



December 5, 2014

### **INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION INTERIM MEETING 2014 AND PRELIMINARY STAFF HARVEST ADVICE (DECISION TABLE)**

The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) conducted its Interim Meeting at the Hotel Deca in Seattle on December 2 and 3, 2014. 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 2014 Stock Assessment**

A thorough exploration of data sources for the entire historical record was completed during 2013. Notable changes to the input data used for the 2014 stock assessment include the data sets aggregated to geographical regions and a full re-processing of the historical setline survey catch-per-unit-effort time-series. In addition, recreational discard mortality is now included in estimated removals.

This year's stock assessment is based on the probability distributions derived from an ensemble of four stock assessment models, thereby incorporating the uncertainty within each model as well as the uncertainty among models. This approach results in reduced potential for abrupt changes in management quantities as improvements and additional data are added to individual models, and a stronger basis for risk assessment. For 2014, the ensemble included both short and long time-series models based on both coastwide and Areas-As-Fleets (AAF) data structures. The AAF approach models the population as a coastwide stock, but fits to each of the regional datasets for the fishery and survey, allowing for region-specific selectivity and catchability.

The results of the 2014 stock assessment indicate that the Pacific halibut stock declined continuously from the late 1990s to around 2010. That trend is estimated to have been a result of decreasing size at age, as well as recent recruitment strengths that are much smaller than those observed through the 1980s and 1990s. Since that time period, the estimated female spawning biomass appears to have stabilized near 200 million pounds. Comparison with previous stock assessments indicates that the 2014 results are very consistent with estimates from 2012 and 2013 for the recent time period.

An executive summary of the 2014 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 2015**

The IPHC staff harvest advice is prepared for the Commission's consideration as it sets the annual catch limits. The staff harvest advice is summarized in a decision table (Table 1, next page), which presents estimates of risk over a range of potential harvest choices for 2015 (the rows) as measured by different stock and fishery metrics (the columns).

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**Table 1. 2015 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 2014.

2015 Alternative	Total removals (M lb)	Fishery CEY (M lb)	Fishing Intensity	Stock Trend				Stock Status				Fishery Trend				Fishery Status		
				Spawning biomass				Spawning biomass				Fishery CEY from the harvest policy				Harvest rate		
				In 2016		In 2018		In 2016		In 2018		In 2016		In 2018		In 2015		In 2015
				Is less than 2015	Is 5% less than 2015	Is less than 2015	Is 5% less than 2015	Is less than 30%	Is less than 20%	Is less than 30%	Is less than 20%	Is less than 2015	Is 10% less than 2015	Is less than 2015	Is 10% less than 2015	Is above target		
No removals	0.0	0.0	F <sub>100%</sub>	<1/100	<1/100	<1/100	<1/100	5/100	<1/100	1/100	<1/100	<1/100	<1/100	<1/100	<1/100	<1/100	0/100	
FCEY = 0	13.1	0.0	F <sub>73%</sub>	<1/100	<1/100	<1/100	<1/100	5/100	<1/100	2/100	<1/100	<1/100	<1/100	<1/100	<1/100	<1/100	<1/100	
	20.0	7.7	F <sub>64%</sub>	<1/100	<1/100	1/100	<1/100	6/100	<1/100	3/100	<1/100	<1/100	<1/100	<1/100	<1/100	<1/100	<1/100	
	30.0	16.5	F <sub>54%</sub>	3/100	<1/100	17/100	4/100	7/100	<1/100	5/100	<1/100	3/100	2/100	3/100	2/100	4/100	4/100	
Blue Line	38.7	25.0	F <sub>46%</sub>	19/100	<1/100	40/100	23/100	8/100	<1/100	8/100	<1/100	37/100	22/100	36/100	23/100	50/100	50/100	
status quo	41.4	27.5	F <sub>45%</sub>	26/100	1/100	47/100	30/100	8/100	<1/100	9/100	1/100	57/100	37/100	51/100	38/100	50/100	50/100	
Maintain 2014 SPR	43.3	29.5	F <sub>43%</sub>	31/100	1/100	56/100	36/100	8/100	<1/100	10/100	1/100	73/100	51/100	63/100	49/100	88/100	88/100	
	50.0	36.0	F <sub>39%</sub>	44/100	5/100	75/100	51/100	9/100	1/100	13/100	1/100	99/100	91/100	95/100	84/100	>99/100	>99/100	
	60.0	45.8	F <sub>34%</sub>	65/100	22/100	96/100	82/100	11/100	1/100	23/100	2/100	>99/100	>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 25.02 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 results and the Blue Line harvest level by regulatory area – as an example only – is presented in Table 2. For comparison, the 2014 Blue Line catch levels and the *status quo* of carrying the 2014 catch levels forward for 2015 are also presented in Table 2. Catch tables for other choices of removals will be provided at the Commission’s direction.

**Table 2. Apportionment results and catch tables\* for the 2015 Blue Line, with catch tables for the 2014 Blue Line and the *status quo* – maintaining 2014 adopted FCEYs for 2015 – for comparison. Values in the first section of the table are reported in percentages; values below that are reported in millions of net pounds.**

	2A*	2B*	2C*	3A*	3B	4A	4B	4CDE	Sum
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**Apportionment results for 2015**

Apportionment	2.2%	14.8%	15.1%	33.5%	12.1%	6.7%	3.8%	11.9%	100.0%
Harvest Rate Targets	21.5%	21.5%	21.5%	21.5%	16.1%	16.1%	16.1%	16.1%	19.6%
Target TCEY distribution	2.4%	16.2%	16.5%	36.6%	9.9%	5.5%	3.1%	9.8%	100.0%

**2014 Blue Line catch table**

Total O26 non-FCEY	0.14	0.74	1.31	2.63	0.90	0.71	0.34	2.27	9.04
Total FCEY	0.72	4.98	4.16	9.43	2.84	0.85	0.82	0.64	24.44
TCEY - Total O26	0.86	5.72	5.47	12.06	3.74	1.56	1.16	2.91	33.48
Total U26	0.01	0.04	0.01	0.52	0.30	0.48	0.14	1.42	2.92
Total mortality	0.87	5.76	5.48	12.58	4.04	2.04	1.30	4.33	36.40

**2015 Blue Line catch table**

Total O26 non-FCEY	0.08	0.80	1.55	2.88	1.06	0.60	0.38	3.11	10.46
Total FCEY	0.75	4.96	4.30	10.12	2.46	1.35	0.72	0.37	25.02
TCEY - Total O26	0.84	5.75	5.85	13.00	3.51	1.95	1.10	3.48	35.48
Total U26	0.00	0.03	0.01	0.50	0.50	0.40	0.06	1.75	3.24
Total mortality	0.84	5.78	5.85	13.49	4.01	2.35	1.16	5.23	38.72

**Status quo catch table - maintaining 2014 adopted FCEYs for 2015**

Total O26 non-FCEY	0.09	0.86	1.55	2.88	1.09	0.58	0.40	3.15	10.60
Total FCEY	0.96	6.85	4.16	9.43	2.84	0.85	1.14	1.29	27.52
TCEY - Total O26	1.05	7.71	5.71	12.31	3.93	1.43	1.54	4.44	38.12
Total U26	0.00	0.03	0.01	0.49	0.50	0.40	0.06	1.75	3.25
Total mortality	1.05	7.74	5.72	12.81	4.44	1.83	1.59	6.19	41.37

\* In accordance with the current Catch Share Plans, the Area 2A FCEY includes the sport, commercial, and tribal fisheries, the Area 2B FCEY includes the sport and commercial fisheries, and the Areas 2C and 3A FCEYs include the commercial and the guided recreational fisheries, and incidental mortality for both.

## How to Submit Catch Limit Proposals for 2015

The Commission invites public comment or proposals regarding the 2015 catch limits or harvest advice. Proposals or comments should be submitted to the Commission **by December 31, 2014**. 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.

## Communications Survey

The IPHC is conducting a survey of its stakeholders to gauge the quality and effectiveness of its current communications and to gather recommendations for improving the communications flow. It is important to gather as many survey responses as possible, and all members of the halibut community are invited to take the survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/IPHC2014CS>. The survey is open now and will remain open through December 31. Results and analysis will be presented at the Annual Meeting.

## Looking Ahead to the 2015 Annual Meeting

The Ninety-First Annual Meeting of the International Pacific Halibut Commission will be held from **Monday, January 26 through Friday, January 30, 2015 at the Vancouver Marriott Pinnacle Downtown Hotel in Vancouver, British Columbia**. This year's meeting is scheduled to open on Monday with presentations on the fishery, the 2014 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.**

A block of rooms has been reserved for Annual Meeting attendees at the Vancouver Marriott Pinnacle Downtown Hotel, located at 1128 West Hastings Street in downtown Vancouver. For reservations, please visit the meeting reservation site at [https://resweb.passkey.com/Resweb.do?mode=welcome\\_ei\\_new&eventID=11203744](https://resweb.passkey.com/Resweb.do?mode=welcome_ei_new&eventID=11203744).

The most up-to-date information regarding the Annual Meeting, including the schedule and the corresponding hotel meeting room locations, 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 and meeting reports, webcast information, and presentations, as the meeting date approaches.

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