

CONFERENCE BOARD REPORT 77th IPHC ANNUAL MEETING

**January 22-25, 2001
Vancouver, BC**

Attendance:

United States	Canada
Alaska Longline Fishermans' Association	Annieville Halibut Association
Aleut Corporation	BC AFC
Area 3B/4A False Pass	BC Halibut Longliners Association
ATKA Fishermen's Association	Canadian Sablefish Association
Bristol Bay Drift Net Association	Cowichan Tribes
Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation	Ditidaht First Nation
Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association	Halibut Advisory Board
Concerned Area M Fishermen	Northern Halibut Producers Association
Deep Sea Fishermen's Union of the Pacific	Northern Trollers Association
Fishing Vessel Owners Association	Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council
Gulf of Alaska Coastal Communities Coalition	Pacific Coast Vessel Owners Guild
Kachemak Bay Fisheries Association	Pacific Halibut Management Association
Klinket-Haida Fishermen's Association	Pacific Longline Fisherman's Association
Kodiak Longliners Association	Sports Fishing Advisory Board
Kodiak Vessel Owners Association	Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation
North Pacific Fisheries Association	Ucluelet First Nation
Norton Sound Economic Development Association	United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union
Petersburg Vessel Owners Association	
St. George Fishermen's Association	
St. Paul Fishermen's Association	
Seafood Producers Co-op	
Tribal Government of St. Paul	
United Fishermen's Marketing Association	
Washington Recreational Fishing Industry Association	
Washington Treaty Tribes	
Westport Charterboat Association	
Yukon Delata Fisheries Development Association	

1. SELECT CHAIRPERSONS – Canada and United States

On the Canadian side, Chris Sporer was selected as chair.
On the United States side, John Bruce was selected as co-chair.

2. REVIEW CONFERENCE BOARD VOTING ROSTER AND APPROVE ANY NEW REPRESENTATIVES

There were 27 accredited organizations from the United States in attendance of which three (3) of these accredited associations were not on the 2000 Conference Board

Membership Roster. There were 17 accredited organizations from Canada in attendance of which five (5) were not on the 2000 Conference Board Membership Roster.

3. REVIEW AREAS

The Conference Board has no recommendations for new or altered IPHC areas.

4. SEASON DATE RECOMENDATIONS FOR ALL AREAS

A. Commercial

The Conference Board voted to extend the 2001 fishing season two weeks on each side (March 1 – November 30).

	Yes	No	Abstain
US	19	2	1
Canada	7	8	1
Total	26	10	2

The Conference Board unanimously voted to request the Commission appoint a sub-committee of IPHC staff and Conference Board members to address the issues surrounding a 12 month commercial halibut fishery. The issues identified include, but are not limited to:

- Acceptable amount of catch in the winter season by IPHC area
- Identification of spawning grounds and times for potential seasons within IPHC areas.
- Present studies that will measure migration of fish between areas, particularly for areas 2A through to 3A.
- Supply cost estimates for such studies
- Allowing bycatch in winter longline fisheries to be retained and sold as IFQ/IVQ fish.
- Report back to the Conference Board at the Interim and Annual meetings.

The Conference Board voted to open part of Alaska (where migratory issues are not a concern) and Area 2B for 12 months as a pilot project for the 2002 fishing season. Two delegates did not support this motion (one from the US and one from Canada).

The Conference Board requested that the Commission staff start an extensive and comprehensive tagging program as soon as possible to determine migratory patterns of halibut between areas that can answer the concerns with a year round commercial fishery. This motion passed unanimously.

B. Sports

No changes were recommended.

5. CATCH LIMIT & REGULATORY PROPOSALS

A. Catch Limit Recommendations

The Conference Board recommends the following harvest levels:

Area 2A	1.14 million lbs. (staff recommendation)
Area 2B	10.8 million lbs. *
Area 2C	8.78 million lbs. (staff recommendation)
Area 3A	21.89 million lbs. (staff recommendation)
Area 3B	18.50 million lbs. (staff recommendation)
Area 4A	5.47 million lbs. **
Area 4B	5.40 million lbs. **
Area 4CDE	5.12 million lbs. **
Total	77.10 million lbs.

* **Area 2B:** The Conference Board is recommending a harvest of an additional 810,000 lbs. in Area 2B above the staff recommendations. The Conference Board took into consideration new information about recreational harvest levels in Area 2 B, specifically a new estimate provided by Fisheries and Oceans Canada and a past error in the calculation of recreational harvests for 2000 catch limits (930,000 lbs. were used in error for recreational harvests in 2000; however, IPHC staff have since recalculated this number at 887,000 lbs.). The vote to increase Area 2B catch limit to 10.8 million lbs. was as follows:

	Yes	No	Abstain
US	17	8	1
Canada	8	5	0
Total	25	13	1

** **Area 4:** The Conference Board recommends an increase in Area 4 above staff recommendations based on the fact staff's recommendations for CEY were all up substantially over 2000 estimates. A copy of the proposal for the increases put forward to the Conference Board is attached. Further, arguments were put forward that CPUEs were up in Area 4. Some concerns were expressed that the increase in quotas for Area 4 is too rapid and caution should be exercised given IPHC staff have raised concerns about reliability of data for Area 4. The vote to increase Area 4 catch limits was as follows:

	Yes	No	Abstain
US	17	5	5
Canada	6	0	8
Total	23	5	13

The Conference Board voted to request the Commission develop the scientific process necessary to permit areas west of 3A (3B, 4A, 4B, 4CDE) to be assessed as individual (“stand alone”) regulatory areas as quickly as possible so that extrapolations from Area 3A are not used as the sole means for the setting of catch limits. The Conference Board also felt this was a priority and should be undertaken even if it requires the re-prioritizing of staff and/or resources. This motion was unanimously supported.

Some quota shareholders in Area 3B are concerned about the rapid upward trend in quota in this area, particularly when increases in catch limits for the past few years are taken into consideration.

B. Staff Proposals for Changes to IPHC Regulations

The Conference Board unanimously accepted all staff proposals for changes to IPHC regulations.

The Conference Board voted to extend the use of transponders for Area 4 clearance requirements for one year and that industry be permitted to provide the transponders if NMFS does not have any units available. This motion was unanimously supported.

6. INDUSTRY PROPOSALS

a) Live Halibut Landings

After a lengthy discussion the Conference Board voted to permit the landings of live halibut. This proposal was addressed as an issue of delivering live fish to the dock.

The vote on this issue was as follows:

	Yes	No	Abstain
US	6	10	9
Canada	9	4	1
Total	15	14	10

b) Filleting Halibut On Board

The Conference Board voted to accept this proposal with the following changes:

“In the ports of landing allow the possession of fillets on board a vessel if the fillets are from legally retained and landed halibut in the same port of landing until 6pm on the day following the landing.”

The Conference Board unanimously supported this proposal.

c) Pre-Trip Check Out

The Conference Board voted unanimously not to support this proposal.

d) Area 3B Check-In

The Conference Board voted not to support this proposal. The vote to support the proposal was as follows:

	Yes	No	Abstain
US	2	16	4
Canada	0	5	7
Total	2	21	11

e) ADF&G Logbooks

The Conference Board voted unanimously to support this proposal.

f) Restrict 2C Commercial Fishery Within 2.5 Nautical Mile Limit

The Conference Board voted unanimously not to support this proposal. This issue should be addressed at the NPFMC through the Local Area Management Plans (LAMPs) program.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

a. Eco-Labeling

The Conference Board agreed eco-labeling could be a benefit to the industry. The Conference Board voted to ask the Commission to look into the benefits of eco-labeling, the Marine Stewardship Council and determine what funding could be available for this initiative from different agencies. In addition, the Conference Board form a subcommittee to start dealing with this issue and also look at organic certification for Pacific halibut. Bob Alverson to be the resource person for this initiative.

One US delegate opposed the motion, all other accredited organizations (Canada and the US) supported the motion.

b. Aquaculture

The Conference Board unanimously approved the following separate motions:

- i. That the IPHC recommend to the governments of Canada and the United States that the development and expansion of halibut aquaculture be stopped until research has been conducted and analysed regarding the impacts of halibut

aquaculture on the environment (i.e. pollution, oxygen depletion, chemical and antibiotic discharge), wild stocks (i.e. pathogen transfer and genetic diversity), and the commercial fishing industry (from biological, health, environmental, and economic impacts).

- ii. That the IPHC shall be the primary organization of the Canadian and United States governments for assessing the various impacts of halibut aquaculture on the wild halibut stocks.
- iii. The IPHC shall not allow Pacific halibut or Pacific halibut eggs to be used in aquaculture in any way. That the IPHC ensure that its resources, expertise, facilities, and staff not be employed or made available in any way to support the advancement of commercial aquaculture.
- iv. That the IPHC recommend to the governments of Canada and the United States that the practice of open netcage aquaculture or penning of wild halibut should be banned due to risks of escapes, pathogen transfer, algae blooms, pollution, and discharge of drugs and chemicals into the marine environment.
- v. That the IPHC recommend to the governments of Canada and the United States that the use of Atlantic halibut for aquaculture purposes be prohibited in the Pacific waters of North America.
- vi. That the IPHC take a position opposing research on and the use of genetically modified organisms to advance aquaculture.
- vii. Commissioners Beamish and Balsiger give the Conference Board a report on the plans of the respective governments for the development of halibut aquaculture in Canada and the US.

c. Halibut Bycatch

The Canadian delegation brought up the issue of halibut bycatch in the U.S. trawl fisheries. The concern is that Canada has adhered to its commitment to reduce trawl bycatch by 50%; however, the US has not lived up to its commitments made at this international forum. It was noted that Area 2C appears to have achieved its bycatch reduction target but questions were raised whether this was due to selective fishing techniques or reduced trawl opportunities. US representatives responded that trawling has been eliminated offshore in Area 2C.

The Canadian delegation also was particularly concerned about increased bycatch levels in Area 2A. Canadian representatives were unclear how bycatch levels in Area 2A could double yet the quota could still increase. The Canadian representatives were also upset about the continued high bycatch levels in Area 4.

Canada summarized their position by saying they have been trying to deal with this issue for 20 years yet they appear to be getting nowhere. Canada has lived up to its

commitments in a bilateral agreement. We appear to be going into a time of low recruitment and it is now even more important to protect juvenile halibut.

The Conference Board passed the following motions:

1. “The Commission write a letter to the U.S. State Department endorsing Individual Bycatch Quotas (IBQ) for halibut for the US trawl fleet as IBQs would allow NPFMC/NMFS to reduce halibut bycatch from happening and permit the US to live up to the commitments made under bilateral agreement with Canada.”

One US delegate opposed the motion, all other accredited organizations (Canada and the US) supported the motion.

It was noted by many Canadian and US representatives that this request has been made in previous years with little or no response.

2. “The Canadian government send a letter to the US government requesting the US government take action to deal with the halibut bycatch issue and live up to commitments made in a bilateral agreement with Canada and allow for the changes necessary to reduce bycatch to the agreed level.”

This motion was passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 pm.