



December 2, 2011

### **International Pacific Halibut Commission Staff Preliminary Catch Limit Recommendations: 2012**

In making catch limit recommendations for 2012, staff has considered the results of the 2011 stock assessment, changes in the commercial and survey indices used to monitor the stock, and a harvest policy that reflects coastwide policy goals.

Coastwide overall commercial fishery weight per unit effort (WPUE) was largely unchanged (+1%) in 2011 from 2010 values, although a significant decline continued (-18%) in Area 3B. Area 2A commercial WPUE also declined significantly, although this area is the sole remaining derby-style fishery and in consequence the commercial index is more variable than other areas. In contrast, commercial WPUE increased from 8-15% in Areas 2B, 2C, and 4B. The 2011 IPHC stock assessment survey WPUE values (adjusted for hook competition, survey timing, and averaged as in the apportionment process) increased notably in Area 2C but continued to decrease by about 20% in Areas 3B, 4A, and 4CDE. The coastwide survey value declined by approximately 9% from 2010 to 2011.

The stock exploitable biomass continues to decline, reflecting lower recruitment from the 1989 to 1997 year classes and smaller size at age. Recruitment from more recent year classes is stronger but halibut size at age continues to be much lower than that seen in the recent period (1997-1998) of historic high biomass, so these year classes are recruiting to the exploitable biomass more slowly than past year classes. For historical context, total 2011 removals (commercial, recreational, personal use, wastage, plus bycatch mortality in non-target fisheries) of 60.3 million lb, net weight (Mlb) are about 40% below the maximum seen in 2004 but about double the minimum value (29.0 Mlb) seen in 1978.

The staff recommendations continue to be based on applying the SUFullID (Slow Up – Full Down) policy of a 33% increase from previous year's catch limits when stock yields are projected to increase and adopting the full decrease in recommended catch, when stock yields are projected to decrease.

#### **Catch Limit Recommendations for 2012**

The 2011 stock assessment resulted in a coastwide estimate for the 2012 Fishery Constant Exploitation Yield (FCEY) of 33.882 Mlb, a decline of approximately 19% from the 2011 value of 41.07 Mlb. While FCEY values increased in Areas 2A and 2C, these increases were offset by decreased values for all other areas, ranging from 13-32%. For 2012, the staff continued with the hook competition and survey timing adjustment factors to account for variation in the catchability of the survey fishing gear, and a three-year reverse weighting of the adjustment factors. For all areas, direct deductions for all bycatch and wastage mortality between 26-32 inches are made in the area of occurrence to determine the FCEY, as was done in 2011.

The largest changes in recommended 2012 Catch Limits occur in Areas 3B, 4A, and 4CDE. Only Areas 2A and 2C show recommended catch limit increases for 2012. The staff recommended Catch Limits totaling 33.135 Mlb for 2012, a decrease of approximately 19%

from 2011 Catch Limits, are presented in Table 1. The Area 2A recommendation includes all removals (commercial, treaty Tribes, and sport) allocated by the Pacific Fishery Management Council's Catch Sharing Plan. Area 4CDE is treated as a single regulatory unit by the Commission, although the North Pacific Fishery Management Council's Catch Sharing Plan allocates the Commission catch limit into limits for the individual regulatory areas. The Area 2B catch limit recommendation includes totals for the commercial and sport fisheries. The Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans will allocate the adopted catch limit between the sport and commercial fisheries.

The catch limit recommendations for Areas 2C and 3A include the use of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) authorized Guideline Harvest Levels (GHL) for the halibut recreational charter fisheries of 0.931 Mlb and 3.103 Mlb, respectively, as the projected removals by that sector for 2012. The catch limit recommendations are made with the assumption that both Canada and the U.S. will manage to their domestic targets for sport fisheries.

*These recommendations, along with public and industry views on them, will be considered by IPHC Commissioners and their advisors at the IPHC Annual Meeting in Anchorage, Alaska, during January 24-27, 2012. These recommendations are preliminary and, as final data are included in the assessment, may be updated for the Annual Meeting but are not expected to change significantly.*

*Proposals concerning changes to catch limits should be submitted to the Commission by December 30, 2011. Catch limit proposals are available on the Commission's webpage (<http://www.iphc.int/meetings-and-events/annual-meeting/catch-limit-comments.html>) or from the Commission's office. Additional details about the [Annual Meeting](#) can also be found on the web page.*

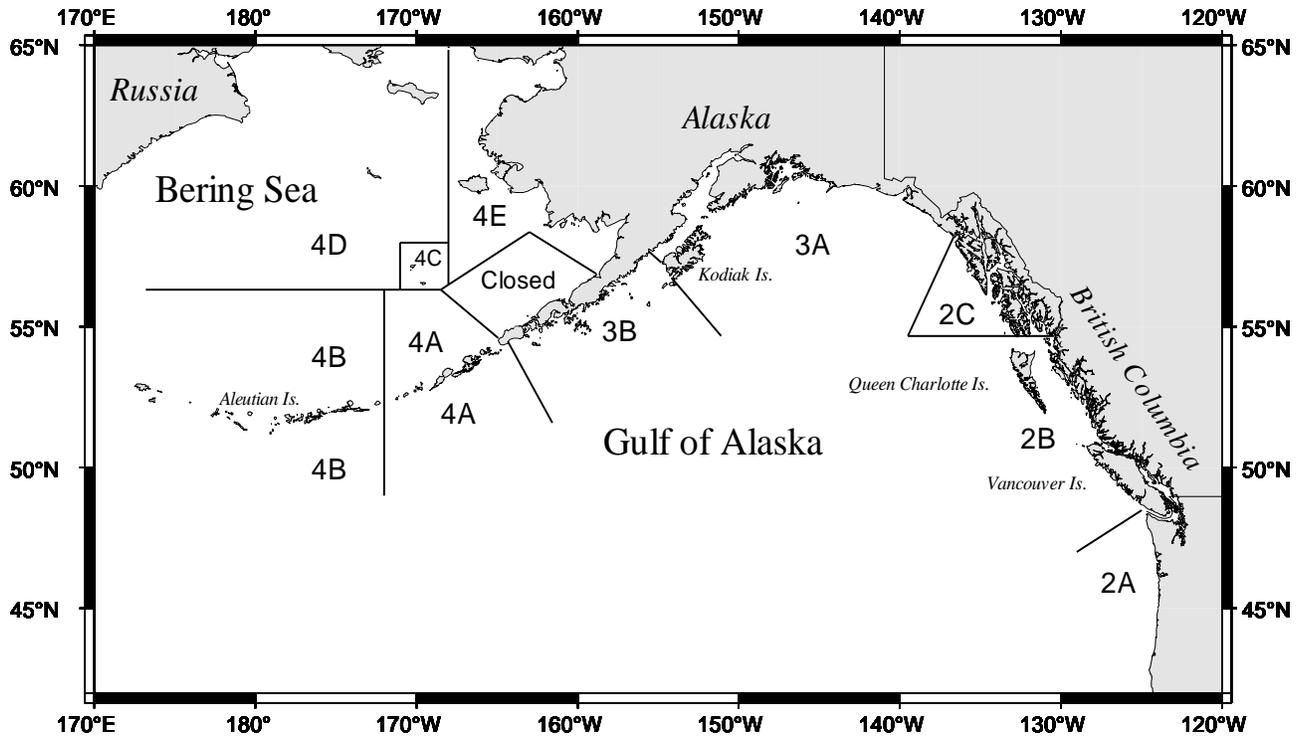
**Table 1. IPHC staff recommended catch limits for 2012, by IPHC regulatory area (million lbs, net weight). The 2011 fishery catch limits are included for comparison.**

<b>Regulatory Area</b>	<b>2011 Adopted Fishery Catch Limit</b>	<b>2012 IPHC Staff Recommended Fishery Catch Limit</b>
2A <sup>a</sup>	0.910	0.989
2B <sup>b</sup>	7.650	6.633
2C	2.330	2.624
3A	14.360	11.918
3B	7.510	5.070
4A	2.410	1.567
4B	2.180	1.869
4CDE <sup>c</sup>	3.720	2.465
<b>Total</b>	<b>41.070</b>	<b>33.135</b>

<sup>a</sup> Includes sport, tribal, and commercial fisheries.

<sup>b</sup> Includes sport and commercial fisheries.

<sup>c</sup> Individual catch limits for Areas 4C, 4D, and 4E are determined by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council catch sharing plan.



**Figure 1. International Pacific Halibut Commission Regulatory Areas.**