

DRAFT

## **PROCESSOR ADVISORY GROUP**

January 27-29, 1998

### **Third Annual Meeting Report**

Chair: Brian Bigler; Wards Cove Packing Company

Vice Chair: Blake Tipton; S.M. Seafoods

### **Harvest Allocations**

#### **Area 2A:**

As we have recommended previously, the PAG proposes a 30-day season for area 2A: March 15-April 15; due to chalky halibut. No comments on harvest recommendation (820,000 lb.)

PAG members no longer purchase fish in Area 2A due to incidence of chalky halibut during the July-August fishery. We recommend a late-winter/early Spring fishery.

PAG members have found that chalkiness increases during late season, and one processor claimed 13% chalky for 1997. Neah Bay is particularly problematic for chalkiness during summer fisheries and warrants a small and focused survey.

#### **Total Allocations:**

We agree with staff recommendations for conservation, but recommend an increase to 15% above 1997 allocation rather than a 30% increase. Rationale is to adopt a conservative approach to new setline models recognizing that staff proposals are conservative interpretations, and to provide for banking of harvest to future seasons. Total recommended 1998 allocation should be 76.13 million pounds, pro-rated proportionally among IPHC harvest areas according to staff recommended percentage increases.

### **PAG Industry Proposals**

#### **Sportfish Harvest**

The PAG is unified in the deep concern that the sport harvest in all areas is under-reported and unmonitored; particularly in Canada. The current efforts to account for these removals are not acceptable. Canada has no mechanism for accounting for sport harvest, and efforts by ADF&G could be improved.

We request that the commissioners direct staff to review the analysis of sport harvest and present an assessment of the technique at the next annual meeting.

Further, the Commissioners should request ADF&G and DFO implement a logbook accounting for monitoring sport harvest in all charter vessels.

**Season Dates**  
The IPHC Staff has expressed concern for protecting migrating halibut in Areas 2B and 2C during November. Halibut are known to migrate between these areas at that time of the season, and violates certain assumptions of harvest allocation. Given these staff concerns, and previously expressed concerns of deteriorating weather and the incidence of chalkiness, the PAG continues to recommend the harvest season in all areas be abbreviated by two weeks, to end October 31.

**Chalky Halibut**  
The PAG feels that the IPHC should continue to conduct surveys among processors regarding chalky halibut. There was much discussion as to the validity of the 1997 results. Particular disagreement was focused on results from Area 2A. One season's survey may not adequately address the problem, and we recommend the survey be continued. Anecdotal information implies a much larger, and localized, problem than indicated by survey results (Neah Bay).

**Body Size Limits**  
In the spirit of concern for smaller fish and reduced fecundity/replacement in the population, the PAG requests IPHC staff provide information on the recommendation that fish larger than 120 pounds not be retained. Staff should prepare a report for the 1999 Annual Meeting to address the degree of biological impact of removing the largest members of these populations.

**Alaska Trawl Bycatch**  
PAG processors remain concerned with the lack of bycatch reductions. Canada has taken steps to reduce bycatch with minimal reciprocal reductions by the United States. Bycatch is becoming much more visible in the public arena, and the industry is done harm by perceived inaction.

**Waste/High Grading**  
Although IPHC data do not indicate a problem of high-grading on a macro scale, there remains anecdotal information that this remains a local issue. The PAG recommends that staff examine whether high-grading is a problem on a local scale.

**Setline Surveys**  
The PAG wishes to express support for continuing IPHC setline surveys in all regulatory areas. These surveys will provide field-testing for new assessment models.

**NMFS/Coast Guard Enforcement**  
The PAG recognizes and supports that enforcement is an increasingly important issue. We support the NMFS minimum standard for 20% observed landings, though the percentage of observed landings should be based on poundage rather than numerical landings. We request that NMFS provide the IPHC an annual accounting for observed landings and enforcement efforts. We further recommend that, where possible, the Coast Guard assist NMFS in observing landings in order to attain the 20% minimum standard. When possible, landings should be validated in total.

## WRITTEN PROPOSALS SUBMITTED TO THE IPHC

### **Halibut as Customary & Traditional Cultural Resource of Alaska Natives**

Tlingit and Haida Central Council  
Recommendation: No Comment.

### **Amendment to Fishery Regulations**

False Pass Fisheries Development Association  
Recommendation: No Comment

### **Increased Allocation to Area 2A**

Powder River Tackle Company  
Recommendation: No Comment

### **Allow Retention of Halibut Fillets for Personal Use/Consumption**

Kathy Frost; F/V Pelican  
Recommendation: No Comment; enforcement issue.

### **Future Changes to Current Regulations**

DFO  
Recommendation: This is a "house-keeping" issue and does not require comment at this time.

### **Allow Wales and Little Diomedede Test Fishery**

Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation  
Recommendation: The PAG supports this proposal in principle as a developing fishery.

### **NPFMC Proposals:**

#### **Authorize retention of undersized halibut taken in 4E CDQ fisheries**

Recommendation: No Comment

#### **Authorize a three-year trial period for distribution of halibut bycatch to poor**

Recommendation: The language of this proposal is broad and vague. No explanation is provided for details of proposal origin or regulatory references.

The halibut industry has seen this proposal in several iterations. We strongly reject this proposal on the grounds that the amount of product that could be provided is insignificant in comparison with the overall bycatch of groundfish, but represents an unacceptable risk that improperly handled fish could damage the halibut industry.

Halibut delivered as incidental catch to shore-side processors is sorted and stored unprotected and unprocessed. This catch is subject to severe degradation and poses the strong possibility of being in less than wholesome condition if offered for distribution to the public. The salmon industry suffered enormous harm when a single can of salmon infected with botulism was found in 1981. The halibut industry cannot accept the risk of a similar occurrence.

**Increase 2A Quota**

Oregon Coast Charterboat Association  
Recommendation: No Comment.

**Allow Toksook Bay to increase annual harvest quota**  
Toksook Bay Traditional Council

Recommendation: This is fishing area 4E, where the staff has recommended that the allocation increase. The PAG has no other comment.

**Allow Chukchi Sea/Kotzebue Sound Test Fishery**  
Bering Sea Fishermen's Association

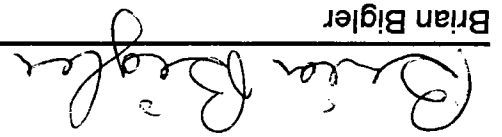
Recommendation: The PAG is uncertain whether the IPHC has formal jurisdiction in this region. The PAG has no other comment.

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

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Atka Pride Seafoods	YKI Fisheries
Icicle Seafoods	Howthpert/Kellihner Fisheries
Kellihner Fish Company	Sitka Sound Seafoods
APIC	Resurrection Bay Seafoods
Wards Cove Packing Co.	S.M. Products Ltd.
Northern Products	HANA
Hoonah Cold Storage	Kake Tribal Fisheries

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Brian Bigler  
Chairman

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These minutes are respectfully submitted to the International Pacific Halibut Commission  
by the Processors Advisory Group: