

News Release



P.O. Box 95009, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98145-2009

February 24, 2006

WANTED: LONGLINERS INTERESTED IN CHARTER WORK WITH THE IPHC!

Charter Announcement: **IPHC Requests Bids for 2006 Stock Assessment and Experimental Fishing Charters**

The International Pacific Halibut Commission is seeking commercial longline vessels to conduct survey and experimental fishing between May 29th and August 31st 2006.

Setline Stock Assessment Survey:

The purpose of the setline survey is to collect standardized data used for halibut stock assessment. This information is used to study aspects of the halibut resource such as growth, distribution, area-wide biomass, age composition, sexual maturity, and relative abundance of other species. The 2006 setline survey will cover 28 regions, from the southern Oregon border to the northern Bering Sea including the Aleutian Islands. Survey vessels will fish six (6) skates of standardized gear at each station (5 skates in Area 2A and the Eastern Bering Sea Shelf) following standard survey protocols. The survey has been designed so that the average vessel can fish 3 stations per day (a maximum of 4 per day will be permitted). Most regions require 11 - 18 fishing days plus additional days for running, loading and offloading gear and fish, foul weather days etc. Depending on the region, total charter duration can be expected to be 20 - 32 days. Vessels are encouraged to bid for multiple areas.

Seventeen of these areas are currently held under multi year contracts. We are asking that all interested parties submit contingency bids on any areas that may currently be under contract, in the event that a current contract holder bids for and wins one of the currently open areas. Contingency bids would be mutually renewable for two years. These bids will only be assessed if a contract holder gives up their current holding(s) to take on a new area.

New in 2006 we will be conducting a newly designed halibut setline survey on the Eastern Bering Sea shelf as well as 25 special stations in the Washington survey region looking at rockfish populations. Surveys in these two regions will operate under different conditions for the amount of gear fished, station layout, number of stations per day, and trip length. Please request the Charter Bid Specifications to view details regarding these two new initiatives.

Fish Trap Observation Charter:

In response to a request by B.C. fishermen and our Research Advisory Board, the Commission is considering a study to investigate fish traps as an alternate gear for halibut capture. There are growing concerns with the catch and mortality of rockfish during halibut fishing. This problem could be addressed by using traps to catch halibut in high rockfish areas, if the trap catch of rockfish could be reduced or eliminated. The proposed trap experiment would require a vessel to deploy a 7-meter metal arm with a self-contained scanning sonar unit on one end, viewing a fish trap secured to the other end. This will be set like a fish trap, with a float line and buoy. The vessel will be expected to supply trap fishing gear. Preference may be given to vessels with experience handling fish traps in British Columbia. Halibut hook-and-line experience is desired but not necessary. There will be two five-day

fishing trips, with a two-day port break mid-charter to allow for gear repair or modification. There will be no fish sales from this charter. A final decision on whether this study will be conducted will be made in the next few weeks.

For all survey charters, information such as age, sex, maturity, length, location, and CPUE will be collected from all halibut captured. Legal-sized halibut from all skates and some bycatch will be retained and sold by the IPHC to cover charter expenses.

Vessel owners interested in surveys or the experimental charter are invited to submit bids based upon standard IPHC contract structure. Bids will be accepted based upon a lump sum payment for the completion of a region, plus 10 percent of the net halibut sales and 50 percent of selected bycatch sales. Due to low relative catch rates and the remote nature of the survey areas off Oregon and Washington (Area 2A), the western Aleutians (Area 4B), and portions of the Bering Sea (4A and 4D Edges, Eastern Bering Sea Shelf), vessels are encouraged to submit proposals with alternate catch sharing or other financial arrangements to complete the work in these areas. Vessels may bid up to three regions. **Charter Specifications and Vessel Tender Forms may be requested from the Commission or downloaded from the IPHC web site.**

Vessels need not be licensed for halibut fishing in Canada or the U.S. to be eligible. The Commission is not restricted as to nationality of the vessels it charters for operation in any area as long as customs regulations are followed. The IPHC will consider only those vessels with captains and crews that have halibut fishing experience. Vessels bidding for charter must have adequate deck space and suitable accommodations for at least two Commission employees (including women). The vessels must supply **conventional fixed-hook setline gear** built to Commission Standards (see Charter Specifications) as well as all associated equipment normally required for commercial halibut fishing.

The lowest or any bid will not necessarily be accepted and the Commission will contract according to its own best interests. The IPHC will evaluate bids based on (1) the experience of captain and crew with halibut fishing, (2) the characteristics and safety features of the vessel, (3) vessel's availability, and (4) IPHC operating costs.

For further information please contact Claude Dykstra (ext. 213) for information concerning surveys, or Steve Kaimmer (ext. 210) for information concerning trap fishing. Bids must be received at the IPHC office **in Seattle by 12:00 p.m. (Pacific Standard Time) on Friday, March 17th, 2006.**

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