



Report of the IPHC Secretariat (2017)

PREPARED BY: IPHC SECRETARIAT (21 DECEMBER 2017)

PURPOSE

To provide the Commission with an update on the activities of the IPHC Secretariat in 2017.

STAFFING CHANGES DURING 2017

| FT Departures | Type | Hire Date | Departure Date | Position Title | Status |
|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Melissa Knapp | Full time regular | 1 June 2001 | 15 January 2017 | Administrative Coordinator | Retired |
| Kelly McElligott | Full time regular | 17 January 2017 | 27 December 2017 | Data transcriber | Departed |
| FT Arrivals | Type | Hire Date | Departure Date | | |
| Kelly Chapman | Full time regular | 1 January 2017 | - | Front office assistant | Active |
| Kelly McElligott | Full time regular | 17 January 2017 | - | Data transcriber | Active |
| Temporary positions | | | | | |
| Collin Winkowski | Temporary full time | 20 March 2017 | 30 September 2017 | Survey assistant | Contract ended |
| Niall O'Brien | Temporary full time | 16 May 2017 | 14 August 2017 | Intern | 3 month Contract ended |

MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION AND SUBSIDIARY BODIES DURING 2017

| Meeting | 2017 | | | |
|--|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| | No. | Original Date | Changes | Location |
| Annual Meeting (AM) | 93rd | 23-27 Jan | - | Victoria, Canada |
| Conference Board (CB) | 87 th | 24-25 Jan | - | Victoria, Canada |
| Processor Advisory Board (PAB) | 22 nd | 24-25 Jan | - | Victoria, Canada |
| Finance and Administration Committee (FAC) | -- | 23, 26 Jan, during AM | - | Victoria, Canada |
| Scientific Review Board (SRB) | 10 th | 20-21 June | 3d; 14-16 June | Seattle, USA |
| | 11 th | 26-28 Sept | - | Seattle, USA |
| Management Strategy Advisory Board (MSAB) | 9 th | 9-11 May | - | Seattle, USA |
| | 10 th | 25-26 Oct | 4d; 23-26 Oct | Seattle, USA |
| Scholarship Committee (SC) | (no meeting in 2017) | | | |
| Work Meeting (WM) | -- | 20-21 Sept | - | Bellingham, USA |
| Research Advisory Board (RAB) | 19 th | 15 Nov | 28 Feb 2018 | Seattle, USA |
| Interim Meeting (IM) | 93rd | 28-29 Nov | - | Seattle, USA |

IPHC FISHERY REGULATIONS (2017)

In 2017, the Commission adopted **four (4)** fishery regulations in accordance with Article III of the Convention, as follows:

1) **IPHC Pacific halibut fishery regulations, Section 13. Size Limits**

IPHC-2017-AM093-R, para. 48: *The Commission **ADOPTED** a proposal aimed at eliminating a recently identified bias in Pacific halibut removal estimates (net weight), by requiring all commercial Pacific halibut to be landed and weighed with their heads attached for data reporting purposes and to be subject to the 32-inch minimum size limit (IPHC-2017-AM093-PropA), which supersedes Section 13 of the IPHC Pacific halibut fishery regulations. An exemption was agreed upon whereby vessels that freeze Pacific halibut at sea may possess and land their frozen fish with the head removed subject to the 24-inch minimum size limit if possessed or landed with the head removed (Appendix VI).*

2) **IPHC Pacific halibut fishery regulations, Section 18. Fishing Multiple Regulatory Areas**

IPHC-2017-AM093-R, para. 54: *The Commission **ADOPTED** a proposal aimed at harmonising IPHC and NMFS regulations regarding fishing in multiple regulatory areas in Alaska (Appendix VII), which supersedes Section 18 of the IPHC Pacific halibut fishery regulations.*

3) **2017 Catch limits**

IPHC-2017-AM093-R, para. 71: *The Commission **ADOPTED** catch limits for 2017 as provided at Appendix VIII.*

4) **Fishing periods**

IPHC-2017-AM093-R, para. 72: *The Commission **ADOPTED** fishing periods for 2017 as provided at Appendix IX, thereby superseding Section 8 of the IPHC halibut fishery regulations.*

INTERACTIONS WITH CONTRACTING PARTIES

CANADA

- a) Identification of concerns with the current process of estimating Pacific halibut biological distribution

The IPHC Secretariat continues to hear concern from Canadian representatives regarding the IPHC's current understanding of Pacific halibut biological distribution. Commentary indicates that the current methodology is underrepresenting the amount of the coastwide Pacific halibut stock

that is within Canadian waters. Reports of large Pacific halibut and high catch rates are thought to further support this claim. The IPHC is expanding the fisheries-independent setline survey (FISS) in Canadian waters in the summer of 2018. We are confident that this expansion will increase our collective knowledge of Pacific halibut biological distribution, as it will cover a greater range (deeper and shallower depths) than the current setline survey design. The setline survey expansion comes at a challenging time as DFO is managing fishery impact restrictions in areas where the setline survey is proposed. The IPHC Secretariat is working closely with DFO staff to alleviate the impact of these fishery restrictions on the current IPHC fisheries-independent setline survey stations and the stations necessary for the expansion.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (NPFMC)

a) Joint meetings

A one-day Joint Session of IPHC Commissioners and NPFMC Council Members was held on 7 June 2017. The session was held as part of the Council process. The majority of Council Members were supportive of an periodic Joint Session, held in conjunction with one of the bodies' meetings to reduce travel obligations. However, it was not agreed to make this a formal standing body.

b) Abundance-Based Management of Pacific halibut bycatch

The Council's Abundance-Based Management Working Group (ABMWG) developed a [discussion paper](#) describing indices and potential alternatives for abundance-based management (ABM) of Pacific halibut in the Bering Sea. The discussion paper was presented to the NPFMC in April of 2017. The Council felt that there was not enough information to develop specific alternatives for the ABM working group to analyze, and they put forward a [motion](#) providing guidance for further developments to be provided at the October 2017 NPFMC meeting.

Further clarification was received at the June NPFMC meeting after a summary of the ABM progress and an outline of the discussion paper for October was presented at the Joint IPHC/NPFMC meeting in Juneau, AK and to the Council. This [motion](#) provided further direction to the ABMWG who jointly developed the [ABM discussion paper](#) with Council staff for the October NPFMC meeting in Anchorage, AK. The Commission provided a [comment letter](#) for the October meeting based on the Commissioners' discussion at the Work Meeting.

At the October meeting, the NPFMC reviewed the discussion paper and concurred with the ABMWG and Scientific and Statistical Committee (SSC) recommendations to move forward with two indices: the estimates of Pacific halibut biomass from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Eastern Bering Sea annual shelf trawl survey, and from the annual IPHC fishery-independent setline survey in IPHC Regulatory Areas 4A/B/C/D/E. The NPFMC provided further direction on explicit elements and options to consider while developing control rules, including the shape of the control rule, a range of starting points for Prohibited Species Catch (PSC/bycatch) limits (2,118 mt to 3,867 mt), and the maximum and minimum bycatch (a.k.a. PSC) limits under consideration.

c) **Discard Mortality Rates of Pacific halibut bycatch**

The NPFMC's discard mortality rate (DMR) working group presented an update to the Groundfish Plan Teams in September 2017 on DMR calculations for use in 2018. This update summarised the DMRs estimated from data collected during the 2016 fisheries in Alaska and compared those results with DMRs applied for use in management during 2017. In addition, several minor issues with the method for calculating the 2017 DMRs for fisheries with low sampling rates or atypical fishing behaviour were reconciled. The Groundfish Plan Team recommended adopting these updates with no further changes, and the Council adopted the DMRs for 2018 and 2019.

Pacific Fisheries Management Council (PFMC)

a) Regulatory Area 2A Catch Sharing Plans / IPHC data

The IPHC Secretariat collaborated with NMFS and State agencies to conduct in-season management of the various fisheries identified in the IPHC Regulatory Area 2A Catch Sharing Plan. Date and possession restrictions were adjusted in season among the various fisheries to meet identified fishery needs while attaining and remaining within the applicable catch limit. Estimates for 2017 will be presented during the IPHC's Annual Meeting Agenda Item 5 on fishery statistics (see paper IPHC-2018-AM094-05).

b) Commercial and Recreational Derby fisheries

The IPHC Secretariat submitted a letter to the PFMC recommending that the PFMC consider a move away from derby-style management for the directed commercial Pacific halibut fishery in IPHC's Regulatory Area 2A ([Agenda Item G.1.a, Supplemental IPHC Letter 2, June 2017](#)). The IPHC Secretariat noted concerns over safety and discards, as well as limitations on fishers and processor flexibility. At the PFMC's June 2017 meeting, the PFMC reviewed the IPHC's letter and heard further input from the PFMC's Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) regarding possible alternatives to the commercial derby fishery ([Agenda Item G.1.b, Supplemental GAP Report, June 2017](#)). In response, the PFMC requested, and the IPHC Secretariat provided, examples of vessel fishing period limits for 1-week, 20-day, or 30-day seasons. The IPHC Secretariat noted these options mitigate, but do not fully address the concerns identified in the original IPHC letter and welcomes other suggestions or recommendations to improve the management of the directed commercial Pacific halibut fishery in IPHC Regulatory Area 2A. The options provided by the IPHC Secretariat were reviewed at the September PFMC meeting. Although no changes to the non-tribal directed Pacific halibut fishery were proposed, the PFMC asked the States and the IPHC to continue investigating options that would move the fishery away from a derby-style fishery. The Council reviewed the analysis and alternatives again in November 2017, with a view toward continuing the discussion during 2018 for possible changes in 2019. No changes were recommended for the 2018 fishery.

IPHC COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

Report of Assessment and Research Activities (RARA)

The annual IPHC [Report of Assessment and Research Activities \(RARA\)](#) is intended to supply progress reports on current projects and monitoring that are underway at the International Pacific

Halibut Commission (IPHC). In past years, this document included fishery information, monitoring activities, stock assessment, and research reports about the previous year's activities. Many of the reports that have been routinely included in the past (e.g. the suite of stock assessment documents) are now provided as detailed papers for the Annual Meeting and as such, are listed and linked here with unique document numbers, e.g. IPHC-2018-AM094-01. This allows us to update our documents in real time as data become available ensuring that Commissioners and stakeholders have access to the most recent information possible for the decision-making process at the Annual Meeting. Continuing to be included in their entirety, are summaries of an expanded research effort that has taken place in the past year, as well as pieces of supporting information for the annual meeting documents now on the IPHC website. Over the coming year, much of the remaining RARA material will be integrated into the new [IPHC Science and Research](#) pages of the website, to be updated in near real-time, thus eliminating the need for future compendiums of this nature.

Annual Report

The 2016 Annual Report is available for download from the IPHC website at the following link: <http://iphc.int/library/documents/category/annual-reports>.

Previously, the IPHC Annual Report was published late in the following year, or even early in the subsequent year (13-14 months after the end of the year being reported on). Unfortunately, this decreased the utility of the report for user groups and led to confusion about the state of the fishery and resource, as well as the current decisions of the Commission.

In 2017, we undertook an accelerated production timeline for the IPHC 2016 Annual Report, which the IPHC Secretariat staff produced some six months ahead of schedule. It is our intention to further accelerate the 2017 Annual Report production process, thereby ensuring users of the report receive the summary information as close to the relevant year as possible. Your continued feedback on the content, format and presentation of the Annual Report is welcome.

Website <http://iphc.int/>

Over the last six years the IPHC has undertaken two major website improvement projects that have been focused on technology refreshes, social media integration, and the creation of subsidiary body web pages.

The new website, launched on 15 December 2017 (<http://iphc.int/>), is the culmination of a year long project by IPHC Secretariat staff which commenced on 15 September 2016, when the IPHC Secretariat chartered a website improvement team with members from the Seattle-based staff. The team's focus was on improving the distribution of public domain information. In November 2016, support for the team's efforts were enhanced by ensuring funding was available to hire a professional website designer.

In February 2017, the IPHC Secretariat entered into a partnership with Efelte Creative to redesign our website. Immediately after entering into the partnership with Efelte Creative, the team worked on the new website design for five months. In addition to the new design, the Seattle-based staff went through a full review of website content prior to publishing on our new website.

Our new website has five categories of content which include 'The Commission, Science and Research, Fisheries, Data, Meetings, and Documents'. The Meetings section of our website contains all the information about the Commission and its subsidiary body meetings including meeting documents, agenda, schedule, and registration links. Additionally, IPHC publications, meeting documents, and reports can be found and downloaded from the Documents section of the website.

The Seattle-based staff will continue to develop different ways to publish data and statistics for our stakeholders. This is evident through our interactive maps and our online fishery-independent setline survey data query. Areas we are still developing will be indicated on the website as such.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That the Commission:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IPHC-2018-AM094-04 which provides the Commission with an update on additional activities of the IPHC Secretariat in 2017, not detailed in [other papers before the Commission](#).

APPENDICES

Nil