

## *News Release*



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May 30, 2012

### **COMMISSION COMPLETES BILATERAL PLANNING MEETING**

The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) completed a bilateral work session during May 8-9, 2012 to address issues of research planning, peer review of the 2012 halibut stock assessment, ongoing external peer review of the stock assessment, and the development of a framework for public engagement in a Management Strategy Evaluation. These topics were identified as priority areas for action by the Commission at its Annual Meeting in January 2012.

#### **Research Planning**

The Commission is developing a five-year research plan to guide the existing process of annual research planning. The elements of the long-term plan will address the requirements of the Commission's core mandate, as defined by the Halibut Convention, and inform decisions on optimum yield through developing harvest policy, estimating abundance and biomass, understanding the biology of the species, and understanding the environmental and ecological context for halibut. The draft long-term plan is intended to be developed by Commission staff, evaluated and refined by the Commission, presented to the public at the IPHC Interim Meeting in November 2012, and may be approved with any required amendments at the Commission's Annual Meeting in January 2013.

#### **Peer Review of the Stock Assessment**

Given the length of time since the last external review of the IPHC assessment model and ongoing concerns about the status of the halibut population and certain properties of the model (e.g., retrospective bias), the Commission considers another peer review to be timely. For 2012 only, this review will be comprised of a small bilateral team to work with Commission staff to: better understand the model structure and its underlying assumptions; explore key model sensitivities; gain insight into causes of retrospective bias in the model; recommend modifications to improve the current halibut stock assessment; and, explore alternative methods to present catch advice. Members of the work team will be tasked to produce a report documenting key findings, model revisions, and any follow-on recommendations. The Terms of Reference for the review will be posted on the IPHC website prior to the review. The report produced by members of the review team will be made available to the public following evaluation by the Commission, as well as any potential Commission's response.

For subsequent years, the Commission will be developing a broader scientific peer review process with more robust public involvement. The intent of this broader process is to support and strengthen the use of a credible, effective stock assessment process, as well as to conduct other reviews, as determined by the Commission, that may include: five-year research plan, updates and changes to survey methodology, white papers on selected critical issues, etc. Opportunities for stakeholder involvement will be a key element in the design and implementation of this longer-term review process.

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### Management Strategy Evaluation

The IPHC is committed to developing a Management Strategy Evaluation (MSE) to augment the existing assessment-based approach to managing the halibut resource. This MSE approach utilizes simulation and feedback control to develop harvest control procedures that are robust to the uncertainties in the assessment and monitoring processes, our understanding of stock dynamics, and variability in the environment affecting halibut. The Commission formed a bilateral work team to draft Terms of Reference for a MSE working group, to be comprised of IPHC staff, industry stakeholders, managers, and scientists from both countries, to oversee consultation on and engagement in the MSE process. This work group will be engaging the public in the development of harvest objectives, fishery performance metrics, candidate harvest strategies, and control rules for managing the halibut resource. The Commission may receive and review the Terms of Reference for this process at its 2012 Interim Meeting.

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