



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
Alaska Fisheries Science Center
7600 Sand Point Way N.E.
Seattle, Washington 98115-6349

March 22, 2024

LETTER OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT (LOA): 2024-04

David T. Wilson
Executive Director
International Pacific Halibut Commission
2320 W. Commodore Way, STE 300
Seattle WA 98199

Dear Mr. Wilson:

This letter acknowledges that you have submitted a scientific research plan dated March 12, 2024 as specified at 50 CFR 600.745 for the attached group of vessels to conduct the IPHC annual halibut stock assessment longline survey in Alaskan waters.

Vessel Names: F/V Kema Sue, F/V Saint Peter, F/V Vanisle (Canada), F/V Pender Isle

Chief Scientist: Kayla Ualesi, Setline Survey Coordinator

Effective Dates: 24 May – 30 September 2024

Study Area: IPHC regions off Alaska. A map of IPHC survey stations is attached.

The IPHC is conducting this survey as part of a scientific research plan thus is not regulated or bound by regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Thus, the IPHC may retain and sell legal-sized and U32 halibut, Pacific cod and rockfish at the end of each cruise. Other species, such as longnose and big skate and yelloweye rockfish, may also be retained for research purposes. Upon any vessel inspection, the lead scientist and captain must provide documentation and identification of any retained catch.

This LOA is separate and distinct from any permit required by the Marine Mammal Protection Act, Endangered Species Act, or any other applicable law. In order to facilitate identification of your activities as scientific research, a copy of the survey plan and this LOA must be on board each research vessel while conducting survey activities.

Through the issuance of this letter, the AFSC sponsors the IPHC's scientific research activities for purposes of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and compliance with the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). Under the final ESA Section 7 biological opinion (ECO Number: AKRO-2017-00028; dated April 5, 2019) and MMPA five-year letter of authorization (84 FR 54893, October 11, 2019; 84 FR 46788, September 5, 2019), the IPHC has coverage for the taking of ESA-listed species and marine mammals that occur incidental to its scientific research activities. In order for this



incidental take coverage to apply, the IPHC must comply with all terms and conditions, including mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements, in the ESA Section 7 biological opinion and MMPA five-year letter of authorization. IPHC requirements include, among other things, reporting and communication with AFSC and NMFS Alaska Region staff, who are also available to answer questions and assist with compliance. The failure to abide by all terms and conditions, including applicable mitigation, monitoring, and reporting requirements, means the incidental take coverage under the ESA and MMPA lapses. In addition, IPHC staff are encouraged to contact AFSC and NMFS Alaska Region staff regarding any changes to IPHC scientific research activities that may cause effects beyond those already considered in the relevant ESA Section 7 biological opinion and MMPA five-year letter of authorization (such as use of new gear; gear modifications; or changes in survey intensity, timing, or location, including in Cook Inlet).

Generally, activities are deemed scientific research if conducted in accordance with the scientific research plan submitted for this LOA. Not covered by this LOA are any activities found not to fit the definition of scientific research activity or is outside the scope of the scientific research plan submitted for this LOA.

The AFSC requests copies of any cruise report or other publication created resulting from this cruise, including the amount, composition, and disposition of your samples, oceanographic, and benthic substrate data collected. Please send to:

Dr. Robert Foy
Science and Research Director
Alaska Fisheries Science Center
7600 Sand Point Way NE
Seattle, WA 98115

We also request that any incidental take of, or injuries or mortalities to, marine mammals as a result of this research be reported to Anne Marie Eich (annemarie.eich@noaa.gov, 907-586-7172) or Nancy Friday (Nancy.Friday@noaa.gov, 206-526-6266).

For information regarding this LOA, please contact Robert Foy by phone at 907-482-0026; by FAX at 206-526-4004; or by email at Robert.Foy@noaa.gov.

for Foy

Robert Foy Ph.D.
Science and Research Director
Alaska Fisheries Science Center

March 22, 2024

Date

cc:

F/AKC - J. Bengtson
F/AKR – J. Kurland
F/AKR – M. Mackey
F/AKC1 – L. Britt
F/AKC2 - R. Felthoven

F/AKC4 – D. Hanselman
F/EN4 - Juneau, Anchorage, Kodiak, Sitka,
Homer, Dutch Harbor
USCG D17 - Commander (DRE/PPI)
ADF&G - Office of the Commissioner