Report of the 27th Session of the IPHC Research Advisory Board (RAB027)

Seattle, Washington, USA, 17-18 November 2026

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INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION

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ACRONYMS

AM	Annual Meeting
FISS	Fishery-Independent Setline Survey
IPHC	International Pacific Halibut Commission
RAB	Research Advisory Board
SRB	Scientific Review Board
TCEY	Total Constant Exploitation Yield

DEFINITIONS

A set of working definitions is provided in the IPHC Glossary of Terms and abbreviations: https://www.iphc.int/the-commission/glossary-of-terms-and-abbreviations.

HOW TO INTERPRET TERMINOLOGY CONTAINED IN THIS REPORT

This report has been written using the following terms and associated definitions so as to remove ambiguity surrounding how particular paragraphs should be interpreted.

Level 1: **RECOMMENDED**; **RECOMMENDATION; ADOPTED** (formal); **REQUESTED; ENDORSED; ACCEPTED** (informal): A conclusion for an action to be undertaken, by a Contracting Party, a subsidiary (advisory) body of the Commission and/or the IPHC Secretariat.

Level 2: **AGREED**: Any point of discussion from a meeting which the Commission considers to be an agreed course of action covered by its mandate, which has not already been dealt with under Level 1 above; a general point of agreement among delegations/participants of a meeting which does not need to be elevated in the Commission's reporting structure.

Level 3: **NOTED/NOTING**; **CONSIDERED**; **URGED**; **ACKNOWLEDGED**: General terms to be used for consistency. Any point of discussion from a meeting which the Commission considers to be important enough to record in a meeting report for future reference. Any other term may be used to highlight to the reader of an IPHC report, the importance of the relevant paragraph. Other terms may be used but will be considered for explanatory/informational purposes only and shall have no higher rating within the reporting terminology hierarchy than Level 3.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

REPORT OF THE 27TH SESSION OF THE IPHC RESEARCH ADVISORY BOARD (RAB027) 1
TABLE OF CONTENTS 4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 5
1. OPENING OF THE SESSION 6
2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SESSION 6
3. IPHC PROCESS 6
3.1 Update on the actions arising from the 26th Session of the RAB (RAB026) 6
3.2 Outcomes of the 102nd Session of the IPHC Annual Meeting (AM102) 7
4. SEASON OVERVIEW – 2026: RAB MEMBERS 7
5. INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION INTEGRATED RESEARCH AND MONITORING PLAN 7
5.1 Research 7
5.1.1 Description of IPHC Biological and Ecosystem Sciences Research (Core research streams) 7
5.2 Monitoring 8
5.2.1 Fishery-dependent data 8
5.2.2 Fishery-independent data 9
5.2.2.1 2026 FISS season: Design and implementation 9
5.2.2.2 2027-29 FISS design evaluation 9
6. GUIDANCE ON, AND DISCUSSION OF, OTHER POTENTIAL APPLIED RESEARCH PROJECTS 9
7. OTHER BUSINESS 9
7.1 IPHC Meeting Calendar (2027) 9
8. REVIEW OF THE DRAFT AND ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE 26TH SESSION OF THE IPHC RESEARCH ADVISORY BOARD (RAB026) 10
APPENDIX I LIST OF PARTICIPANTS 11
APPENDIX II AGENDA FOR THE 27TH SESSION OF THE IPHC RESEARCH ADVISORY BOARD (RAB027) 13
APPENDIX III LIST OF DOCUMENTS FOR THE 27TH SESSION OF THE IPHC RESEARCH ADVISORY BOARD (RAB027) 14
APPENDIX IV CONSOLIDATED SET OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 27TH SESSION OF THE IPHC RESEARCH ADVISORY BOARD (RAB027) 15

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 27th Session of the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) Research Advisory Board (RAB027) was held in Seattle, Washington, USA, on 17-18 November 2026. A total of twelve (12) members attended the session (10 in-person, 2 online) from the two (2) Contracting Parties, as well as five (5) observers. The meeting was opened by the Chairperson, Dr David T. Wilson, and the Vice-Chairperson Dr Josep Planas.

The following are a subset of the complete recommendations and requests for action from RAB027, which are provided in Appendix IV.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Update on the actions arising from the 26th Session of the RAB (RAB026)

RAB027-Rec.01 (para. 7) The RAB **RECOMMENDED** the IPHC Secretariat expand its efforts to incorporate additional members to the RAB, particular Canadian potential members.

Reproductive assessment of the female Pacific halibut population

RAB027-Rec.02 (para. 21) The RAB **RECOMMENDED** prioritising fecundity estimations to determine the relationship between Pacific halibut female weight and total egg production.

Guidance on, and Discussion of, other Potential Applied Research Projects

RAB027-Rec.03 (para. 33) The RAB **RECOMMENDED** that the IPHC Secretariat continue to collaborate with industry on a range of research projects in the Fishing Technology area, noting the recent successful collaborations involving the catch-protection study and bycatch reduction studies. This could include facilitating the application and further innovation of catch protection devices by the commercial fishery.

RAB027-Rec.04 (para. 34) The RAB **RECOMMENDED** that the IPHC Secretariat continues efforts to collect data on sand flea occurrence during commercial fishing activities and **NOTED** the importance of including information on environmental (e.g. bottom characteristics, temperature) and fishery-related aspects (e.g. soak time).

RAB027-Rec.05 (para. 36) The RAB **RECOMMENDED** that the deployment of water profilers is ensured in annual FISS designs.

REQUESTS

Reproductive assessment of the female Pacific halibut population

RAB027-Req.01 (para. 18) The RAB **REQUESTED** that the IPHC Secretariat investigate possible links between sex ratios and maturity at age of female Pacific halibut.

Guidance on, and Discussion of, other Potential Applied Research Projects

RAB027-Req.02 (para. 32) The RAB **REQUESTED** that the IPHC Secretariat collect information on catch rates during openers of the Pacific halibut directed fishery in IPHC Regulatory Area 2A in relation to previous trawling activities in Pacific halibut fishing grounds and acknowledged uncertainty in accessing the relevant data.

RAB027-Req.03 (para. 35) The RAB **REQUESTED** that the IPHC Secretariat conduct an analysis on registration requirements for rental boats in the recreational fisheries in all IPHC Regulatory Areas, and how these regulations are enforced.

RAB027-Req.04 (para. 37) The RAB **REQUESTED** that the IPHC Secretariat continue investigations on Pacific halibut larval and juvenile stages, including the mapping of essential juvenile habitat throughout IPHC Convention Waters.

RAB027-Req.05 (para. 38) The RAB **REQUESTED** that the IPHC Secretariat continue exploring research avenues involving size-at-age and possible environmental drivers.

The full recording of the RAB027 is available to the following link: IPHC-2026-RAB027-WEBINAR

1. OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The 27th Session of the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) Research Advisory Board (RAB027) was held in Seattle, Washington, USA, on 17-18 November 2026. A total of twelve (12) members attended the session (10 in-person, 2 online) from the two (2) Contracting Parties, as well as five (5) observers. Apologies were received from Jason Roberts. The list of participants is provided at Appendix I. The meeting was opened by the Chairperson, Dr David T. Wilson, and Vice-Chairperson, Dr Josep Planas.

2. The RAB **RECALLED** its mandate as stated in the IPHC Rules of Procedure (2025) as follows:

Appendix VII, I.1-2:

"1. The Research Advisory Board (RAB) is composed of members of the Pacific halibut community that shall:

a. Suggest research topics to be considered for incorporation in the IPHC integrated research and monitoring activities, as well as to comment upon operational and implementation considerations of those research and monitoring activities;

b. provide the IPHC Secretariat staff (who participate in Sessions of the RAB as Observers) with direct input and advice from industry on current and planned research activities contemplated for inclusion in the IPHC 5-Year program of integrated research and monitoring.

2. The RAB may also make recommendations to the Scientific Review Board concerning options for new suggest research topics, and current and planned research activities, and their prioritization for its consideration."

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SESSION

3. The RAB **ADOPTED** the Agenda as provided at Appendix II. The documents provided to the RAB are listed in Appendix III.

3. IPHC PROCESS

3.1 Update on the actions arising from the 26th Session of the RAB (RAB026)

4. The RAB **NOTED** paper IPHC-2026-RAB027-03, which provided an opportunity to consider the progress made during the inter-sessional period, in relation to the recommendations and requests of the 26th Session of the IPHC Research Advisory Board (RAB026).

5. The RAB **NOTED** that two (2) of the actions from RAB026 remained in progress or two (2) pending, and will be reported on at RAB028 in 2027.

RAB026-Rec.01 (para. 18) *The RAB **RECOMMENDED** prioritising fecundity estimations to determine the relationship between Pacific halibut female weight and total egg production.*

RAB026-Req.04 (para. 31) *The RAB **REQUESTED** that the IPHC Secretariat continue investigations on Pacific halibut juvenile stages, including the mapping of juvenile habitat throughout IPHC Convention Waters.*

RAB026-Req.05 (para. 32) *The RAB **REQUESTED** that the IPHC Secretariat collect information on catch rates during openers of the Pacific halibut directed fishery in IPHC Regulatory Area 2A in relation to previous.*

RAB026-Req.07 (para. 36) *The RAB **REQUESTED** the consideration of an investigation of a floor coastwide mortality limit (e.g. a minimum Total Constant Exploitation Yield (TCEY)) be conducted as part of the MSE process to understand potential risks to the Pacific halibut stock and fisheries for this type of management procedure.*

6. The RAB **AGREED** to consider the actions arising from RAB026 and revise as necessary, and for these to be combined with any new actions arising from RAB027.

7. The RAB **RECOMMENDED** the IPHC Secretariat expand its efforts to incorporate additional members to the RAB, particular Canadian potential members.

3.2 Outcomes of the 102nd Session of the IPHC Annual Meeting (AM102)

8. The RAB **NOTED** paper IPHC-2026-RAB027-04, that provided the outcomes of the 102nd Session of the IPHC Annual Meeting (AM102) relevant to the mandate of the RAB.

4. SEASON OVERVIEW – 2026: RAB MEMBERS

9. The RAB **NOTED** the following key 2026 fishery updates provided by RAB members:
   a) Whale depredation (primarily Orcas and Sperm whales) remained an issue coastwide;
   b) Dogfish were a continued problem in 2026, with high catches reported in IPHC Regulatory Areas 2B, 2C, and 3A;
   c) The discrepancy observed between low dogfish abundance estimates in IPHC Regulatory Area 2B and actual high fishery encounters remains a source of concern;
   d) Sand fleas were anecdotally reported as less of a problem in 2026, compared to 2025 in most areas. Improved reporting coastwide remained important to better understand the issue long-term;
   e) Fish prices were substantially higher (20-year high) in 2026 compared to 2024 and 2025, and remained so for the entire fishing period;
   f) Small fish (U32 inches) were being seen in high numbers in most IPHC Regulatory Areas and big fish were being seen in lower numbers;
   g) Pacific halibut fishing was generally poor and geographically variable in most IPHC Regulatory Areas compared to previous years;
   h) High yelloweye rockfish bycatch was a source of concern coastwide;
   i) Lower levels of incidental catch of Pacific halibut by the salmon troll fishery were observed in IPHC Regulatory Area 2A, as attributed to salmon species moving higher in the water column.

5. INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION INTEGRATED RESEARCH AND MONITORING PLAN

10. The RAB **NOTED** paper IPHC-2026-RAB027-05, that provided the RAB with the draft IPHC Integrated Research and Monitoring Plan.

11. The RAB **NOTED** the presentation by Mr William Le from the University of Washington, that provided an update on a project that aims to describe the RAB and MSAB processes and the role of participants, to produce a synthesis of participant perspectives on benefits and costs of participation, strength of the process, and areas for improvement, and, finally, to identify opportunities for improving collaborative research to support Pacific halibut fisheries. The main objective of this project is to determine how successful the collaboration between fishers and scientists is for the participants. Mr Le also called for additional participation from RAB members

5.1 Research

5.1.1 Description of IPHC Biological and Ecosystem Sciences Research (Core research streams)

12. The RAB **NOTED** paper IPHC-2026-RAB027-06, that provided a description of the biological and ecosystem science research projects conducted and planned by the IPHC Secretariat and contemplated within the Integrated Research and Monitoring Plan.

13. The RAB **NOTED** that the main objectives of the Biological and Ecosystem Science Research at the IPHC are to:
   a) identify and assess critical knowledge gaps in the biology of the Pacific halibut;
   b) understand the influence of environmental conditions; and
   c) apply the resulting knowledge to reduce uncertainty in current stock assessment models.

Delineating the genetic population structure of Pacific halibut throughout Convention Waters

14. The RAB **NOTED** paper IPHC-2026-RAB027-06, that described the outcomes of a recent study completed by the IPHC Secretariat on delineating Pacific halibut population structure and that reported on the lack of discrete genetic groups within IPHC Convention Waters, supporting current IPHC assessment practices that model the Pacific halibut population as a single coastwide stock.

Development of a genetic-based method for estimating age of Pacific halibut

15. The RAB **NOTED** paper IPHC-2026-RAB027-06, that provided a description of the studies designed to develop a genetic-based method of aging Pacific halibut using fin clips, non-lethal genetic samples already used for genetic sexing and genetic population analyses.

Reproductive assessment of the female Pacific halibut population

16. The RAB **NOTED** paper IPHC-2026-RAB027-06, that provided a description of the studies designed to update maturity schedules and estimate fecundity in female Pacific halibut.

17. The RAB **NOTED** the comparative analysis of coastwide histological (microscopic) and visual (macroscopic) maturity ogives generated from data collected in the FISS during the period 2022-2024, and the development of a calibration that was applied to re-estimate (i.e. calibrate) historical visual maturity data collected in the FISS during the period 2002-2024. The RAB also **NOTED** the shift in the age at 50% maturity (A_{50}) during the period before and after 2016, from a gradual increase in A_{50} values (i.e. increase in the age at 50% maturity) until 2016 and a subsequent sharp decrease in A_{50} values (i.e. decrease in the age at 50% maturity) until approximately 2022.

18. The RAB **REQUESTED** that the IPHC Secretariat investigate possible links between sex ratios and maturity at age of female Pacific halibut.

19. The RAB **NOTED** the revised calibrated coastwide maturity ogive with a A_{50} value of 11.0 years of age that has replaced the previous maturity ogive since the 2025 stock assessment.

20. The RAB **NOTED** the collection of ovarian samples for fecundity during the period of 2023-2026 over a broad range of female sizes and ages, and the choice of the auto-diametric method for fecundity estimations.

21. The RAB **RECOMMENDED** prioritising fecundity estimations to determine the relationship between Pacific halibut female weight and total egg production.

Discard mortality rates of Pacific halibut in the charter recreational fishery

22. The RAB **NOTED** paper IPHC-2026-RAB027-06, that provided a description of the completed results of the study designed to provide direct estimates of discard mortality in the Pacific halibut charter recreational fishery that could be used to update currently applied estimates in management.

Whale depredation mitigation strategies involving longline catch protection devices

23. The RAB **NOTED** paper IPHC-2026-RAB027-06, that provided a description of a study designed to evaluate the efficacy of a catch protection shuttle device to reduce killer whale depredation in the Pacific halibut longline fishery.

24. The RAB **NOTED** the preliminary results from this study, indicating that the shuttle can be safely deployed and retrieved by fishing vessels with a picking boom, and that it has good retention of Pacific halibut.

5.2 Monitoring

5.2.1 Fishery-dependent data

25. The RAB **NOTED** paper IPHC-2026-RAB027-INF01, that provided an update on work aimed at addressing the request IPHC-2025-RAB026-Req.02 (para. 29):

> "*The RAB REQUESTED that the IPHC Secretariat set up efforts to increase documentation of sand flea occurrence during commercial fishing activities by encouraging fishing vessels to report*

such occurrences in logbooks, and to also relay this information to IPHC Fisheries Data Specialists (Field)."

5.2.2 Fishery-independent data

5.2.2.1 2026 FISS season: Design and implementation

26. The RAB **NOTED** paper IPHC-2026-RAB027-07 Rev_1, that provided an overview of the IPHC Fishery-Independent Setline Survey (FISS) design and implementation in 2026.

27. The RAB **DISCUSSED** the 2026 FISS activities and fish prices.

5.2.2.2 2027-29 FISS design evaluation

28. The RAB **NOTED** paper IPHC-2026-RAB027-08, that provided proposed designs for the IPHC's Fishery-Independent Setline Survey (FISS) for the 2027-29 period, and an evaluation of those designs.

29. The RAB **SUPPORTED** an annual FISS design with sufficient coverage across all Biological Regions, and that the IPHC Secretariat continue its efforts to obtain supplementary funding for FISS activities that would support this goal, including through direct increases in Contracting Party contributions.

6. GUIDANCE ON, AND DISCUSSION OF, OTHER POTENTIAL APPLIED RESEARCH PROJECTS

30. The RAB **NOTED** the use of chum salmon as standardised bait in the FISS and discussed possible alternatives for bait (e.g. other salmon species, hatchery discards, etc.).

31. The RAB **NOTED** the importance of catch reporting from the various recreational Pacific halibut fishery sectors and looks forward to improved data collection efforts by ADF&G expected in 2028.

32. The RAB **REQUESTED** that the IPHC Secretariat collect information on catch rates during openers of the Pacific halibut directed fishery in IPHC Regulatory Area 2A in relation to previous trawling activities in Pacific halibut fishing grounds and acknowledged uncertainty in accessing the relevant data.

33. The RAB **RECOMMENDED** that the IPHC Secretariat continue to collaborate with industry on a range of research projects in the Fishing Technology area, noting the recent successful collaborations involving the catch-protection study and bycatch reduction studies. This could include facilitating the application and further innovation of catch protection devices by the commercial fishery.

34. The RAB **RECOMMENDED** that the IPHC Secretariat continues efforts to collect data on sand flea occurrence during commercial fishing activities and **NOTED** the importance of including information on environmental (e.g. bottom characteristics, temperature) and fishery-related aspects (e.g. soak time).

35. The RAB **REQUESTED** that the IPHC Secretariat conduct an analysis on registration requirements for rental boats in the recreational fisheries in all IPHC Regulatory Areas, and how these regulations are enforced.

36. The RAB **RECOMMENDED** that the deployment of water profilers is ensured in annual FISS designs.

37. The RAB **REQUESTED** that the IPHC Secretariat continue investigations on Pacific halibut larval and juvenile stages, including the mapping of essential juvenile habitat throughout IPHC Convention Waters.

38. The RAB **REQUESTED** that the IPHC Secretariat continue exploring research avenues involving size-at-age and possible environmental drivers.

7. OTHER BUSINESS

7.1 IPHC Meeting Calendar (2027)

39. The RAB **AGREED** that the placement of the RAB meeting in November, before the Pacific Marine Expo and prior to the Interim Meeting, over 1.5 days is optimal and to continue this meeting format moving forward.

8. REVIEW OF THE DRAFT AND ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE 26TH SESSION OF THE IPHC RESEARCH ADVISORY BOARD (RAB026)

40. The Report of the 27th Session of the Research Advisory Board (RAB027) (IPHC-2026-RAB027-R) was **ADOPTED** on 18 November 2026, including the consolidated set of recommendations and requests arising from RAB027 provided at Appendix IV.

APPENDIX I
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

RAB Officers

Chairperson	Vice-Chairperson
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APPENDIX II
AGENDA FOR THE 27TH SESSION OF THE IPHC RESEARCH ADVISORY BOARD (RAB027)

Date: 17-18 November 2026
Location: Seattle, Washington, USA
Venue: IPHC HQ office
Time (PST): 17th: 09:00-16:00; 18th: 09:00-12:00
Chairperson: Dr David T. Wilson (Executive Director)
Vice-Chairperson: Dr Josep V. Planas (Biological & Ecosystem Sciences Branch Manager)

1. **OPENING OF THE SESSION** (Chairperson)
2. **ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SESSION** (Chairperson)
3. **IPHC PROCESS** (Chairperson)
   - **3.1** Update on the actions arising from the 26th Session of the RAB (RAB026)
   - **3.2** Outcomes of the 102nd Session of the IPHC Annual Meeting (AM102)
4. **SEASON OVERVIEW – 2026: RAB MEMBERS**
5. **INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION INTEGRATED RESEARCH AND MONITORING PLAN**
   - **5.1 RESEARCH**
     - **5.1.1 Biology and ecology**
       - Description of IPHC Biological and Ecosystem Sciences Research (Core research streams)
   - **5.2 MONITORING**
     - **5.2.1 Fishery-dependent data**
     - **5.2.2 Fishery-independent data**
       - 2026 FISS season: Design and implementation (K. Ualesi)
       - IPHC Fishery-Independent Setline Survey (FISS)
         - 2027-29 FISS design evaluation (R. Webster)
6. **GUIDANCE ON, AND DISCUSSION OF, OTHER POTENTIAL APPLIED RESEARCH PROJECTS** (Chairperson & Vice-Chairperson)
7. **OTHER BUSINESS**
8. **REVIEW OF THE DRAFT AND ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE 27th SESSION OF THE IPHC RESEARCH ADVISORY BOARD (RAB027)** (Chairperson)

APPENDIX III
LIST OF DOCUMENTS FOR THE 27TH SESSION OF THE IPHC RESEARCH ADVISORY BOARD (RAB027)

Document	Title	Availability
IPHC-2026-RAB027-01	Agenda & Schedule for the 27th Session of the IPHC Research Advisory Board (RAB027)	✓ 16 Dec 2025 ✓ 17 Oct 2026
IPHC-2026-RAB027-02	List of Documents for the 27th Session of the IPHC Research Advisory Board (RAB027)	✓ 16 Dec 2025 ✓ 23 Oct 2026 ✓ 5 Nov 2026
IPHC-2026-RAB027-03	Update on the actions arising from the 26th Session of the RAB (RAB026) (D. Wilson & J. Planas)	✓ 17 Oct 2026
IPHC-2026-RAB027-04	Outcomes of the 102nd Session of the IPHC Annual Meeting (AM102) (D. Wilson)	✓ 16 Oct 2026
IPHC-2026-RAB027-05	International Pacific Halibut Commission Integrated Research and Monitoring Plan (D. Wilson)	✓ 16 Oct 2026
IPHC-2026-RAB027-06	Report on current and future biological and ecosystem science research activities (J. Planas, C. Dykstra, A. Jasonowicz, C. Jones)	✓ 14 Oct 2026
IPHC-2026-RAB027-07 Rev_1	IPHC Fishery-independent setline survey (FISS) design and implementation in 2026 (K. Ualesi, T. Jack, K. Coll, C. Skalley)	✓ 16 Oct 2026 ✓ 5 Nov 2026
IPHC-2026-RAB027-08	2027-29 FISS designs (R. Webster, I. Stewart, K. Ualesi, & D. Wilson)	✓ 17 Oct 2026
Information papers		
IPHC-2026-RAB027-INF01	Preliminary assessment of sand flea prevalence in Pacific halibut commercial fisheries (B. Hutniczak)	✓ 23 Oct 2026

APPENDIX IV
CONSOLIDATED SET OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 27TH SESSION OF THE IPHC RESEARCH ADVISORY BOARD (RAB027)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Update on the actions arising from the 26th Session of the RAB (RAB026)

RAB027-Rec.01 (para. 7) The RAB **RECOMMENDED** the IPHC Secretariat expand its efforts to incorporate additional members to the RAB, particular Canadian potential members.

Reproductive assessment of the female Pacific halibut population

RAB027-Rec.02 (para. 21) The RAB **RECOMMENDED** prioritising fecundity estimations to determine the relationship between Pacific halibut female weight and total egg production.

Guidance on, and Discussion of, other Potential Applied Research Projects

RAB027-Rec.03 (para. 33) The RAB **RECOMMENDED** that the IPHC Secretariat continue to collaborate with industry on a range of research projects in the Fishing Technology area, noting the recent successful collaborations involving the catch-protection study and bycatch reduction studies. This could include facilitating the application and further innovation of catch protection devices by the commercial fishery.

RAB027-Rec.04 (para. 34) The RAB **RECOMMENDED** that the IPHC Secretariat continues efforts to collect data on sand flea occurrence during commercial fishing activities and **NOTED** the importance of including information on environmental (e.g. bottom characteristics, temperature) and fishery-related aspects (e.g. soak time).

RAB027-Rec.05 (para. 36) The RAB **RECOMMENDED** that the deployment of water profilers is ensured in annual FISS designs.

REQUESTS

Reproductive assessment of the female Pacific halibut population

RAB027-Req.01 (para. 18) The RAB **REQUESTED** that the IPHC Secretariat investigate possible links between sex ratios and maturity at age of female Pacific halibut.

Guidance on, and Discussion of, other Potential Applied Research Projects

RAB027-Req.02 (para. 32) The RAB **REQUESTED** that the IPHC Secretariat collect information on catch rates during openers of the Pacific halibut directed fishery in IPHC Regulatory Area 2A in relation to previous trawling activities in Pacific halibut fishing grounds and acknowledged uncertainty in accessing the relevant data.

RAB027-Req.03 (para. 35) The RAB **REQUESTED** that the IPHC Secretariat conduct an analysis on registration requirements for rental boats in the recreational fisheries in all IPHC Regulatory Areas, and how these regulations are enforced.

RAB027-Req.04 (para. 37) The RAB **REQUESTED** that the IPHC Secretariat continue investigations on Pacific halibut larval and juvenile stages, including the mapping of essential juvenile habitat throughout IPHC Convention Waters.

RAB027-Req.05 (para. 38) The RAB **REQUESTED** that the IPHC Secretariat continue exploring research avenues involving size-at-age and possible environmental drivers.