



December 9, 2013

INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION INTERIM MEETING 2013 AND PRELIMINARY STAFF HARVEST ADVICE (DECISION TABLE)

The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) conducted its Interim Meeting in its Seattle offices on December 4 and 5, 2013. The Interim Meeting IPHC staff presentations and recordings of the webcasts are posted at the Commission's website at <http://iphc.int/meetings-and-events/interim-meeting.html>.

The 2013 Stock Assessment

During 2013, a thorough exploration of all available data sources, including the entire historical record, was completed. This re-analysis of data sources provided several new avenues for stock assessment modeling. The IPHC's scientific peer review process also continued with a Scientific Review Board (SRB, <http://www.iphc.info/srb>) evaluation of the stock assessment data and modeling conducted since the 2012 assessment. This evaluation produced important recommendations that have been incorporated into the 2013 assessment and will be used to structure the work planned for 2014.

For the 2013 stock assessment, an ensemble of three alternative models now available for the halibut stock was used to produce the stock biomass estimates and yield decision table results. This resulted in a combined estimate of stock size and management reference points that are substantially more robust to current or future technical changes to the underlying models. The results of the 2013 stock assessment indicate that the Pacific halibut stock has been declining continuously over much of the last decade as a result of decreasing size at age, as well as recruitment strengths that are much smaller than those observed through the 1980s and 1990s. In recent years, the estimated female spawning biomass appears to have stabilized near 200 million pounds. An executive summary of the 2013 stock assessment is posted on the IPHC website at <http://iphc.int/meetings-and-events/interim-meeting.html>.

Preliminary Staff Harvest Advice (Decision Table) for 2014

The format of the IPHC staff harvest advice was restructured in 2012 to present more information and options for consideration by the Commission as it sets the annual catch limits. This procedural approach estimates the probabilities of risks and benefits involved with specific harvest choices. The staff harvest advice is summarized in a decision table (Table 1, next page). The decision table includes estimates of risk over a range of potential harvest choices for 2014 (the rows) as measured by different stock and fishery metrics (the columns).

Table 1. 2014 Preliminary Decision Table, with the probabilities of various risks (columns) given alternative harvest levels (rows).

Values in the table represent the probability, in “times out of 100,” of a particular risk. Total removals include all halibut mortality caused by humans, i.e., all removals except natural mortality. The Blue Line (shown as the dark shaded area in this table) represents the application of the current harvest policy to the stock assessment results. The status quo line corresponds to the catch levels approved for 2013.

2014 Alternative	Total removals (M lb)	Fishery CEY (M lb)	Harvest rate	Stock Trend				Stock Status				Fishery Trend				Fishery Status		
				Spawning biomass				Spawning biomass				Fishery CEY from the harvest policy				Harvest rate		
				In 2015		In 2017		In 2015		In 2017		In 2015		In 2017		In 2014		In 2014
				Is less than 2014	Is 5% less than 2014	Is less than 2014	Is 5% less than 2014	Is less than 30%	Is less than 20%	Is less than 30%	Is less than 20%	Is less than 2014	Is 10% less than 2014	Is less than 2014	Is 10% less than 2014	Is above target		
No removals	0.0	0.0	0.0%	5/100	<1/100	23/100	4/100	3/100	<1/100	1/100	<1/100	0/100	0/100	0/100	0/100	0/100		
FCEY = 0	11.4	0.0	5.0%	31/100	<1/100	32/100	18/100	3/100	<1/100	2/100	<1/100	0/100	0/100	0/100	0/100	<1/100		
	20.0	8.5	10.1%	33/100	<1/100	37/100	24/100	4/100	<1/100	3/100	<1/100	<1/100	<1/100	<1/100	<1/100	<1/100		
	30.0	18.2	15.9%	39/100	<1/100	66/100	41/100	4/100	<1/100	5/100	<1/100	5/100	2/100	8/100	4/100	7/100		
Blue Line	36.4	24.5	19.7%	56/100	1/100	82/100	63/100	5/100	<1/100	6/100	1/100	43/100	20/100	74/100	47/100	50/100		
	40.0	28.0	21.8%	68/100	1/100	87/100	73/100	5/100	<1/100	8/100	1/100	85/100	52/100	96/100	84/100	92/100		
	45.0	32.8	24.7%	82/100	4/100	93/100	83/100	6/100	1/100	10/100	1/100	>99/100	95/100	>99/100	99/100	>99/100		
<i>status quo</i>	48.5	36.1	26.7%	88/100	8/100	95/100	87/100	6/100	1/100	13/100	1/100	>99/100	>99/100	>99/100	>99/100	>99/100		
	55.0	42.6	30.5%	95/100	23/100	98/100	94/100	6/100	1/100	19/100	2/100	>99/100	>99/100	>99/100	>99/100	>99/100		
	60.0	47.5	33.5%	98/100	38/100	99/100	97/100	7/100	1/100	26/100	2/100	>99/100	>99/100	>99/100	>99/100	>99/100		
				a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m		

The application of the current harvest policy, consistent with the approach used in recent stock assessments, produces the “Blue Line” harvest option of Table 1 (shown as the dark shaded area in the table), with a coastwide Fishery CEY of 24.5 Mlb. Refinements in the decision table directed by the Commission at the Interim Meeting will be included in the final staff harvest advice presented at the Annual Meeting. Alternative metrics of performance, as well as different increments of total removals, may be considered in the Commission’s decision-making process. It should also be noted that the current harvest policy is under review through the Management Strategy Evaluation process with the Management Strategy Advisory Board (MSAB).

The apportionment of the Blue Line harvest level by regulatory area – as an example only – is presented in Table 2. (Note that the 2014 FCEY totals for Areas 2C and 3A include commercial wastage and the guided recreational catch. This is based on the assumption that the Catch Share Plan for those Areas will be approved by the U.S. Department of Commerce.) Apportionment tables for other choices of removals will be provided at the Commission’s direction. For comparison, the catch levels adopted in 2013 are presented in Table 3.

Table 2. Apportionment results for the Blue Line. Values for biomass, CEY, and removals are reported in millions of net pounds.

	2A	2B	2C	3A	3B	4A	4B	4CDE	Total
Exploitable biomass	4.03	26.64	25.44	56.07	23.14	9.69	7.23	18.06	170.29
Percent of total	2.4%	15.6%	14.9%	32.9%	13.6%	5.7%	4.2%	10.6%	100.0%
Harvest rate	21.5%	21.5%	21.5%	21.5%	16.1%	16.1%	16.1%	16.1%	19.7%
Total CEY	0.87	5.73	5.47	12.05	3.73	1.56	1.17	2.91	33.49
Other removals (O26)	0.14	0.74	1.31	2.63	0.90	0.71	0.34	2.27	9.04
Fishery CEY	0.72	4.98	4.16*	9.43*	2.84	0.85	0.82	0.64	24.45

*For comparison with analyses from previous years, the breakdown of the FCEY is as follows:

2C = 3.32 directed fishery landings + 0.08 commercial wastage + 0.76 guided recreational;

3A = 7.32 directed fishery landings + 0.33 commercial wastage + 1.78 guided recreational

Table 3. Apportionment results for the adopted catch levels in 2013. Values for biomass, CEY, and removals are reported in millions of net pounds.

	2A	2B	2C	3A	3B	4A	4B	4CDE	Total
Exploitable biomass	3.81	24.54	23.28	70.38	26.02	11.97	6.75	19.74	186.49
Percent of total	2.0%	13.2%	12.5%	37.7%	14.0%	6.4%	3.6%	10.6%	100.0%
Harvest rate	29.0%	31.7%	21.6%	24.2%	22.6%	20.3%	28.6%	21.7%	24.4%
Total CEY	1.11	7.78	5.02	17.07	5.87	2.43	1.93	4.28	45.48
Other removals (O26)	0.11	0.73	2.05	6.04	1.58	1.10	0.48	2.35	14.45
Fishery CEY	0.99	7.04	2.97	11.03	4.29	1.33	1.45	1.93	31.03

How to Submit Catch Limit Proposals for 2014

The Commission invites public comment or proposals regarding the 2014 catch limits or harvest advice. Proposals or comments should be submitted to the Commission **by December 31, 2013**. The submission

form can be obtained from the Annual Meeting page of the IPHC website (<http://www.iphc.int/meetings-and-events/annual-meeting.html>) or by calling the IPHC office at (206) 634-1838. A running summary of all submitted proposals is posted on the IPHC website.

Public Comment Period Extended to December 17 for Halibut Bycatch Report

Since 2011, a Halibut Bycatch Project Team, composed of IPHC Commissioners and Canadian and U.S. agency staff, has been reviewing the status of halibut bycatch. The Team has also explored options for reducing and mitigating halibut bycatch mortality. The Team has completed a draft report of its findings, which is available for public comment (<http://www.iphc.int/research/245-bycatch.html>). The Project Team's consideration of the report's findings will benefit from stakeholder's views, so a public comment period has been established for this purpose. **Based on comments received to date, the Commission has decided to reopen the comment period until December 17.** Comments can be submitted via email using the following address: bycatchreportcomments@iphc.int

The Commission will carefully review the report, taking into consideration the feedback received during the public comment period, as it develops priorities and recommendations for long-term bycatch reduction and mitigation. Significant discussion of the report is expected to take place at the upcoming Annual Meeting.

Looking Ahead to the 2014 Annual Meeting

The Ninetieth Annual Meeting of the International Pacific Halibut Commission will be held from **Monday, January 13 through Friday, January 17, 2014** at the Grand Hyatt Seattle in Seattle, Washington. The meeting is scheduled to open on Monday with presentations on the fishery, the 2013 stock assessment, and the harvest decision table, and conclude on Friday with Commission approval of catch limits and regulations.

All public sessions and administrative sessions will be open to the public. These open sessions will also be webcast.

The Grand Hyatt Seattle is located at 721 Pine Street in downtown Seattle. **A block of rooms has been reserved for Annual Meeting attendees at the hotel until December 23, 2013** at a special rate of \$137, plus taxes. After the cut-off date, the special rate and/or rooms may not be available. For reservations please visit the meeting reservation site at <https://resweb.passkey.com/go/IntlPacificHalibutCommission>. If phoning for reservations, please call (402) 592-6464 or (888) 735-2954 and identify yourself as attending the International Pacific Halibut Commission Annual Meeting to receive the special rate and ensure room availability.

The 2014 IPHC Annual Meeting Schedule of Sessions and the corresponding hotel meeting room locations will be released in the coming weeks. The most up-to-date information regarding the Annual Meeting can be found on the Annual Meeting page of the Commission's website (<http://www.iphc.int/meetings-and-events/annual-meeting.html>) or by calling the IPHC office at (206) 634-1838. The Commission's website will be updated regularly with new information, including the agenda, meeting reports, and presentations, as the meeting date approaches.

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