

INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION

MINUTES

OF THE

SIXTY-NINTH ANNUAL MEETING

Vancouver, British Columbia

January 25-28, 1993

INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION

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**PARTICIPANTS**

Commissioners

Richard J. Beamish, Chairman  
Steven Pennoyer, Vice Chairman  
Richard Eliason  
Ralph Hoard  
Allan Sheppard  
Gary T. Williamson

Commission Staff

Donald A. McCaughran, Director  
Stephen H. Hoag, Assistant Director  
William G. Clark  
Heather L. Gilroy  
Gerald A. Lariviere  
Ian R. McGregor  
Ana M. Parma  
Gordon J. Peltonen  
Phyllis J. Severeid  
Patrick J. Sullivan  
Robert J. Trumble

Advisors

Bruce Leaman  
Loh-Lee Low

**INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION  
SIXTY-NINTH ANNUAL MEETING**

Le Meridien Hotel, Vancouver, British Columbia

January 25 - January 28, 1993

**SCHEDULE OF SESSIONS**

**Monday - January 25**

a.m. -	8:00 - 9:00	IPHC Administrative Session	Belair Room
	9:00 - 12:00	Public Session	Versailles Room
p.m. -	1:30 - 5:00	IPHC Administrative Session	Belair Room
	1:30 - 5:00	Conference Board	Versailles Room
	6:30 - 8:30	Reception	Versailles Room

**Tuesday - January 26**

a.m. -	8:30 - 5:00	IPHC Administrative Session	Belair Room
	8:30 - 5:00	Conference Board	Versailles Room

**Wednesday - January 27**

a.m. -	8:30 - 9:30	Conference Board Report	Versailles Room
a.m. -	9:30 - 12:00	Administrative Session	Belair Room
p.m. -	1:30 - 5:00	IPHC, Conference Board, and Processors	Versailles Room

**Thursday - January 28**

a.m. -	8:30 - 12:00	IPHC Meeting (Public welcome)	Versailles Room
p.m. -	1:30 - 5:00	IPHC Administrative Session	Versailles Room

**INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION  
SIXTY-NINTH ANNUAL MEETING**

Le Meridian Hotel, Vancouver, British Columbia  
January 25 - January 28, 1993

**PUBLIC SESSION - January 25, 1993**

**VERSAILLES ROOM**

9:00 a.m. **OPENING**

Chairman's Opening Remarks

Introductions

Commissioners  
Staff  
Guests

9:15 a.m. **DIRECTOR'S REMARKS**

9:30 a.m. **STAFF PRESENTATION**

Review of the 1992 Fishery

Management of Halibut Bycatch Mortality

Re-evaluation of the 32-inch Size Limit

Alternative Harvest Rates

Population Assessment, 1992

Regulations and Proposals: 1993

10:30 a.m. **COFFEE**

11:00 a.m. **QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION**

12:00 Noon **ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT**

6:30 p.m. **RECEPTION (No Host) - Versailles Room**

## SUMMAR OF MAJOR DECISIONS

### **RECOMMENDED REGULATIONS**

- 1.Created a new subarea 4D-N, with a 20,000 pound catch limit to allow exploratory fishing around St. Lawrence Island.
- 2.Changed the catch coverage plan for the Canadian Individual Vessel Quota (IVQ) fishery from 5% to 10%.
- 3.Agreed to require that fishermen record all halibut, including take-home fish, in the log book.
- 4.Catch limits and fishing period dates were established for all areas. The Commission adopted a policy of setting catch limits based on a 30% exploitation rate.
- 5.The catch sharing plan requested by the Pacific Fishery Management Council for Area 2A was adopted.
- 6.Adopted a careful release requirement for all halibut released during halibut openings, i.e., undersized and those over fishing period limits.

### **RESEARCH**

- 1.Approved a total research budget of \$125,000.
- 2.The Commission prioritized four additional studies should funding become available.
- 3.Directed the staff to review mortality estimates for halibut bycatch and obtain legal opinions regarding requirements that all halibut must be returned to the sea immediately.
- 4.Directed the staff to contact other agencies to improve the accuracy of subsistence and other unaccounted removals.
- 5Asked the staff to continue to refine bycatch estimates for Area 2A and urge the Pacific Fishery Management Council to collect data on halibut bycatch.
- 6.Encouraged the staff to look for additional funding sources for research projects.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE**

- 1.Approved minutes for the 1992 Annual Meeting and Interim Meeting.
- 2.Approved an amended 1993-1994 budget and U.S. budgets for 1993-1994 and 1994-1995.
- 3.Adopted the U.S. fiscal year running from October 1 to September 30. Rescinded all budgets previously passed. Budgets to be reworked for fiscal year change.
- 4.Agreed to retain the firm of Coopers and Lybrand for the 1993 audit.
- 5.Instructed the Director to write a letter to the North Pacific Fishery Management Council explaining the Commission's position regarding the Terra Marine and E.A.R.T.H. proposals.
- 6.The Commission agreed to hold the 1994 Annual Meeting during the last week of January 1994 in either Sitka or Seattle. The staff will contact commissioners with regard to costs.
- 7.The Commission's Halibut Bycatch Work Group will hold a meeting in July - possibly in Juneau - to review bycatch in 1993.
- 8.Mr. Pennoyer was selected chairman for 1993.
- 9.Dr. Beamish was selected vice-chairman for 1993.

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**ADMINISTRATIVE SESSION - MONDAY, JANUARY 25, 1993**

The meeting was convened by Chairman Beamish at 8:00 a.m. The agenda was reviewed and there was agreement to add hearings for bycatch proposals from Terra Marine and E.A.R.T.H. They were advised to address the public meeting and conference board as well.

Two visiting Russian scientists, Dr. Nikolai Novikov and Dr. Vladimir Karpenko, were introduced.

Word was received that many of the Canadian fishermen were attending a protest meeting, about other issues, at D.F.O. and would not arrive in time for the 9:00 a.m. public session. It was agreed that the lunch break and commencement of this afternoon's session would be moved back one half hour.

The morning session was adjourned at 9:00 a.m.

**PUBLIC SESSION - MONDAY, JANUARY 25, 1993**

Gary Williamson was accepted as an acting commissioner to fill the vacant Canadian seat. Chairman Beamish called the session to order and delivered his opening remarks, including the introduction of guests, special advisors, and retired commissioners in attendance.

Many Canadian fishermen were not present because they were attending a protest rally regarding Indian fishing rights. It was decided to go forward with the staff review of the 1992 fishery and then break for an early coffee in an attempt to wait for the arrival of the Canadians.

After an extended coffee break, at approximately 10:00 a.m., the meeting reconvened with most Canadians then present. The staff continued and completed its presentations.

The meeting was then opened for questions from the floor regarding the staff's presentation or for comments. Questions and comments were heard concerning the following points: (1) staff's estimate of Area 2B sports catch at 900,000 pounds is much too high; (2) effect of use of black cod gear on Area 2A CPUE estimates; (3) effect of fishing effort shift from north to south on Area 2B CPUE; (4) reliability of preliminary 500,000 pound bycatch estimate in Area 2A; (5) estimate of Area 2A biomass is too low; (6) Canadian bycatch reduction proposal is inadequate; and (7) Canadian fishing season should be longer.

Upon completion of the question and comment period, a presentation was given by Mr. Tuck

Donnelly of Terra Marine outlining their proposal for use of halibut bycatch. This was followed by a bycatch use proposal from Mike O'Callahan of the group E.A.R.T.H.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE SESSION - MONDAY, JANUARY 25, 1993**

This session was convened at 2:00 p.m. The proposals presented at the public session by Terra Marine and E.A.R.T.H. were discussed. The differences between their proposals were noted, one distributing halibut, one selling it. It was agreed to have a private audience for these people on January 26 to allow the commissioners to ask questions.

The minutes from the 1992 Annual Meeting and from the 1992 Interim Meeting were approved. The appointment of Coopers and Lybrand as auditors for the following fiscal year was approved. A time was set aside to hear comments from the visiting Russian scientists on January 26.

Preliminary discussion about the budget took place. Items discussed included (1) the amount in the 1993/1994 budget, (2) the split between personnel and research expenditures, (3) sale of fish and disposition of the proceeds, (4) Canadian fiscal restraints that will likely prevent any budget increases over the next several years, and (5) the difficulties caused when the governments suddenly reduce the budget mid-year, as has often happened in the past.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE SESSION - TUESDAY, JANUARY 26, 1993**

Dr. Beamish reported that the Russian guests were addressing the conference board through an interpreter and would address the Commission later in the day. A time was arranged to hear the Terra Marine proposal. A lengthy in-depth discussion followed concerning bycatch retention for food banks, including the long term effects of this on minimizing bycatch. A subcommittee report on the food bank proposals was received from the conference board. Tuck Donnelly of Terra Marine addressed the Commission concerning their food bank proposal and he was followed by Mike O'Callaghan from E.A.R.T.H. Both individuals presented their proposal and then responded to questions from the Commission.

The concept of changing to a common fiscal year for the Commission came under discussion. Presently, there is a different financial year for each country, but a single fiscal year is simpler and may be possible. The 1993/1994 budget, as submitted, includes a \$16,500 increase over the 1992/1993 budget. Canada has indicated that no increase is likely at this time. The proposed increase was removed and the budget at \$833,500, as in 1992/1993, was passed. It is intended that a letter indicating the effect on research be included with this reduced budget request. It was noted that should a revised fiscal year be adopted, budget requests may need to be revised.

The Commission discussed the proposed research program for 1993. The staff proposed research at \$125,000 was passed. The research budget included funds for programmer support (\$79,000), two discard mortality studies (\$16,000) and stock identification studies (\$30,000). The proposed, but unfunded, research was discussed and prioritized as follows, should funding become available:

- (1) Analysis of NMFS observer data
- (2) Longlining - trawl tagging for mortality studies
- (3) IVQs - Demographics and CPUE
- (4) Hook timer study

Proposed regulations for 1993 were the next topic for consideration. The proposal for a limited halibut fishery concurrent with the sablefish fishery, as submitted by Linda Behnken, was not supported by the conference board and, therefore, the Commission decided that further consideration was not needed at this time.

Following a brief discussion a motion was passed on the provisional budget for the Commission for 1994/1995 at \$1,768,000, for the U.S. share of the 1993/1994 budget at \$891,000 and for the U.S. share of the 1994/1995 budget at \$895,000.

Dr. McCaughran introduced the two visiting Russian scientists and the interpreter. Dr. Novikov addressed the Commission through the interpreter. Some key points:

- (1) Halibut is an important species to both North America and Russia, though less so to Russia.
  - (2) During the 1950s and 1960s TINRO studied halibut extensively for distribution, migration, and the extent of the commercial fishery. During the 1970s and first half of the 1980s research was reduced to bycatch studies, i.e., no directed halibut research. Directed research recommenced in 1986 when a rise in abundance was detected.
  - (3) Current research indicates that the biological parameters of size at age, average ages in the population, migration patterns, and distribution are very similar to those of the 1950s.
  - (4) Russian studies have not indicated migrations outside the Bering Sea, but they speculated that such movements occur to some extent. Their studies are small scale and might not detect infrequent events.
  - (5) Arrowtooth flounder, Greenland turbot, and Pacific halibut are all quite abundant at present. Trawl estimates of biomass are at about 22,000 tons, not including larger, trawl-evading specimens.
  - (6) They commenced a setline fishery in 1990.
- 
- (7) Joint research with IPHC could be very productive in areas of:
    - (a)tagging to estimate migration directions and volume.

- (b)estimation of biomass present in the area and biomass trends.
- (c)Bycatch mortality studies.

(8) Recent catches estimated at 1,000 tons in 1990, 2,000 tons in 1991, and 3,000 tons in 1992. Most of this would be classified as longline bycatch. These catches are combined Russian, Japanese, and American.

(9) They have a 62 cm size limit. Fishery is open year around, though ice and winter conditions do curtail effort. Their fleet presently consists of four small longliners.

(10) Trawlers may retain up to 8% of catch as bycatch, though they may not keep small fish. Fined or license rescinded if bycatch percentage is too high.

(11) Russian marketing is fresh-frozen and hot-smoked, though a minor amount is cold smoked. Halibut, though cheap by our standards, is relatively expensive.

(12) Mr. Novikov prefers scales to otoliths for aging.

Barry Ackerman from DFO briefed the Commission on the status of halibut regulations in Canada. The last time regulations were passed was in 1987. For the future, under the IVQ fishery, it is believed that our regulations can be adopted as conditions of license, therefore, negating the need to pass annual regulations. There are new consolidated fishery regulations in the pipeline in Canada. Among other things, these regulations will authorize DFO to insist that trawlers take an observer, if requested. The regulation, however, has no funding mechanism for observers. It also improves the regulations regarding retention of halibut by non-licensed vessels by excluding halibut from the list of species which may be retained as a condition of license in each fishery. Not passing annual halibut regulations makes it slow and difficult to change sport fish regulations. These do not, of course, come under conditions of license. Therefore, it would be necessary to amend previous regulations, which it is believed will take from one to two years. Barry was asked about the Indian Food Fishery and replied that he was not prepared to respond. Trawlers are not allowed to have sport-caught fish on board. The closed area on Swiftsure Bank will be continued.

The issue of Canadian trawl vessels possibly unloading halibut in U.S. ports and enforcement efforts was discussed, and it was concluded that this was in violation of Canadian regulations and that U.S. enforcement should take action.

Bruce Leaman briefed the Commission on the status of halibut bycatch mortality in other Canadian fisheries. The rock sole catch is to be reduced by 50% in 1993 and since this fishery normally catches significant quantities of halibut, less mortality should occur. Further, Pacific cod seasons will be shifted to a time of year when halibut catch should be lower. A revised upward estimate in the survival rate of discarded halibut will also result in less mortality. When all things are considered, Canada hopes to reduce bycatch mortality by 25% in 1993. The 1992 estimate was 1.844 million pounds of halibut mortality.

**COMMISSION/CONFERENCE BOARD SESSION  
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27, 1993**

The minutes of the Conference Board including the industry proposals were presented by Gregg Best from the Canadian delegation. The commissioners then asked questions for clarification of Conference Board desire or intent. There was discussion on the following:

- (1) There was confusion regarding the Conference Board endorsement of the 30% utilization concept, yet the rejection of some of the 30% catch limits. The Conference Board explained that they believe the biomass estimate is too low in some areas.
- (2) Steve Joner and Gregg Bargman explained the rationale for recommending a 713,000 pound catch limit in Area 2A which is above the 35% exploitation rate.
- (3) There was also discussion concerning the Conference Board recommendations for catch limits in Area 2B and 2C and how they related to the 30% exploitation rate.
- (4) It was noted that the Area 3A-3B combined catch limit request was slightly higher than the staff proposal and that the requested Area 3A-3B split was quite different from that recommended by the staff. The Conference Board believes there is more fish available in Area 3B than indicated by the staff. In other matters, the Conference Board agreed with the recording of all fish from commercial openings on fish tickets.

**ADMINISTRATIVE SESSION - WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27, 1993**

It was agreed to cancel the afternoon scheduled second session with the conference board as no major areas of clarification seemed necessary. The Commission reviewed, again, each of the issues from the conference board recommendations. The following were discussed:

- (1) The division of Area 4D to allow additional fishing time to explore fishing grounds near St. Lawrence Island.
- (2) The advantages of moving to a 30% utilization rate.
- (3) Options for determining the appropriate catch limit for Area 2A including setting the Area 2A catch limit as a fixed proportion of the Area 2B catch limit.
- (4) The division of the Area 3 catch limit between subareas 3A and 3B.
- (5) The appropriate catch limit for Area 4.

The Commission concluded that the Conference Board Resolution for Fixed Gear Preference is

allocative in nature and must be addressed by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council.

The Commission discussed the Terra Marine and E.A.R.T.H. proposals and the director was instructed to write a letter to the Council explaining the Commission's position on these proposals.

The Commission was informed that some shore-based trawlers working out of Dutch Harbor pump fish directly from the net into the fish hold without sorting. Therefore, all bycaught halibut are dead and sorted out in Dutch Harbor. The legality of not discarding at sea was discussed.

The following matters were also discussed at some length:

- (1) The pros and cons of changing the underage/overage program in the Canadian IVQ program from 5% to 10%.
- (2) The Canadian Indian food fishery and the lack of catch data for it. The letters to government are to include a request for data.
- (3) Bycatch reduction progress in both nations. It was agreed that some progress is being achieved, but that more can and should be done. If an industry bycatch committee is formed in Canada, the Commission would like to be a member.
- (4) The possibility of joint research in the Russian EEZ. Present budget constraints make this unlikely unless outside funding through the State Department and other sources can be arranged. Monies may be available on a matching basis for international research.
- (5) The desire to create increased opportunity for an exploratory fishery around St. Lawrence Island. The best solution appears to be a one-year, temporary area - called 4D-N - which would include the northern portion of Area 4D. A small quota and limited time could control removals during this exploratory fishery.
- (6) A request to hold next year's annual meeting in Sitka.
- (7) The Commission adopted the U.S. fiscal year running from October 1 to September 30. This will require a one-time six-month fiscal year running from April 1, 1993 to September 30, 1993 and an extra audit of the financial records for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1993. To accomplish this, all budgets that had been previously passed were rescinded and new budgets will be reworked and sent to commissioners for approval.
- (8) The joint venture halibut fishery in the Russian EEZ and enforcement concerns.

## **PUBLIC MEETING - THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 1993**

Mr. Pennoyer explained the staff's desire to shift from a 35% to a 30% exploitation rate. He noted that conference board catch limit requests were from below 30% to over 35%, depending on the area. He further noted that the conference aboard generally supported the concept of 30% and that the Commission should move in that direction. In catch limit recommendations for this year, the Commission is working towards phasing in the 30% exploitation yield concept. The following catch limits were adopted.

Catch Limits	
Regulatory Area	Pounds
2A	600,000
2B	10,500,000
2C	10,000,000
3A	20,700,000
3B	6,500,000
4A	2,020,000
4B	2,300,000
4C	800,000
4D	780,000
4D-N	20,000
4E	120,000

A new subarea, 4D-N, was created for a one year period from that portion of Area 4D north of 62°30'00"N. It will have a catch limit of 20,000 pounds as indicated in the above table. This subarea is being created to allow an exploratory fishery around St. Lawrence Island.

Seasons were adopted for all areas as listed in the following table:

2A	4B	4C	4D-N	4E
7/27	6/06	6/06-6/07	8/19-8/20	6/06-6/07
8/10	6/08	6/08-6/09	8/21-8/22	6/08-6/09
8/24-*	6/10	6/10-6/11	8/23-8/24	6/10-6/11
	6/12	6/12-6/13	8/25-8/26	6/12-6/13
2B	6/14	6/14-6/15	8/27-8/28	6/14-6/15
	6/16	6/16-6/17	8/29-8/30	6/16-6/17
3/01-10/31	6/18	6/18-6/19	8/31-9/01	6/18-6/19
	6/20	6/20-6/21	9/02-9/03	6/20-6/21
2C	6/22	6/22-6/23	9/04-9/05	6/22-6/23
	6/24	6/24-6/25	9/06-9/07	6/24-6/25
6/10-6/11	6/26	6/26-6/27	9/08-9/09	6/26-6/27
9/08-*	6/28	6/28-6/29	9/10-9/11	6/28-6/29
10/06-*	6/30	6/30-7/01	9/12-9/13	6/30-7/01
10/25-*	7/02	7/02-7/03	9/14-9/15	7/02-7/03
	7/04	7/04-7/05	9/16-9/17	7/04-7/05
3A-3B	7/06	7/06-7/07	9/18-9/19	7/06-7/07
	7/08	7/08-7/09	9/20-9/21	7/08-7/09
6/10-6/11	7/10	7/10-7/11	9/22-9/23	7/10-7/11
9/08-*	7/12	7/12-7/13	9/24-9/25	7/12-7/13
10/06-*	7/14	7/14-7/15	9/26-9/27	7/14-7/15
10/25-*	7/16	7/16-7/17	9/28-9/29	7/16-7/17
	7/18	7/18-7/19	9/30-10/01	7/18-7/19
4A	7/20	7/20-7/21	10/02-10/03	7/20-7/21
	7/24	7/22-7/23	10/04-10/05	7/22-7/23
6/10-6/11	7/26	7/24-7/25	10/06-10/07	7/24-7/25
8/11-*	7/28	7/26-7/27	10/08-10/09	7/26-7/27
8/26-*	7/30	7/28-7/29	10/10-10/11	7/28-7/29
9/08-*	8/01	7/30-7/31	10/12-10/13	7/30-7/31
9/24-*	8/03	8/01-8/02	10/14-10/15	8/01-8/02
10/06-*	8/05	8/03-8/04	10/16-10/17	8/03-8/04
	8/07	8/05-8/06	10/18-10/19	8/05-8/06
4D		8/07-8/08	10/20-10/21	8/07-8/08
	8/11-*	8/09-8/10	10/22-10/23	8/09-8/10
8/11-*	8/26-*	8/11-8/12	10/24-10/25	9/13-9/15
8/26-*	9/08-*	8/13-8/14	10/26-10/27	9/16-9/18
9/24-*	9/24-*	8/15-8/16	10/28-10/29	
10/06-*	10/06-*	8/17-8/18	10/30-10/31	9/19-10/31

The new subarea, 4D-N, will open every other day, as indicated in the above table, at noon for twenty-four hours and will have a 1,000 pound per vessel limit per opening. On August 10 the subarea will close and any remaining catch limit will be added to the Area 4D catch limit.

The catch sharing plan for Area 2A was adopted.

The underage/overage proposal from Canada was discussed. Bruce Turris explained that the change from 5% to 10% would result in quite a few more vessels not having to leave quota in the water at

year's end or losing catch because of going over quota. On balance, the change should have little effect on total catch for the year. The change was adopted.

A proposal to have all sport-caught halibut in Area 2A landed head-on was submitted by Washington State as a means of assuring adequate length samples for the recreational fishery. The staff concurred in this matter. However, Washington State has since made satisfactory arrangements to receive a sufficient sample on a voluntary basis and withdrew the request.

A proposal was considered by the Commission to require that all halibut from commercial trips be offloaded and recorded on fish tickets, including take home fish. This proposed regulation would apply to commercial trips only and not sport trips. Conference Board and the staff agree on this proposal. A lengthy discussion followed concerning the legal need to report take home fish while there is no requirement to report recreational fish. This was seen as an unfair burden on commercial fishermen. The Commission decided to require fishermen to record all halibut, including take-home fish in the log book, but not on fish tickets.

A careful release requirement for undersized fish and those over a vessel's trip limit has been proposed by both the staff and the Conference Board. Language has been worked out for this, though not yet implemented, by the NPFMC for cod and sablefish hook and line vessels. This requirement was accepted for the halibut fishery.

The Conference Board recommended that all bycaught halibut be immediately returned to the sea. This is designed to reduce mortality. In both Canada and the U.S. the law requires that a reasonable opportunity to return the fish to the sea must occur. Some fishing operations are not considered to present such an opportunity and thus all fish will not be returned immediately. The desire and intent of this request is appreciated and it is hoped that maximum attempts will be made to return all fish possible to the sea immediately. The staff will review mortality estimates for these vessels. We have thus a three part issue:

- (1) Halibut mortality should be reduced as much as possible.
- (2) Legal ramifications of non-retention rules. The staff will request legal opinions regarding retention from both the Canadian and American legal departments. The staff should report on the opinions at the interim meeting.
- (3) We must be sure that the accounting system takes different handling techniques into account with as many mortality estimates by fishery as are needed. The staff should report on how this is handled at the interim meeting.

Letters to governments will contain a paragraph on "fixed gear preference" as a means of reducing bycatch. This incorporates the intent of the conference board's resolution on this issue.

The level of bycatch in Area 2A was discussed. The staff is directed to continue to refine its

estimates and to write to the Pacific Council urging collection of more and better bycatch data whenever possible in 2A.

The need for accurate estimates of the quantities of halibut taken in the Indian Food Fishery in Canada was discussed. A request for this data should be included in the letters to government after this meeting. The quantity taken is considered an internal Canadian allocation issue. The Commission's concern is that accurate catch records be available to protect the resource.

The Commission staff has appointed a bycatch coordinator, Bob Trumble, who will work with both the Canadian and U.S. sections concerning bycatch matters. The staff will then be able to brief the Commission on the status of bycatch reduction activities in both nations. Mr. Pennoyer reviewed the bycatch history and current programs in place in Alaska. The Canadian situation was addressed by Dr. Beamish. Dr. McCaughran pointed out that much progress has been made in both nations.

The lack of adequate funds for all of the desired research activities was discussed. It was pointed out that fixed costs keep rising but that the budget has been essentially flat, leaving fewer dollars each year for research. Dr. McCaughran indicated that matching funds may be available through the State Department if funds were made available from industry sources.

The next topic was the joint venture delivery of halibut from the Russian EEZ that are below their minimum size limit of 62 cm. A copy of their regulations and data on local enforcement are lacking. Under the Lacy Act, the U.S. can enforce the Russian rules if we know what the rules are and that they are enforced at home. We need more information.

The following statement concerning bycatch retention was read into the record:

**STATEMENT ON THE  
E.A.R.T.H. AND TERRA MARINE PROPOSALS**

The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) has long been in the forefront of efforts to reduce bycatch and wastage in the fisheries in Convention waters. The IPHC is charged with developing the stocks of halibut to the levels which will permit the optimum yield from the halibut fishery to the fishermen of Canada and the United States. This has heightened the Commission's concern that bycatch of halibut be reduced to minimum levels because juvenile halibut encountered by non-target fisheries form the bulk of the recruitment to halibut fisheries in the Bering Sea, Gulf of Alaska, Canada, and Washington-Oregon. Efforts to reduce this loss of yield have consumed a significant proportion of the activities of the Commission, as well as United States and Canadian management agencies over the past five years.

These levels of bycatch have not yet been reduced to those the IPHC believes are achievable while harvesting the allowable yield of groundfish off the United States and Canada. The level of bycatch is particularly distressing in light of the fact that Canada and the U.S. have significantly reduced harvest rates in the directed fishery in 1993 in response to a recent drop in recruitment. Halibut are a prohibited species in other groundfish fisheries and are not allowed to be retained by these non-target fisheries. This requirement promotes both avoidance of harvest and the careful return of halibut bycatch to the sea to reduce mortality rates. Regulations and supporting research have focused on careful release and while mortality of halibut bycatch continues in some gear types, the mortality rate

for these fish may be as little as 10%. The direction of the program is firstly to minimize the bycatch and secondly to reduce the mortality of those fish unavoidably taken. The Terra Marine and E.A.R.T.H. proposals seek measures which the IPHC believes will conflict with this bycatch mortality reduction program.

The IPHC notes that while there have been major efforts to reduce halibut bycatch, there have not been similar efforts in many other fisheries. The mortality of halibut, which must be returned to the sea by law, is about 20.3% of the total annual discards while the majority of other species of groundfish taken as bycatch in the north Pacific and Bering Sea are most of which is returned to the sea voluntarily. The IPHC believes that the opportunity to reduce wastage and provide for charitable use of currently unutilized fish is much greater and more appropriate with species that now can be legally retained as opposed to changing the direction of the halibut non-retention and mortality reduction program and the treaty laws between Canada and the U.S. which support it and have been in place for many years.

While the Commission sympathizes with the objectives of E.A.R.T.H.'s proposal the Commission has serious reservations regarding the enforcement and market implications of proposals that use proceeds from the sale of halibut. Furthermore, the Commission believes that the evaluation of such proposals and the selection process of specific charitable organizations is outside its conservation and management charter.

The proposals from Terra Marine and E.A.R.T.H. have put the dual issues of discard wastage reduction and fuller utilization of the fisheries resource harvested from the North Pacific/Bering Sea squarely in front of the north Pacific fishery community. The IPHC is unable to support the request from E.A.R.T.H. and Terra Marine as currently constituted. However, the IPHC is prepared to join with the fishing industry, other agencies, and private organizations to address these issues in a comprehensive and coordinated fashion. The need for reduction and fuller utilization is great and the potential diversion of current wastage to food banks or other charitable organization needs is significant.

A motion was approved to authorize the staff to make minor changes to the regulations for clarity.

A request for next year's annual meeting to be held in Sitka, Alaska was put before the Commission. Costs were considered to be a serious impediment to this proposal. The staff will investigate comparative costs and it is agreed that a decision on location would be made later. The 1994 Annual Meeting will be held the last week of January.

A motion passed appointing Steven Pennoyer chairman for 1993-1994 and Richard Beamish vice chairman.

Closing remarks were presented by Dr. Beamish for Canada and by Mr. Pennoyer for the United States.

The meeting was adjourned.

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Steven Pennoyer, Chairman