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DISCARD MORTALITY STUDY CHARTER ANNOUNCEMENT

The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) is seeking commercial longline and research vessels to conduct a Pacific halibut discard mortality study in the latter part of October to early November 2017. The study will require fishing conventional fixed gear in an area southeast of Chignik, AK, bounded between the following points (56°05'N, 158°10'W), (56°05'N, 157°25'W), (55°26'N, 156°23'W), (54°55'N, 157°15'W), (54°55'N, 158°10'W), and (55°40'N, 158°50'W). Three sets of 8 skates (1,800' feet long (300 fathoms) with 100 hooks (#3 (16/0 Mustad)) at 18' intervals) will be fished per day. A secondary roller will need to be in place in board the rail to enable release of fish into an area where they can be assessed, tagged, and released. Release methods (careful shake, hook straightening, gangion cutting, and hook stripper) will be randomly assigned by skate throughout each set. Two trips of six days will be conducted following an initial two days of test fishing to finalize the experimental protocols. The vessel must be capable of taking three (3) IPHC field biologists for data and sample collections. IPHC will bear bait and ice costs; fuel costs will be borne by the vessel. Some Pacific halibut will be retained and sold by IPHC, and limited retention of Pacific cod and rockfish bycatch may be allowed.

The purpose of the charter is to (1) evaluate the effects of fish handling practices on injury levels and their association with the physiological condition of captured Pacific halibut, (2) investigate the effects of fish handling methods and associated injury level and physiological condition on post-release survival of sublegal Pacific halibut discards, and (3) validate the ability of electronic monitoring (EM) to correctly identify release methods and associated fish handling methods to post-release survival. This project will help refine current estimates of discard mortality rates (DMRs) in the directed Pacific halibut fishery by investigating the relationship between hook release methods, injury levels, physiological condition, and survival post-release. Additionally, it will pioneer the use and application of EM to associating fish handling practices with survival.

Charter specifications and bid tender forms are available from IPHC via mail and on our website (www.iphc.int). The IPHC will consider only those vessels and captains having a history of commercial longline fishing. Vessel must have accommodations for three IPHC employees (including women) in addition to an experienced captain and crew, capable of fishing 24 skates per day and handling halibut in adverse weather conditions. The IPHC will evaluate vessels based upon the experience of the captain and crew with longline fishing, the safety features of the vessel, and charter costs. Vessel will provide setline gear and all associated equipment normally required for commercial halibut fishing. The IPHC will replace all fishing gear lost in the course of being put into the sea for fishing.

The IPHC is not restricted as to the nationality of vessels it charters in any region, and will contract according to its own best interests. The lowest or any bid will not necessarily be accepted. Interested owners can contact IPHC for more information on charter specifications and to obtain tender forms. Sealed tenders must be received at the IPHC office in Seattle no later than 12:00 noon (Pacific Daylight Time) on Monday, 25 September 2017. Interested parties should contact Claude Dykstra (ext. 7662), Josep Planas (ext. 7687), or Timothy Loher (ext. 7674) at (206) 634-1838 for further information.

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