by Pacific Fishery Management Council in late April).

Incidental Commercial Pacific Halibut During Longline Sablefish Fishery (IS)

Application deadline: 15 March

The incidental commercial fishery during the limited entry fixed gear sablefish primary fishery operates north of Pt. Chehalis (46° 53.18' N). In-season actions may be taken by management agencies such as landing restrictions and season dates. A NOAA Fisheries limited entry groundfish permit with a sablefish endorsement is required in this fishery.

Directed Commercial (DC)

Application deadline: 30 April

The directed commercial Pacific halibut fishery operates south of Pt. Chehalis (46° 53.18' N) with opening dates announced in IPHC Pacific Halibut Fishery Regulations each year. The fishery is restricted by specific vessel-length landing limits, called fishing period limits in IPHC Pacific Halibut Fishery Regulations. Fishing periods and fishing period limits are announced before each fishing period via IPHC News Releases. (sign up to receive IPHC News Releases at <https://iphc.int/form/news-letter>)

COMPLETING AND SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS

IPHC uses one electronic application form for all IPHC Regulatory Area 2A licenses. Applications must be submitted at <https://iphc.int/form/license-application> no later than 2359 hours on the applicable license deadline date. **No emailed, faxed, or paper applications will be accepted.** Licenses are issued for the year of application.

1. Activity Code

Select only one box, if applying for (S), (T), (IS), or (DC) license only.

If applying for both the (IS) and (DC) licenses, select each box respectively.

If participating in both, you will receive two separate licenses, one for each fishery.

2. Vessel

Vessel Name: Enter the vessel's full name.

Documentation Official No.: Enter the USCG Documentation or State Registration Number (Washington DMV, Oregon State Marine Board, or California DMV). *This is required.*

Overall Length: Enter the horizontal distance from the foremost part of the stem to the aftmost part of the stern (excluding bowsprits, rudders, outboard motor brackets,

and similar fittings or attachments), as indicated on the USCG Documentation. *This is required.*

Gross Tons, Net Tons, and Year Built: Enter gross tonnes, net tonnes, and year built as shown on the USCG Documentation.

Home Port: Enter the vessel's primary marine port of operations.

Number in Crew: Enter the number of crew members, including the captain, usually on board while Pacific halibut fishing.

3. Vessel Owner(s)

Owner Name: Enter the vessel owner's first and last name. *This is required.*

Co-Owner Name: Enter the vessel co-owner's first and last name, if applicable.

Mailing address, City, State, Zip Code: Enter the vessel owner's mailing address. The license(s) will be mailed to this address. *This is required.*

Owner Telephone: Enter the vessel owner's telephone number, with area code. *This is required.*

Owner Cell: Enter the vessel owner's cell phone number, with area code. **Owner E-mail:** Enter the vessel owner's E-mail address. *This is required.*

4. Vessel Captain(s)

Captain Name, Co-captain Name, Mailing Address, City, State, Zip Code, Captain Telephone, Captain Cell, Captain E-mail: Enter the name of the captain and co-captain, if applicable, if different from the Vessel Owner. Enter any contact information for the vessel captain.

5. Vessel Registration Numbers

Enter all state issued vessel registration numbers: *At least one registration number is required.*

6. Sign and date application

Enter vessel owner's initials in attestation of application: *This is required.*

Enter application date: Click on the small icon of a calendar and select the date the application is completed. *This is required.*

7. Submit

Click “Submit”: You will be directed to a page saying “*License Application- Form Submitted!*” if your application has been successfully submitted. If you do not see this page, check that all required fields (those marked with *) are completed; as your application has not been submitted.

LICENSE CHANGES

Vessels may change from an Incidental Commercial (T or IS) to Directed Commercial license until 30 April.

Vessels may change from a Directed Commercial (DC) to Incidental Commercial (T or IS) license if the application was received by 15 March.

The previously issued license must be returned by mail to IPHC; no new license will be issued prior to the IPHC receiving the previously issued license. No changes will be issued after 1 May.

WHERE TO SEEK MORE INFORMATION

- **Sign up to receive IPHC News Releases:** all IPHC news releases are distributed electronically <https://iphc.int/form/news-letter>
- **IPHC licenses:** IPHC Licensing Department (206)634-1838 or licensing@iphc.int. Local WDFW or ODFW offices may also be able to assist with applications.
- **Incidental Pacific halibut catch during the salmon troll fishery:** (number of Pacific halibut allowed per salmon, other licenses, dates, etc.)
 - Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife:** (360) 902-2464 option 4
 - Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife:** (541) 867-4741
 - California Department of Fish and Wildlife:** (707) 445-6493
- **Incidental Pacific halibut catch during the longline sablefish fishery:** (amount of Pacific halibut per vessel, other licenses and endorsement, dates, etc) **NOAA Fisheries:** (206) 526-4646