

Conference Board Report
80th IPHC Annual Meeting
January 21 – 24, 2003
Victoria, B.C.

United States	Canada
Area 3B/4A False Pass	Annieville Halibut Association
Atka Fishermen's Association	Canadian Sablefish Association
Bristol Bay Drift Net Association	Diddaht First Nations
Bristol Bay Economic Development Corp	Halibut Advisory Board
Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association	Hesquiat First Nation
Deep Sea Fishermen's Union of the Pacific	Northern Halibut Producers Association
Fishing Vessel Owners Association	North Pacific Halibut Fisherman's Association
Kodiak Vessel Owners Association	Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council
North Pacific Fisheries Association	Pacific Coast Fishing Vessel Owners Guild
Petersburg Vessel Owners Association	Stevenston Halibut Association
St George Fishermen's Association	Ucluelet First Nation
St Paul Fishermen's Association	Northern Trollers Association
Seafood Producers Coop	Pacific Trollers Association
United Fishermen's Marketing Association	Gulf Trollers Association
Washington Recreational Fishing Industry Association	Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations
Washington Treaty Tribes	Pacific Halibut Management Association
Westport Charter Boat Association	
Washington Trollers Association	
Yukon Delta Fisheries Development Association	
Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association	
Quinault Indian Nation	
Makah Fisheries Management	
Tribal Government of St Paul	
Seikiu Sportsmen's Association	

REVIEW CONFERENCE BOARD VOTING ROSTER

Three new organizations were accredited. The Pacific Management Association was accredited for Canada. The Quinault Indian Nation and Seikiu Sportsman's Association were accredited for the United States.

SELECT CHAIRPERSONS FROM CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES

On the Canadian side, Chris Sporer was selected as chairman

On the United States side, Robert Alverson was selected as co-chair

CONFERENCE BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS TO IPHC

A. REVIEW AREAS

The Conference Board has no recommendations for new or altered IPHC areas.

B. SEASON DATE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL AREAS

A March 1st opening for the 2003 season was unanimously supported by the Conference Board.

In order to address a year round fishery the following action was proposed:

- The Conference Board recommends the IPHC Commissioners request the NPFMC and DFO initiate an analysis of alternatives to allow for annual IFQ permitting and Canadian IVQ and halibut license issuance;
- The Conference Board further requests the Commissioners form a multi-agency and industry task force to address extended season issues and make recommendations on implementation; and,
- The Conference Board submits the following names for consideration to this task force:

Western Alaska – Greg Elwood and Eric Olson
Kodiak/Homer – Drew Scalzi and Walter Sargent
Southeast Alaska – Arnie Fuglvog and Dan Falvey
Seattle – Tim Hinkle and Bob Alverson
Canada – Gary Williamson and Herb van Grootel

The above considerations were made after significant deliberations of the Conference Board and input from NMFS, DFO and IPHC.

The Conference Board urges the IPHC staff to continue looking at the issue of trans-boundary halibut migrations in and out of all regulatory areas.

No change was recommended for the sports fishing seasons.

C. CATCH LIMIT RECOMMENDATIONS - ALL AREAS

The Conference Board supported the IPHC staff recommendations for 2003.

2A	1.31 million pounds
2B	11.75 million pounds
2C	8.50 million pounds
3A	22.63 million pounds
3B	17.13 million pounds
4A	4.97 million pounds
4B	4.18 million pounds
4CDE	4.45 million pounds
Total	74.92 million pounds

Conference Board comments:

The Conference Board entertained motions to reduce the proposed harvest limits in Area 3B and 4A of up to 10% below IPHC staff recommendations. The Conference Board also entertained a motion to reduce Area 4B by 15% below staff recommended levels. This was based on the IPHC action of 2002 where there was a decision to reduce the catch limit by 30% in 4B over a 2 year period, with a fifteen percent reduction taken in 2002. However, all these proposals, when put to a vote, failed to pass.

The support for these reductions ranged from 3 to 11 Conference Board members and the opposition ranged from 14 to 23. The request for lower quotas in these areas were made by fishermen who principally fished in western Alaska. They cited declining survey and commercial CPUE indexes as well as their own fishing experience.

Those who spoke in favor of the IPHC staff recommendations pointed out that the staff recommendations were based on conservative assumptions and therefore did not feel a reduction for these areas was warranted. They also expressed that the commercial CPUE rates better reflected the resource abundance in those areas.

The Conference Board debated a proposal to increase Area 3A by 10% due to a CEY listed at 34.22 million pounds and rising CPUE numbers. This action failed by 11 in favor and 19 against with 3 abstentions.

D. STAFF AND INDUSTRY PROPOSALS FOR CHANGES TO IPHC REGULATIONS

Catch sharing plans: Areas 2A and 4CDE

The Conference Board on separate motions moved unanimously to endorse the Pacific and North Pacific Fishery Management Council's respective catch sharing plans.

Possession of fillets aboard vessels

The Conference Board unanimously supported the staff recommendation.

Vessel monitoring system for Area 4

The Conference Board unanimously supported the staff recommendation on the understanding that this regulation is on a trip by trip basis.

Definition of landing

The Conference Board unanimously supported the staff recommendation.

Access to fish for sampling

The Conference Board unanimously supported the staff recommendation.

Permit required to tag fish or retain halibut for research purposes

The Conference Board unanimously supported the staff recommendation but included the wording “possess, transport, and release live fish and/or eggs or in any way mark live fish”

Cape Spencer Light

The Conference Board unanimously supported the staff recommendation.

E. INDUSTRY PROPOSALS FOR CHANGES TO IPHC REGULATIONS

RSW fish delivery

It was the Conference Board understanding that this was not an IPHC regulation and therefore should be taken up with the NPFMC.

Extension of halibut season and winter halibut fisheries

The Conference Board felt these two proposals had been adequately addressed under the season date recommendations.

Buoy markings (Jeff Hochstein)

Conference Board recommended that Paragraph 4 of the IPHC regulations be amended to reflect that only those buoys used in fishing and deployment of gear be required to be marked (e.g., strike “carried on board” from the regulations).

This change is requested as Enforcement is citing commercial vessels that have buoys that are not used with the gear that is set. Buoys are often used as guards to the boat when docking and these buoys are not usually marked. Additionally, buoys that are picked up on the beach that are not

marked are often carried on a transiting vessel. It is the fleet's opinion that only the gear that is set needs to have the proper markings. This resolution was originally put into place during the derby fisheries and is currently obsolete.

F. BY-CATCH

The by-catch of halibut continues to be an issue of serious concern to the Conference Board. Delegates are particularly concerned about by-catch levels and the loss of habitat from bottom trawling. By unanimous consent the Conference Board recommends that a strongly worded letter be sent from IPHC to the US agencies requesting that there be a 50% reduction in halibut mortality with a 10% reduction per year over a five year period.

It is the understanding of the Conference Board that the United States government is considering rationalizing the groundfish fisheries in the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea with IFQ formats. Under such programs the by-catch of halibut should be easier to manage and control, and a 50% reduction coupled with IFQ rationalization should be achievable. Based on the success of the Canadian model to address by-catch mortality by the trawl fleet, the Conference Board supports a similar initiative for Alaska.

Specific concerns were expressed by the participants from 4C that an increasing amount of the allotted halibut by-catch caps are occurring near that area.

The Conference Board also recommends the IPHC request DFO permanently cap trawl by-catch in Area 2B at a limit that reflects the recent trawl by-catch moralities (legal and sub-legal).

G. LOCAL DEPLETION

The Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council expressed concern about near shore halibut stocks that appear to have been hit hard and never recovered, even when the overall halibut stock became healthy. The Conference Board felt this was an issue that may best be addressed by Canada. For example, a similar situation occurred in areas around Sitka and was dealt with by local management. There was some question of how IPHC staff could deal with such a matter. However, the Conference Board requests IPHC staff work with Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council and First Nations to investigate local depletions along the west coast of Vancouver Island.

In a similar matter the Conference Board also requests the IPHC investigate recent sharp declines in the 4C halibut fishery.

OTHER BUSINESS

Area 2B recreational fishery average weights

There appears to be a discrepancy with the average weights used to calculate Area 2B recreational halibut catches. The Conference Board requests the IPHC use the average weights for sports caught halibut from 2002 (the previous year) until the apparent discrepancy over actual average weights can be resolved.