

**Conference Board Report  
80<sup>th</sup> IPHC Annual Meeting  
January 20 – 23, 2004  
Juneau, AK**

<b>United States</b>	<b>Canada</b>
Alaska Longline Fishermen’s Association Alaska Trollers Association Area 3B/4A False Pass Atka Fishermen's Association Bristol Bay Economic Development Corp Bristol Bay Drift Net Association Central Bering Sea Fishermen’s Association Coastal VRF Cordova District Fishermen United Deep Sea Fishermen's Union of the Pacific Fishing Vessel Owners Association Gulf of Alaska Coastal Comm. Dev. Assoc Kodiak Vessel Owners Association Makah Fisheries Management North Pacific Fisheries Association Norton Sound Economic Development Corp Petersburg Vessel Owners Association Quinault Indian Nation St George Fishermen's Association St Paul Fishermen's Association Seafood Producers Coop Sitka Halibut & Blackcod Marketing Association Tribal Government of St. Paul United Fishermen's Marketing Association Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association	Annieville Halibut Association Canadian Sablefish Association Gulf Troller’s Association Halibut Advisory Board HUU-Ay-Aht First Nation Northern Halibut Producers Association Northern Trollers Association Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council Pacific Coast Fishing Vessel Owners Guild Pacific Halibut Management Association Sports Fish Advisory Board Stevenston Halibut Association

**REVIEW CONFERENCE BOARD VOTING ROSTER**

The United States section accredited 25 organizations for participation in the 2004 conference board proceedings.

The Canada section accredited 12 organizations for participation in the 2004 conference board proceedings.

**SELECT CHAIRPERSONS FROM CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES**

On the United States side, Robert Alverson was selected as Chair.

On the Canadian side, Chris Sporer was selected as Co-Chair.

## CONFERENCE BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS TO IPHC

### A. REVIEW AREAS

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

### B. SEASON DATE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL AREAS

The conference board took a vote in the US and Canadian sections and the results are as follows:

There were 20 organizations from the United States that supported a March 1, 2004 opening date with the Quinault Indian Nation objecting and one organization abstaining. The extended season has been debated for three consecutive years and the change to the March 1<sup>st</sup> date is strongly supported by a majority of the US section for marketing reasons.

There were 6 organizations from Canada that supported a March 1, 2004 opening date, 5 organizations were opposed and the Sports Fish Advisory Board abstained. Those Canadian organization opposed to the March 1, 2004 opening date were concerned about the impacts on migrating 2B stocks.

### C. CATCH LIMIT RECOMMENDATIONS - ALL AREAS

The Conference Board's recommendations for 2004 are as follows:

2A	1.48 million pounds <Includes recreational catch>
2B	13.80 million pounds <Includes recreational catch>
2C	11.31 million pounds
3A	26.30 million pounds
3B	15.60 million pounds
4A	4.00 million pounds
4B	3.19 million pounds
4CDE	4.18 million pounds
<b>Total</b>	<b>79.86 million pounds</b>

Conference Board comments:

For areas 2A, 2B, 2C & 3B, the conference board supported the catch limit recommendations presented the morning of 01/21/04.

Area 3A is recommended at 26.3 million pounds and this is calculated at a 50% increase from the 2003 harvest level of 22.63 million and the 2004 set line CEY of 29.98 million. The conference board notes that the commercial CPUE in area 3A has increased consistently over the last 5 years to 526 pounds per skate, and is the highest it has been for the last 18 years. {taken from page 86 of the blue book.} Additionally, the IPHC staff showed a 30% increase in the biomass in area 3A at the 2003 annual meeting and no additional increase in harvest was allowed at that time. Various U.S. representatives indicated there was an inconsistency in the application of the "slow-up" approach to increasing harvest levels in 2003. The U.S. section supported this action 19-1 with 1 abstention. 9 of the Canadian organizations abstained from this vote, 2 were opposed to the increase and 1 organization supported the increase.

The conference board is recommending for area 4A a harvest level that represents 64% of the recommended reduction in harvest level by the IPHC staff. In area 4B, the conference board is recommending a catch limit that represents 72% of the staffs recommended reduction. In area 4CDE, the conference board is recommending a reduction that represents 25% of the staffs recommended reduction.

The harvest levels in these three areas were calculated using page 71 of the blue book, referencing table 2. The conference board used a harvest rate of 22.5% of the 2004 exploitable biomass in each respective area and then subtracted out the total removals as listed in table 2. The staff used a harvest rate of 20% and the conference board recognizes that in areas 4B and 4A that the continuing reduction in CPUE levels warrant reductions. The recommended reductions in these two areas are believed to reflect the actual conditions of the stocks from the perspective of the conference board. In area 4CDE, the blue book indicates continuing strong CPUE numbers in 4D. It is the conference boards opinion that 4C has shown reduced CPUE levels due to oceanographic conditions that have encompassed all of area 4C and this does not reflect the overall condition of 4CDE. The recommendations for these three areas were supported by all U.S. organizations with the exception of one organization that abstained from the vote. The entire Canadian sector abstained from this vote.

## **CONDITIONAL CONSTANT CATCH**

The conference board made the following recommendations:

The conference board does not recommend adopting the CCC policy at this time. The conference board recommends that the staff incorporate the following changes to their CCC Policy and release the results for further public comment.

Additionally, the conference board recommends the following:

- 1.) Update the CCC ceiling recommendations using the new age data, length based selectivity, and sex specific accounting.
- 2.) Develop near-term projections (5-10 years) illustrating the effect of the CCC on the halibut stock and the gain or loss that industry may experience.
- 3.) Clarify the conservation gains of the CCC policy over the current “fast-down, slow-up” policy.
- 4.) Expand the policy to include all areas.
- 5.) Separate the catch ceiling issue from the reduction in harvest rates as biomass nears historic lows. The CCC policy for biomass levels below the threshold may be able to be considered as a separate management action.
- 6.) Calculate in the 2005 blue book both the CEY and CCC harvest proposals. The conference board would like to see the conditional constant catch policy as a stand-alone decision.

The U.S and Canadian sections were unanimous in their support of this motion.

## **D. STAFF AND INDUSTRY PROPOSALS FOR CHANGES TO IPHC REGULATIONS**

### Retention of tagged Halibut

The Conference Board unanimously endorsed the staff’s proposal.

### Permit required to retain halibut for research purposes

The Conference Board unanimously endorsed the staff's proposal.

### Request NMFS to change date-specific regulations

The Conference Board unanimously endorsed the staff's proposal.

### Customary and traditional fishing in Alaska

The conference board was advised that this proposal had been withdrawn.

### Buoy Markings NMFS

The conference board supported the position they took last year with respect to this issue.

Conference Board recommended that Paragraph 4 of the IPHC regulations be amended to reflect that only those buoys used in fishing and deployment of gear be required to be marked (e.g., strike "carried on board" from the regulations).

This change is requested as Enforcement is citing commercial vessels that have buoys that are not used with the gear that is set. Buoys are often used as guards to the boat when docking and these buoys are not usually marked. Additionally, buoys that are picked up on the beach that are not marked are often carried on a transiting vessel. It is the fleet's opinion that only the gear that is set needs to have the proper markings. This resolution was originally put into place during the derby fisheries and is currently obsolete.

### Offal Disposal NMFS

The Conference Board recommended this change with one organization in opposition.

### External Tag change NMFS

The Conference Board unanimously recommends this change.

### Subsistence NMFS

The Conference Board unanimously recommends this change.

### Alaska Seafood Coalition Proposal

The conference board considered a motion to approve a one-year pilot program with a 50K pound maximum cap with the provision that the program be reviewed and discussed at the next IPHC meeting. The U.S. sections were supportive of this on a vote of 16-3. The Canadian section voted 8 in opposition with 4 abstentions. Should this proposal be approved, the conference board requests that it be approved for no more than 1 year with a 50K pound cap and placed on the agenda for the 2005 annual meeting for reconsideration.

### The Boat Company Proposals

These proposals are currently in front of the NPFMC relative to subsistence and other issues. The conference board felt these issues were the purview of the NPFMC and not the IPHC.

#### Adherence to the 32” Size Limit

The conference board felt that action on this was premature as the staff is going to reanalyze length of age data relative to various populations’ dynamics issues at the 2005 annual meeting. No action was taken.

#### Area 4 Vessel Clearance with an observer

The conference board unanimously approved this recommendation.

#### Proposed Dispute Resolution Guidelines

The conference board recommends no action on this. For the past 80 years the IPHC has managed to resolve all issues without the assistance of outside help.

#### Creation of Harvest Area

The conference board unanimously opposed this proposal.

#### Letter from NPFMC regarding area 4C

The conference board endorsed the 4C proposal being analyzed without taking a position on the different alternatives. This is really part of the catch-sharing plan in the Bering Sea and is the responsibility of the NPFMC.

### **E. OTHER CONFERENCE BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Conference board recommends a hook size study on catchability and selectivity. The fleet is using different size hooks while directing their fishery on Halibut. Some of the fleet is using cod hooks and others are using halibut hooks. The conference board believes there needs to be some analytical work reflecting the catchability and selectivity of these different hook sizes.
2. The conference board recommends a winter PIT tagging charter program in order to determine migrational issues between the regulatory areas. This will aid in the discussion in extending the season.
3. The conference board requests that the port samplers as well as personnel on survey vessels attempt to verify whether there is an increasing amount of sea-lice on halibut from DFO statistical area 12.
4. The conference board requests that a letter be sent to the NPFMC to encourage their rationalization process which would hopefully result in a reduction of halibut by-catch.