

News Release



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RECOVERY OF DOUBLE-TAGGED HALIBUT PAYS DOUBLE REWARD

During September 2003, the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) will be releasing halibut in Area 2B (British Columbia) which have been tagged with external wire spaghetti tags on the dark side of the head, and internal PIT (Passively Integrated Transponder) tags. IPHC is asking harvesters to look for tagged halibut, and, if possible, to leave the external wire tag on the fish until examined by IPHC personnel.

The purpose of the double tagging study is to examine the retention and durability of internal PIT tags on Pacific halibut *in situ*. PIT tags are being used by IPHC in a coastwide project with an objective of providing a direct estimate of abundance. It will also provide exploitation rates in areas where no analytic assessment exists. The external wire tags used in the double-tag study are two-toned orange in color (see photo), showing the letters "IPHC" and a 5-digit number. When a halibut with this type of wire tag is turned in to IPHC personnel, the head will be scanned with special equipment to check for presence and operation of the internal PIT tag.



Recovery of the external wire tag while still attached to the head is very important. To encourage harvesters to leave the wire tags on the fish, the standard tag reward of \$5 or a Tag Reward Hat is being doubled, i.e., \$10 or 2 hats, when a head is provided with the external tag still in place. Leave the external tag attached and report the tagged fish to IPHC samplers. IPHC has samplers in Prince Rupert, Port Hardy, and Vancouver during the halibut season. If IPHC staff are unavailable when fish are offloaded, harvesters should contact the IPHC office at (206) 634-1838 for handling instructions. If it is not possible to contact IPHC by phone, remove the tag and forward it with the recovery information (recovery date, recovery location (latitude/longitude preferred), fish length, sex, and ear bones if possible) to the IPHC. Include the vessel and finder's name and address so a reward can be mailed. If the wire tag is removed and the PIT tag is unavailable for scanning, only a single hat or \$5 can be rewarded.

IPHC asks harvesters to return any tagged halibut they catch. Tagged halibut of any size may be retained from any gear, although undersized halibut may not be sold. IPHC strongly encourages harvesters, observers, and plant personnel to watch for and retain all tagged halibut, and to return the tags with as much information as possible.

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