

News Release



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IPHC Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea Electronic Tagging Projects

The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) will be tagging halibut throughout the northeast Pacific Ocean this summer, using Pop-up Archival Transmitting (PAT) tags. A total of 72 halibut will be tagged in IPHC Regulatory Areas 2A (Washington-California) and 2B (Canada), and another 24 in Areas 4A (western Gulf of Alaska and eastern Bering Sea) and 4D (eastern Bering Sea). These tags are unique in appearance (see below): the body of the tag is shaped like a microphone approximately 6½ inches (17 centimeters) long, and attaches to the fish by a 7 inch (18 centimeter) leader, secured by a titanium dart embedded below the dorsal fin.



Electronic satellite tags record the temperature and depth experienced by the fish. The tags are programmed to release from the fish on a pre-determined date, float to the surface, and emit a satellite signal that indicates their position and transmits data to a land-based facility. The result is a record of the fish's final location and environmental data during the time at liberty. The leader remains on the fish after the tag body has released, serving as a conventional "spaghetti" tag. Both tag bodies and leaders bear information directing fishers to return them to the IPHC.

Rewards are offered for all returned PAT tags and leaders. A **\$500** reward will be given for the return of each satellite tag body. An IPHC tagging program baseball cap (or \$5) will be offered for returning catch information and the leader from any halibut that no longer carries the tag body. Any vessel that does not hold halibut IFQ can land and retain a PAT-tagged fish, as long as the halibut with the tag leader still attached is reported to IPHC at landing. In addition, fishers who hold IFQ should be aware that **the weight of PAT-tagged fish should NOT be deducted from the fisher's halibut IFQ**. The presence of the dart may prompt the buyer to "#2" the fish, but the fisher may sell it without quota penalty, provided that the fisher possesses halibut IFQ.

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When you catch a satellite-tagged halibut:

1. Record the date, capture location, sex, and the fork-length of the halibut.
2. Ideally, otoliths (earbones) from the fish should be removed in order to determine its age. If the fish is being landed at a port staffed by an IPHC port sampler, please present the fish to the port sampler during offload so that the otoliths can be removed. The IPHC has port samplers at the following ports during the commercial halibut fishing season: Newport, OR; Bellingham, WA; Vancouver, Port Hardy, and Prince Rupert, BC; Petersburg, Sitka, Juneau, Seward, Homer, Kodiak, Dutch Harbor, Adak, and Saint Paul, AK.
3. *If you do not possess halibut IFQ:* If the fish carries a tag body, remove the tag by cutting the leader about 1½" (4 cm) below the point at which the leader attaches to the tag body; **do not pull on the tag**. Retain the tag body so it may be turned in. Do not remove the leader from the fish until after it has been landed and reported to IPHC. Leave the leader attached to the fish and report the capture at time of landing to IPHC at **(206) 634-1838** or to an **IPHC port sampler**.
4. *If you possess halibut IFQ:* Remove the tag by removing the metal dart from the halibut's flesh or by cutting the nylon leader at skin-level; **do not pull on the tag**. Removing the entire metal dart is preferred, since the dart should not remain in the fish when it is processed.
5. Retain the tag and/or leader, and contact the IPHC at **(206) 634-1838**. Or, turn in the tag and information (and fish, if possible) to an **IPHC Port Sampler**.

The PAT tags are used to study seasonal migrations and to learn more about the physical conditions that fish typically experience during the tagging period. In particular, the Commission is examining location of Bering Sea spawning grounds, and the timing of seasonal migration in British Columbia and the US Pacific Northwest.

For further information, please contact Dr. Tim Loher at (206) 634-1838 (ext. 212), or via email at tim@iphc.washington.edu.

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