SUMMARY OF THE SOUTH OF HUMBUG PACIFIC HALIBUT POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

The South of Humbug Mountain Policy Committee, hereinafter Committee, for Pacific halibut convened on Thursday, December 13, 2012 in Portland, Oregon. The following report contains a brief overview of the meeting with a primary focus on Committee recommendations to the Council. The Council will consider the Committee’s recommendations at their March 2013 meeting in Tacoma, Washington.

The meeting began with an overview of the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) stock assessment methodology, presented by IPHC staff, Mr. Gregg Williams. State representatives also provided an overview of the South of Humbug Workgroup (Workgroup) Report on Biological, Monitoring, Assessment, and Apportionment Issues in Area 2A (See Agenda Item F.1.b, Attachment 1, September 2012).

Mr. Williams said the IPHC staff is recommending to the Commission that the IPHC assessment survey for Pacific halibut be extended into northern California to approximately Punta Gorda (Figure 1). The estimated cost to expand the survey by 15-17 stations is approximately $50,000. The Committee supports the expansion of the survey into California. If the survey cannot be conducted annually, the Committee recommends IPHC develop a reasonable timeline for resurveying the area. For years in which there is no IPHC survey in California, the Committee recommends that the previous survey estimate of abundance be scaled by an appropriate metric (e.g., the southern Oregon stations, annual NMFS trawl survey, or other reliable index). This is similar to the approach used in other areas that are not regularly surveyed, such as the Puget Sound area and the Bering Sea flats.

While discussing the challenges associated with expanding the survey to include California on an annual basis, the Committee recognized that the Puget Sound area is in a similar situation. The Committee recommends IPHC develop a reasonable timeline for resurveying the Puget Sound area. If the Puget Sound and California areas cannot be surveyed in the same year, the Committee recommends that the expanded surveys are done in alternate years (i.e., rotating between the two areas).

The Committee discussed the status of the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP) commercial fishery data and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) trawl survey data requests to the Northwest Fisheries Science Center. The Committee recommends prioritizing the NMFS trawl survey request such that data would be available at the IPHC Annual Meeting to inform the southern extent of the survey expansion. The Northwest Fisheries Science Center is currently exploring the feasibility of this request.

The Committee discussed potential 2014 sport fishery management measures for the South of Humbug Mountain subarea in Oregon and California to constrain catches. The Committee recommends the Workgroup estimate the amount of Pacific halibut catch that would result from the following management measures:
• Prohibiting targeting of Pacific halibut on salmon and groundfish trips
• Restricting the days of the week; include at least one weekend day
• Restricting season dates including
  o Open May through July and September through October
  o Open May through July 15 and September through October
  o Open May through June and August through September
• Examine the potential for harvest reduction of other time and area closures off California

The Committee also recommends that the Workgroup bring forward any additional management measures that could be used to reduce catch of Pacific halibut.

In closing, the Committee recommends convening in late May 2013 to review the analysis conducted by the Workgroup. Recommendations from this meeting would be brought forward for Council consideration at their September 2013 meeting in Boise, Idaho.
Figure 1. IPHC staff proposal to expand the Area 2A setline survey into northern California.
Attendee List

Committee Members
Ms. Michele Culver, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Mr. Kevin Duffy, National Marine Fisheries Service, Northwest Region
Ms. Marci Yaremko, California Department of Fish and Game
Mr. Stephen Williams, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Mr. Gregg Williams, International Pacific Halibut Commission

Other Attendees
Ms. Kelly Ames, Council Staff
Ms. Gway Kirchner, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Mr. Tim Klassen, Reel Steel Sportfishing
Mr. Dale Meyer, Arctic Storm Management Group
Ms. Lynn Mattes, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Ms. Heather Reed, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Mr. Chuck Tracy, Council Staff
Mr. Jim Yarnall, Humbolt Area Saltwater Anglers

PFMC
02/07/13