



National Report: Canada

PREPARED BY: FISHERIES AND OCEANS CANADA (20 DECEMBER 2023 AND 3 JANUARY 2024)

PURPOSE

To provide an overview of the Pacific halibut fisheries in 2023 in the IPHC Convention waters and the national waters of Regulatory Area 2B (Canada, British Columbia).

Contracting party: Canada

Reporting agency: Fisheries and Oceans Canada

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SUMMARY

Each year Fisheries and Oceans Canada provides harvest opportunities to First Nations for food, social and ceremonial (FSC) purposes (or domestic purposes for First Nations with modern treaties), and the commercial and recreational fisheries. First Nations, recreational, and commercial fisheries on the Pacific coast of Canada have long harvested groundfish. Groundfish serve as a source of food, they provide jobs, income, and enjoyment for individuals, businesses, and coastal communities and they play key roles in natural ecosystems.

The B.C. Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for collection and reporting of data and statistics for the agri-food sector. An important part of that mandate is to analyse the impact of various sectors, including fisheries and seafood to the broader provincial economy. B.C. commercially harvests and reports on over 25 wild fisheries including Pacific halibut which is within B.C.'s top most valuable wild fishery commodities.

Indigenous fisheries

In the 1990 Sparrow decision, the Supreme Court of Canada found that where an Indigenous group has an Indigenous right to fish for food, social, and ceremonial (FSC) purposes, it takes priority, after conservation, over other uses of the resource. Fisheries are authorized via a Communal Licence issued by the Department under the Aboriginal Communal Fishing Licences Regulations.

Commercial fisheries

There are seven distinct commercial groundfish sectors: Groundfish trawl, Halibut, Sablefish, Inside Rockfish, Outside Rockfish, Lingcod, and Dogfish fisheries that are managed according to the measures set out in the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP). The management of these sector groups is integrated, with all groups subject to 100% at-sea monitoring and 100% dockside monitoring, individual vessel accountability for all catch (both retained and released), individual transferable quotas (ITQ), and reallocation of these quotas between vessels and fisheries to cover catch of non-directed species. There are approximately 223 active commercial groundfish vessels. Information on licensed vessels is available online at the DFO website: <http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/licence-permis/index-eng.htm>.

Recreational fisheries

A recreational fishery may occur where authorized by a valid Tidal Waters Sport Fishing licence, which is required for the recreational harvest of all species of fish. Approximately 300,000 Tidal Waters Sport Fishing licences are sold each year. Tidal Waters Sport Fishing Licences can be purchased online by using the DFO website:

<http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/rec/licence-permis/application-eng.html>

COMMERCIAL FISHERIES OVERVIEW

Summary

Fisheries and Oceans Canada follows an allocation policy that defines access to the Pacific Halibut Canadian Total Allowable Catch (CTAC) for Canadian commercial, recreational, and food, social, and ceremonial (FSC) fisheries. For 2023, the CTAC was 6,320,000 net pounds (fresh, head-off, dressed weight). The CTAC is composed of the catch limit for regulatory area 2B and an allocation for FSC. In addition to the CTAC, a carryover of quota from previous seasons is allocated to some licences.

Priority access is provided to the CTAC for FSC purposes, while commercial and recreational access is divided between the sectors 85% / 15% respectively. The 2023 Commercial and Recreational catch limit for allocation purposes was 6,135,000 net pounds (table 1).

For allocation purposes, the commercial / recreational total allowable catch (TAC) is equal to the Canadian catch limit, plus "O26" wastage mortality. The TAC is then allocated between the commercial and recreational sectors, and the respective "O26" wastage mortality is removed from the commercial and recreational TACs (table 1). The domestic research allocation (use of fish) is also removed from the commercial sector's allocation prior to establishing the 2023 commercial TAC. As of December 18, 2023, the combined commercial and recreational halibut catch (including XRQ landed catch, commercial landed catch and mortality associated with all released fish in the commercial groundfish fisheries) was 6,167,846 net pounds (table 1).

In 2023, the Canadian commercial Halibut catch totalled 4,862,321 net pounds (table 1). This catch, reported by all hook and line/trap groundfish fisheries in area 2B, includes both landed and released at-sea mortality. Given that non-halibut groundfish fisheries continue throughout the Halibut winter closure, additional released at-sea mortality will continue to be attributed to the 2023 Halibut catch until February 20, 2024, after which released at-sea mortality will be attributed to the 2024 TAC. As such the 2023 commercial catch is current as of December 18, 2023.

The 2024/2025 commercial groundfish fishing season will commence February 21, 2024, at which time the renewed Groundfish Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP) will be available. All commercial groundfish management measures are detailed in the IFMP, which can be requested once available at: <http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/ifmp-eng.html#Groundfish>

Monitoring

First introduced as a pilot program in 2006, the Commercial Groundfish Integration Program (CGIP) was made permanent in January 2010 to manage groundfish fisheries, including Pacific

Halibut, in British Columbia. The objectives of the CGIP are to improve and maintain groundfish harvest sustainability and management through improved catch monitoring and catch accountability. The CGIP implemented individual vessel accountability for all catch, both retained and released, via individual transferable quotas which may be reallocated between licences and fisheries to cover non-directed catch. In addition these management tools are supported by 100% at-sea monitoring (via at-sea observers, or electronic monitoring) and 100% dockside monitoring for all groundfish vessels.

Groundfish hook and line fisheries have almost exclusively utilized electronic monitoring (EM) systems for at-sea monitoring for nearly two decades. In April 2020, electronic monitoring was formally launched on groundfish trawl vessels, when at-sea observers were removed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. EM systems were configured on a vessel-by-vessel basis to ensure that groundfish fish trawls vessels met the 100% at-sea monitoring requirements that were previously completed by at-sea observers. Details regarding the trawl EM system requirements can be found in section 14 of appendix 8 in the [Groundfish Integrated Fisheries Management Plan](#).

During the 2023/24 groundfish fishing season, a pilot program for collecting Halibut length samples in the trawl sector using EM technology was developed in collaboration with industry representatives and Archipelago Marine Research (AMR) in the Option A groundfish trawl fishery. While the pilot is still being tested on select trawl vessels, it shows promise to produce length estimates sufficient for stock assessment purposes and scientific research, a role previously completed by at-sea observers. It is anticipated that fleetwide implementation of the program will occur in early/mid 2024.

Fishery statistics

Table 1. Halibut allocations in Canada as of December 18, 2023. All values in net pounds.

Commercial / recreational TAC for allocation ^A		6,135,000
Commercial allocation	x 85%	
O26 wastage	- 180,000	
Research (use of fish)	- 60,000	
Commercial TAC for allocation purposes		4,974,750
Recreational allocation		X 15%
O26 wastage	- 40,000	
Recreational TAC		880,250
Total commercial catch ^B		4,862,321
2B commercial and recreational catch ^C		6,167,846

A Value does not include underage/overage carried forward from 2022/23 fishing season.

B Catch includes all landed fish from the commercial hook and line sector, as well as the mortality associated with legal-sized released fish in the hook and line sector.

C Catch includes all landed fish from both the commercial and recreational sectors, as well as the mortality associated with legal-sized released fish in the commercial trawl fishery.

Compliance with regulations and enforcement

Please see appendix 1 for a detailed enforcement report for the Canadian Halibut fishery in 2023.

Notable Management Updates

The commercial groundfish fisheries, including the Halibut sector, saw several notable management changes for the 2023 season. These changes include:

- The consultation of updated science advice for the Outside Yelloweye rockfish stock, which is a key non-directed species in the Halibut fishery. Science advice included an updated management procedure (MP), alternative target reference points (TRPs) and a candidate rebuilding target for implementation in the 2024/25 season. The Groundfish Management Unit (GMU) is recommending that Outside Yelloweye are considered to be rebuilt, and are no longer in need of a rebuilding plan, and to implement the transition of it to management through the IFMP in accordance with legislative, regulatory and policy requirements.
- A rollover of the seasonal expansion (November 1, 2023 – April 30, 2024) to the existing 800-line pilot bottom trawl closure was first implemented in 2020. The existing and expanded seasonal closures are at a fishing location in the Queen Charlotte Sound known as the Circle Tow by the groundfish trawl fleet and the 800-line by the Halibut fleet. This expanded seasonal closure is an interim management measure that is intended to limit harvest of spawning aggregations of Arrowtooth Flounder and Halibut. The year-round pilot bottom trawl closure that was implemented in March 2019 continues to be in effect. This expanded seasonal closure will be re-evaluated during the 2024/2025 fishing season.
- The endorsement of the Marine Protected Area (MPA) Network Action Plan (NAP) for the Northern Shelf Bioregion (NSB) by the trilateral partnership of the Government of Canada, the Province of BC and 17 First Nations. Trilateral partners are focused on network coordination and implementation, including establishing governance and development of a network workplan that will focus on monitoring, cumulative impacts, reporting and engagement on Network implementation.

RECREATIONAL FISHERIES OVERVIEW

Summary

The 2023 recreational halibut fishery, with a TAC of 880,250 net pounds (table 2) opened on February 1, 2023, with a daily limit of 2 fish per day. The fishery operated under the 2022 recreational licence until March 31. On April 1, the 2023 licence and management measures entered into effect, with a daily limit of 1 fish per day. Current regulations – including daily catch and possession limits, open and closed areas, size limits and gear restrictions – are available online in the BC Sport Fishing Guide: <http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/rec/index-eng.html>. The 2023 measures included:

- A maximum length of 126 cm head-on length
- A daily limit that is set in regulation, is defined in the conditions of licence and can be varied in-season as required. The possession limit is contingent on the daily limit as defined by the *BC Sports Fishing Regulations*, up to maximum of three per day:
 - If the Daily Limit is one (1) or two (2):
 - the Possession Limit is EITHER of: one (1) halibut measuring from 90 cm to 126 cm head-on length - OR - two (2) halibut measuring under 90 cm head-on length.
 - If the Daily Limit is three (3):

- the Possession Limit is EITHER of: one (1) halibut measuring from 90 cm to 126 cm head-on length – OR - three (3) halibut measuring under 90 cm head-on length.
- NOTE: If in possession of one (1) Halibut 90cm head-on length or longer, you shall not possess any other Halibut
- An annual limit of ten (10) in aggregate, from April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024
- All halibut retained must be recorded on the Tidal Waters Licence plus the date and area from which each halibut is caught and its length
- A mandatory Condition of Licence to report catch when surveyed.

The opening was for all Pacific Fishery Management Areas (PFMAs) with the exception of portions of San Juan River Mouth (portion of Area 20-2). Anglers were not permitted to fish for nor retain halibut in this area.

The DFO and Sport Fishing Advisory Board (SFAB) Halibut Committee met monthly throughout the fishing season to review estimated catches. By June of 2023, it was determined that the recreational sector would be unlikely to reach their TAC under the existing management conditions. Resultantly, DFO, in consultation with SFAB, proceeded with a change to the daily limit of Halibut measuring under 90cm in length – varying the daily limit from one (1) daily to two (2) daily. As the season progressed catch estimates for summer months showed higher than forecasted catch. Catch information indicated that the recreational share of the Total Allowable Catch for halibut was going to be achieved by end of September 2023. The committee voted to close the recreational fishing for halibut under the BC Tidal Waters Sport Fishing Licence at 23:59 hours on September 30, 2023.

Experimental Recreational Halibut Program

The Experimental Recreational Halibut fishery pilot program allows individual anglers as well as guides, charters, lodges, marinas and other fishing experience providers to lease Halibut quota from the commercial fishery and subsequently retain Halibut that is in excess of the regular recreational fisheries daily and possession limits, and maximum size limits. An XRQ licence holder is permitted to fish for and retain Halibut from April 1 – December 31, even if the traditional recreational fishery is closed prior to December 31. Participants in the XRQ fishery must complete logbooks and submit them electronically within seven days of retaining a Halibut. Licence holders are permitted to carry forward uncaught quota (up to 10% or 200 net pounds, whichever is greater) to the subsequent season upon licence issuance, if they are in good standing. Additional details about the XRQ program are available online: <https://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/groundfish-poissons-fond/halibut-fletan/index-eng.html>.

In 2023, 225 XRQ licences were issued and 8,256 net lbs of uncaught quota was carried forward from the previous season. As of December 18, 2023, estimated catch from the XRQ program was 15,790 net lbs (table 2).

Monitoring

Catch monitoring of the recreational fishery in BC is extremely challenging given the large geographic area (numerous remote areas), the diversity of fishing opportunities and the diversity of participants.

Starting in 2015, Tidal Waters Sport Fishing Licences (TWSFL) included Conditions of Licence that make catch reporting mandatory. Specifically, the conditions state that “*The licence holder shall provide accurate information regarding their catch and fishing activities upon request of a Creel Surveyor or an on-line surveyor, authorities designated under s.61(5) of the Fisheries Act*”. Conditions of Licence also included regulations related to possession limits, size limits and an annual limit.

In 2020, DFO began using IPHC’s estimate of Area 2B recreational release mortality. This resulted in an estimate of 40,000 lbs of release mortality for the 2023 season. This discard mortality is accounted for before the 2B recreational catch limit is established and thus is not included in the calculation of catch relative to the recreational catch limit described elsewhere in this report.

DFO has been working with the Sport Fishing Advisory Board on an implementation plan to strengthen recreational fishery monitoring and catch reporting in the Pacific Region. For the 2023 recreational halibut fishery, DFO used estimates from three sources; the iREC survey, logbook and lodge manifest program, and creel surveys.

DFO uses data from traditional catch monitoring (e.g. creel, lodge logbooks and manifests) where available, in priority of iREC survey data. As in previous years, traditional monitoring and catch reporting programs such as logbook, lodge manifest and the creel survey were used during peak months and areas of the recreational fishery. In areas and months where traditional programs were not implemented in 2023, DFO used in-season iREC survey catch estimates. In 2023, approximately 88% of the catch estimate was derived from traditional catch monitoring sources, and 12% from iREC survey estimates.

Biological data received as length is converted to net weight using the following formula developed by the IPHC, approved by the Commission at AM098, and adopted for use in the Canadian fishery beginning in the 2023 season:

$$\text{Net weight} = (7.031 \times 10^{-6}) * \text{length (cm)}^{3.231}$$

Biological data received as round weight is converted to net weight, head off and dressed, using a 75% conversion factor. The conversion to net weight via length instead of round weight is prioritized when both biological metrics are provided.

Final estimates are anticipated to be available by the spring of 2024. Estimated harvest in pieces and net weight by regional areas are noted below.

Fishery statistics

Table 2. Halibut for 2B recreational and the Halibut Experimental Recreational pilot program (XRQ) fisheries as of as of December 18, 2023. All values in net pounds.

Recreational TAC	880,250
Recreational catch ^A	889,881
XRQ TAC ^B	25,241
XRQ catch	15,790 ^C
Recreational and XRQ TAC ^D	905,491
Recreational and XRQ catch ^E	905,671

A This is an in-season catch estimate. The final estimate is anticipated to be available by Spring 2024.

B There is no initial allocation provided to XRQ fishery, though quota may be transferred into the XRQ fishery from commercial Halibut fisheries. As a result the XRQ TAC changes proportionately with the commercial TAC as quota is transferred between fisheries.

C Effective December 18, 2023.

D There is no initial allocation provided to XRQ fishery, though quota may be transferred into the XRQ fishery from commercial Halibut fisheries. As a result the XRQ TAC changes proportionately with the commercial TAC as quota is transferred between fisheries.

E Catch includes all landed fish.

Table 3. Summary of the 2023 Recreational Halibut Catch by Pacific Fishery Management Area (PFMA)

Regional Area	PFMA	Piece Count	Total Net Wt. (net lbs)
Haida Gwaii	1	14,754	150,153
	2	2,912	40,505
North Coast	3	5,743	77,566
	4	9,609	125,180
	5/6	2,604	36,193
Central Coast	7/8/9	3,816	35,156
South Coast	10/11/111	1,365	16,555
	12	1,240	20,483
	13/14	26	384
	15-18/28/29	128	1,592
	19	1,682	30,921
	20	322	4,443
	21/121	4,670	77,760
	23/123	8,483	105,912
	24/124	2,297	36,196
	25/125	1,362	18,523
	26/126	3,971	61,804
27/127	3,453	50,553	
Total Landed in Canada		68,434	889,881 ^A
2023 Recreational TAC			880,250
Estimated Remaining Balance (end of September)			-9,631 ^A
			-1.09%

A This is an in-season catch estimate. The final estimate is anticipated to be available by Spring 2024.



Table 4. Recreational Halibut Monthly Catch Estimates (net weight, lbs) for 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023.

	Net Weight (net lbs)					Cumulative Net Weight (net lbs)					
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Feb	0	0	0	1,448	2,067	0	0	0	1,448	2,067	
March	8,172	3,814	13,466	5,371	4,980	8,172	3,814	13,466	6,818	7,047	
April	10,259	7,111	10,923	12,057	14,695	18,432	10,926	24,389	18,876	21,742	
May	40,988	26,356	55,931	62,298	35,688	59,420	37,282	80,320	81,174	57,430	
June	152,282	74,348	153,858	196,453	172,590	211,702	111,630	234,179	277,627	230,020	
July	336,520	182,655	289,479	314,871	347,899	548,221	294,284	523,657	592,499	577,919	
Aug	207,866	148,422	202,856	275,558	266,064	756,088	442,707	726,513	868,057	843,983	
Sept	53,956	69,419	45,733	53,776	45,898	810,044	512,125	772,246	921,833	889,881	
Oct	834	4,236	1,021	3,654	0	810,878	516,361	773,267	925,486	889,881	
Nov	0	398	2,041	1,009	0	810,878	516,758	775,307	926,496	889,881	
Dec	5,761	2,216	40	2,348	0	816,639	518,974	775,347	928,844	889,881	
Total	816,639	518,974	775,347	928,844	889,881	816,639	518,974	775,347	928,844	889,881	
									2023 Recreational TAC		880,250
									Estimated Total Catch		889,881 ^A
									Estimated Remaining Balance (end of September)		-9,631
											-1.09%

^A This is an in-season catch estimate. The final estimate is anticipated to be available by Spring 2024.



Compliance with regulations and enforcement

Please see appendix 1 for a detailed enforcement report for the Canadian Halibut fishery in 2023.

INDIGENOUS FISHERIES OVERVIEW

Summary

The estimated Food, Social, and Ceremonial (FSC) halibut catch in area 2B is 405,000 net pounds. Since 2009, conditions have been applied to commercial Halibut licences and many communal halibut permits, to improve catch reporting of FSC caught fish on commercial trips. Of the total FSC halibut caught in 2023, approximately 34,431 net pounds were caught in conjunction with commercial fishing trips and were subject to all commercial monitoring requirements, including 100% at-sea and 100% dockside monitoring, an activity known as dual fishing. In addition, First Nations engaging in fishing only for FSC used tools such as catch calendars, some dockside monitoring and phone surveys to estimate their catch. Fisheries and Oceans Canada continues to work with First Nations to improve catch reporting within the FSC fisheries.

In April 2011 the Maa-nulth Final Agreement came into effect. The agreement allocates 26,000 net pounds of FSC Halibut (part of the 405,000 net pounds described above) plus 0.39% of the total CTAC to the Maa-nulth First Nations for FSC purposes (equivalent to 50,648 net pounds in 2023). In 2011 DFO mitigated for the additional treaty allocation through acquisition of 0.47% of the commercial TAC which is set aside for the Maa-nulth First Nation on an annual basis.

In order to advance reconciliation efforts, consultations with Indigenous Peoples and the implementation of Reconciliation Framework Agreements, Treaties and rights-based fisheries as they pertain to groundfish have occurred throughout 2023 and will be ongoing throughout the 2024/25 fishing season.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Commission:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IPHC-2023-AM100-NR01 Rev_1 which provides the Commission with an overview from Fisheries and Oceans Canada of the Pacific halibut fisheries in 2023 in the IPHC Convention waters and the national waters of Canada.

APPENDICES

Appendix I

Fisheries and Oceans Canada 2023 Enforcement Report

Appendix II

Province of British Columbia 2023 Annual Report



FISHERIES AND OCEANS CANADA 2023 IPHC ANNUAL REPORT

PREPARED BY: Fisheries and Oceans Canada (19 December 2023)

APPENDIX 1

Canadian Enforcement Report for IPHC Regulatory Area 2B

(Canada: British Columbia)

2023

CONTACT

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COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT PRIORITIES

Groundfish, including commercial Halibut, enforcement priorities for 2023 are identified in the Groundfish Integrated Fisheries Management Plan. The priorities are identified by the Groundfish Enforcement Coordinator and are as follows:

- Closed area fishing in rockfish conservation areas, sponge reef marine protection areas, marine conservation areas, interim sanctuary zones and other permanent and in-season fishing closures.
- Retention of groundfish caught, retained or possessed without licence authority. Priority will be placed on occurrences where retention for the purpose of sale is indicated;
- Unauthorized commercial/FSC (dual) fishing;
- Non-compliance with 100% at-sea and dockside monitoring programs including hails, electronic monitoring systems, incomplete and inaccurate fishing logs, offloading catch without a dockside observer, removing some catch before dockside observer arrives and preventing dockside observer from checking hold, freezers and any other fish storage areas on vessel.
- False and misleading statements to DFO designated observers
- Vessel Masters not providing all reasonable assistance to DFO designated observers.
- Owner or person in charge or in control of a fishing landing station not providing the dockside observer with such assistance as is reasonably necessary to enable observer to perform their duties. This includes safe access to vessel, fish holds/freezers/other fish storage areas and adequate lighting.
- Releasing rockfish at sea, no rockfish shall be released to sea.
- Persons being on board a commercial fishing vessel without being registered. No person who is sixteen years of age or older shall engage in commercial fishing or be on board a vessel that is being used in commercial fishing unless that person is registered. [Registration information](#) can be found on the website.
- Retention of prohibited species.
- Non-deployment of seabird avoidance gear
- Fish Slips. The vessel master shall ensure that fish slips are submitted not later than thirty days after landing.

Link to Pacific Region Groundfish Integrated Fisheries Management Plan – 2023/2024: [Groundfish 2023 Integrated Fisheries Management Plan summary | Pacific Region | Fisheries and Oceans Canada \(dfo-mpo.gc.ca\)](#)

SUMMARY OF THE HALIBUT FISHERY BY USER GROUPS

Commercial

The 2023 commercial halibut fishery opened at 12:00 hours local time on March 7, 2023 and closed at 12:00 hours local time on December 10, 2023. A total of **139** vessels and **535** fishing trips were recorded during the 2023 commercial halibut fishing season.

Table 1. Commercial Halibut Fishing Trips – Trip Type, Number of Fishing Trips, Number of Vessels and Licence Type – March 7, 2023 to December 10, 2023 [Source: DFO Fishery Operations System (FOS)].

Fishing Trip Type	Number of Fishing Trips	Number of Licences	Licence Type
Commercial	268	94	L
Communal Commercial	88	31	FL
Combo (Halibut/Sablefish)	127	12	K/L
Combo (Halibut/Sablefish)	11	5	FK/FL & L/FK
IPHC	21	3	XL
Experimental	9	3	XL

Table 2: Commercial Halibut Fishery Occurrences – March 7, 2023 to December 15, 2023¹

Occurrence Type (not all are found to be violations)	Number of Occurrences
Fishing in Closed Area	8
Dual Fishing Issues	103 (<i>not included in total</i>)
Time Gaps	8
Scale Related Incidents	1
Regulatory Issues	4
Catch Related Issues	13
Monitoring Equipment Issues	33
Documentation Related Issues	10
Piece Count Issues	3
No Halibut Licence	1
Offload Related Incidents	3
Hold Check Not Completed	4
Undersize Fish	4
Prohibited Species	3
No Seabird Avoidance Gear	5
Vessel/Personal Licences issues	2
Fail to comply with COL	6
Total	108

¹Source: DFO National Enforcement Tracking System (NETS) and Archipelago Marine Research Ltd.(AMR) Portal for Clients

RECREATIONAL

The 2023 recreational halibut fishery opened coast-wide at 00:01 hours February 1, 2023 and closed at 23:59 hours September 30, 2023. Recreational Licences are issued for a fiscal year (April 1 – March 31). A total of **350,548** recreational licences have been issued to date.

Table 3: Recreational Halibut Fishery Occurrences - February 1, 2023 to December 16, 2023²

Number of Occurrences	Action Taken	
31	Investigation Initiated	29
	No Action Warranted	1
	Unable to respond	1

²Source: DFO National Enforcement Tracking System (NETS). Occurrence type unavailable.

Experimental

For halibut, in addition to the regular tidal water sport fishing licence, recreational harvesters may obtain an experimental licence, on a voluntary basis, that will allow the licence holder to lease halibut quota from the commercial sector for use in the recreational fishery. For more information: [Pacific Region Halibut Experimental Recreational Fishery Program Details](#)

The halibut experimental recreational fishery (XRQ) is open from April 1, 2023 to December 31, 2023. There were **225 XRQ** licences issued with 197 of the licences purchasing the minimum 20 pounds of quota. There were 28 XRQ licences issued where fishers did not purchase the minimum required 20 pounds of quota, therefore their licences were not valid.

Commercial, Food, Social and Ceremonial (FSC) and Treaty Fisheries

For all dual fishing (commercial and FSC) halibut trips the vessel master is responsible for following the halibut commercial and/or communal commercial conditions of licence including those specific to dual fishing. All of the fish require 100% monitoring at-sea and 100% monitoring at the dock. In 2023, **49** commercial or communal commercial halibut vessels hailed out for **128** dual fishing trips.

FSC halibut fishing does not have electronic monitoring or the dockside validation requirements.

Table 4: Aboriginal Halibut Fishery Occurrences - January 1, 2023 to December 15, 2023³

Number Of Occurrences	Action Taken	
12	Investigation Initiated	8
	Unable to respond	4

³Source: DFO National Enforcement Tracking System (NETS) Occurrence type unavailable.

FISHERY OFFICER ENFORCEMENT EFFORT SUMMARY

Commercial Halibut

61 vessels checked
 82 people checked
 49.99 hours patrolled by FASE
 17 hours patrolled by MPP
 98 hours patrolled by vehicle

Recreational Halibut

147 vessels checked
 470 people checked
 72.83 hours patrolled by program vessel (local detachment RHIBS)
 44.5 hours patrolled by vehicle

Aboriginal Halibut

11 vessels checked
 18 persons checked
 2 hours patrolled by FASE
 71 hours patrolled by vehicle
 0.75 hours patrolled by program vessel

XRQ Halibut

1 vessel checked
 5 people checked
 0.25 hours patrolled by vehicle

AERIAL SURVEILLANCE PATROL SUMMARY

The Fishery Aerial Surveillance Enforcement (FASE) Detachment patrols Canada's EEZ with a Dash 8 Aircraft. Flight reports, photographs, videos and other data collected from the surveillance flights are readily available to departmental managers and fishery officers through an internet-based flight information system. All vessels encountered via radar are visually identified and documented.

Table 5: 2023, 2022, 2021, 2020, C&P Aerial Surveillance Patrols – number of missions, total hours spent flying, and number of halibut vessels viewed during missions⁴

AERIAL SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM (ASP) ACTIVITY			
<i>Air Patrols</i>	<i>Missions</i>	<i>Hours</i>	<i>Total Halibut Vessels Recorded Per Year</i>
January 1, 2023 – December 15, 2023	101	757.77	455 (426 L, 29 FL)
January 1, 2022 – December 15, 2022	128	833.7	168 (126 L, 42 FL)
January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021	136	806.7	225 (214 L, 11 FL)
January 1, 2020 – November 30, 2020	184	1107.3	259 (245 L, 14 FL)

⁴Source: Provincial Aerospace Limited - Surveillance Information System (SIS)
L = commercial halibut licence FL= communal commercial halibut licence

VIOLATION SUMMARIES

Table 6: 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 & 2023 Violations for Aboriginal, Commercial, Recreational Halibut and Experimental Halibut – Charges Laid, Charges Pending/Under Review, and Tickets/Warnings Issue⁵. **Note:** Not all information is in yet.

VIOLATIONS	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
ABORIGINAL GROUND FISH HALIBUT	14	4	4	7	10
CHARGES LAID					
CHARGES PENDING/UNDER REVIEW	12	2	4		3
TICKET ISSUED	1				
WARNING ISSUED		1			7
DIVERTED (ALTERNATIVE MEASURES)	1	1			
OPTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION				7	
COMMERCIAL GROUND FISH - HALIBUT	4	13	Information not available	23	19
CHARGES LAID	2			0	3

CHARGES PENDING/UNDER REVIEW	2	9		15	
TICKET ISSUED		1		3	9
WARNING ISSUED		3		5	7
RECREATIONAL GROUND FISH - HALIBUT	85	55	52	42	51
CHARGES LAID	6				
CHARGES PENDING/UNDER REVIEW	38	8	8		
TICKET ISSUED	25	22	21	11	29
WARNING ISSUED	16	25	23	31	22
EXPERIMENTAL GROUND FISH - HALIBUT				14	2
CHARGES LAID					
CHARGES PENDING/UNDER REVIEW				1	
TICKETS ISSUED					
WARNING ISSUED				13	2
TOTAL FOR ALL HALIBUT FISHERIES	103	72	56	86	82

⁵Source: DFO Departmental Violations System (DVS) and National Enforcement Tracking System (NETS).



APPENDIX 2: PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

PREPARED BY: British Columbia Ministry Water, Land, and Resource Stewardship

DATE: 19/DEC/2023

CONTRACTING PARTY: CANADA

AGENCY:

The Province of British Columbia represented by the Ministry of Water, Land, and Resource Stewardship.

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FISHERY SECTORS:

All sectors within British Columbia.

IPHC REGULATORY AREA

IPHC Regulatory Area 2B (Canada: British Columbia)

DISCUSSION

The Province of British Columbia (BC) has a long history of involvement with the Pacific halibut fishery and the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC). BC recognizes the importance of Canada working bilaterally with the United States through the Pacific Halibut Treaty as well as the work done by the IPHC to develop and conserve Pacific halibut stocks. The significant history of this Treaty, as one of the first Canadian international agreements and the century of mutual benefit to both countries, as of this year, serves as a tremendous example in global fisheries management. BC commends the efforts made by the Commission to reach agreement again during the 99th session of the IPHC Annual Meetings in 2023. Thousands of jobs rely on this continued cooperation, and it is critical that this history of collaboration continues.

The BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food is responsible for collection and reporting of data and statistics for the agri-food sector. An important part of that mandate is to analyze the impact of various sectors, including fisheries and seafood, to the broader provincial economy. BC commercially harvests and reports on over 25 wild fisheries including Pacific halibut which is

among BC's top three most valuable wild fishery commodities¹. The Pacific halibut fishery supports significant commercial harvests in Canada's waters while providing many fishing and processing jobs and is significantly important to small coastal communities and First Nations across Canada's west coast. The Province licences seafood processors and annually collects data on the volumes and values of the various seafood products. In 2022, the survey showed the processing of 3,440 tonnes (7.58M lbs) of Pacific halibut, which includes some imported halibut processed in BC. The survey also showed landed and wholesale values of \$61.45M and \$97.84M, respectively. In 2022 Pacific halibut accounted for 8% of the wholesale value of all BC's wild fisheries including all groundfish, salmon, and shellfish. In 2022, BC exported \$58.1M worth of halibut products¹. The Province historically conducts a seafood sector employment survey every three years which provides data on jobs, wages, and seafood processing activities. The most recent available data from 2020 show 65 processing facilities that reported processing halibut and generated 210 jobs with an estimated \$11.9M paid in wages².

In addition, the recreational halibut fishery supports the hundreds of fishing lodges, charter companies, and individuals that contribute tremendously to the economies of coastal communities. Beginning in 2019, there were severe restrictions on salmon fishing in BC which will continue in future years. Recent restrictions on salmon fisheries amplifies the importance of the recreational halibut fishery to the recreational sector. BC will continue to provide available data to the IPHC from provincially licensed seafood processors to advance the IPHC economic report which will help highlight the benefits that Pacific halibut provide. As BC's lead agency responsible for fisheries policy, the Ministry of Water, Land and Natural Resources recognizes the importance of understanding the broader socioeconomic impacts and downstream effects of the Pacific halibut fishery and looks forward to continuing to work together.

First Nations are entitled to a Food, Social and Ceremonial (FSC) allocation of the total allowable catch (TAC), and many jobs within the halibut fishery and halibut processing facilities are held by members of First Nations across BC. In the commercial halibut fishery, approximately 23% of licenses are held by BC First Nations. In 2019, BC became the first province in Canada to introduce legislation aimed at adopting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). *The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (known as 'DRIPA') mandates that government bring its laws and policies into harmony with the aims of the declaration. The BC government has set Indigenous reconciliation as a top priority and is actively working to ensure that First Nations are meaningfully included in management of all BC fisheries.

The decisions made annually by the IPHC commissioners greatly impact the livelihood of many coastal BC residents and local economies. With the extensive and costly efforts of fisheries monitoring in place to account for all halibut bycatch, BC expects that all fishers who share access to the Pacific halibut stocks should be held to similar standards of catch accounting. BC fishers need to be assured that the decisions made by IPHC commissioners are based on the best data and science possible by ensuring that all contributing data sources are as thorough and reliable as what they contribute.

BC's halibut fishery is part of the Integrated Groundfish Fishery which effectively manages all groundfish species by coordinating the quotas and bycatch allocations between the various groundfish fisheries including trawl, halibut, sablefish, and rockfish. The Integrated Groundfish Fishery operates with 100 percent monitoring and 100 percent bycatch accountability. This includes 100 percent monitoring while on the fishing grounds, and 100 percent dockside monitoring, with auditing programs in place to compare validated landed catch with at-sea catch records. BC's groundfish fisheries monitoring programs are well established with components of

at-sea observers and electronic monitoring and is regarded as one of the most well-monitored fisheries in the world. These extensive fisheries monitoring programs come at a direct cost to fishermen and license holders as they are entirely funded by industry. BC fishers respect that monitoring programs level the playing field by keeping all fishery participants compliant with the rules which help to ensure sustainable stocks and the future of their industry. The BC Pacific halibut fishery has held Marine Stewardship Council certification since 2009 for being a sustainable, well-managed fishery.

BC remains concerned that bycatch of halibut in Alaska Area 3 remains poorly understood and unaccounted for. The IPHC relies on information supplied by observer programs run by Contracting Party agencies for non-directed commercial discard mortality estimates in most fisheries. In BC, these estimates are reliably provided by the well-established data systems as part of monitoring programs. The Fisheries Data Overview provided by the IPHC for the past several years repeatedly stated that Regulatory Area 3 remains the area where non-directed commercial discard mortality is estimated most poorly, and that the lowest coverage rates are realized for the non-pelagic trawl fishery, which also has the highest likelihood of encountering Pacific halibut. The report outlines several factors contributing to the poor estimation including low coverage, loopholes in trip cancelling, and safety considerations likely result in observed trips not being representative of all trips (observed and unobserved) in many regards (e.g., duration, species composition, etc.)⁴. Low observer coverage in IPHC Regulatory Area 3 leads to increased uncertainty in these non-directed commercial discard mortality estimates and to potential for bias. This section of the IPHC Fisheries Data Overview report has remained consistent despite that as part of the 2019 interim agreement, the Commission agreed to continue the development of a workplan to explore methods for improvement of monitoring requirements in directed and non-directed fisheries, and to examine options in each IPHC Regulatory Area for mitigating the impact of bycatch in one IPHC Regulatory Area on available harvest in other IPHC Regulatory Areas. The lack of confidence in the total number of halibut removals in some regulatory areas continues to create issues in the management of this shared resource.

The large trawl fisheries in Alaska experience high volumes of bycatch that impact many species that move between Canadian and US waters. This includes over 157,500 salmon caught as bycatch in Alaskan fleets in 2023, of which over 35,500 were vulnerable chinook salmon⁴. Incomplete monitoring and Alaskan bycatch of halibut in trawl fisheries impact recruitment of juvenile halibut to the fishery as many halibut caught in industrial trawl nets do not survive release. These trawl fisheries pose significant threat to mortality of juvenile halibut that might otherwise grow and become available to the fishery and other regulatory areas. While the estimated amount of halibut bycatch in area 3 has decreased with the decrease in trawl fisheries activity, the estimates of bycatch mortality remain very poor and the impacts on halibut remain relatively unknown.

The Province of BC supports the development of monitoring standards to ensure accountability of halibut bycatch, and the development of a robust method of accountability for all halibut mortality within each regulatory area including non-directed commercial discard. BC regulatory area 2B maintains an excellent understanding of total halibut removals across its integrated commercial fishery structure through robust monitoring programs that come at a direct cost to fishers. If US regulatory areas will not commit to developing monitoring standards or believe that monitoring is a domestic matter that should not be regulated by the IPHC, then the commission should at least establish minimum data requirements for obtaining accurate estimates of non-directed commercial discard mortality in all areas. The scale and impacts of non-directed commercial discard mortality in area 3 remain unknown due to poor data and

represent a large gap in knowledge within the management of the halibut resource. Canada should receive mitigation for the loss of halibut that would migrate into B.C. waters through an established system of U26 mitigation.

RECOMMENDATION

The Government of British Columbia's position is that the IPHC must exercise its authority to regulate the incidental catch of Pacific Halibut in all regulatory areas by:

1. establishing minimum data requirements for accurate estimates of non-directed commercial discard mortality which would inform monitoring standards; and
2. establishing a robust method of accountability for U26 bycatch mortality.

REFERENCES

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