

News Release



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May 20, 2015

JUVENILE HALIBUT TO BE TAGGED ON TRAWL SURVEY

Project description

From May through August 2015, the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) will be releasing halibut that have been tagged with plastic-coated wire tags on the dark side of the head. Tagging will take place on the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) trawl surveys in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea. Most of the halibut that will be tagged and released on the trawl surveys will be less than the minimum commercial size limit (32 in or 81 cm) and if recaptured, are likely to be caught by trawl gear. IPHC is asking harvesters to look for tagged halibut, and, if possible, to leave the tag on the fish until examined by IPHC personnel or a federal groundfish observer.

The main goal of this tagging project is to gather data on juvenile halibut movement and growth. Migration information on adult halibut has been well documented in recent tagging studies, but less is known about juvenile halibut movement. This year will be the first in what is expected to be an ongoing tagging effort aboard the NMFS trawl surveys. Data from tag recoveries from this project will be very helpful in increasing the IPHC's understanding of juvenile halibut movement in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska. The more tags that are returned over the course of the study, the higher will be the quality of results.

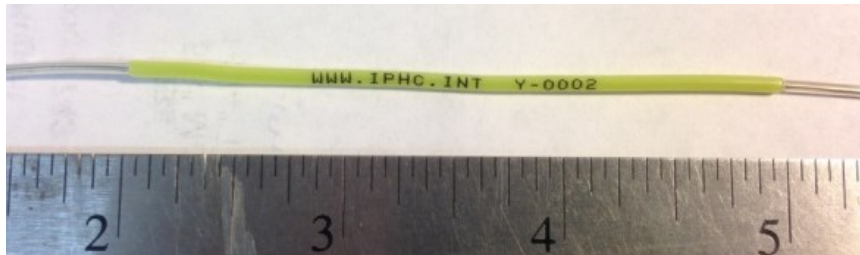
The plastic-coated wire tags used in the trawl tagging study are fluorescent yellow in color, showing the letters "www.IPHC.int" and a 4-digit number preceded by the letter Y (see photo and diagram below). Tagged halibut of any size may be retained from any gear, although undersized halibut may not be sold. Each recovered tag will be redeemed for a halibut tag reward cap or \$5.00.

Instructions for recovered tags

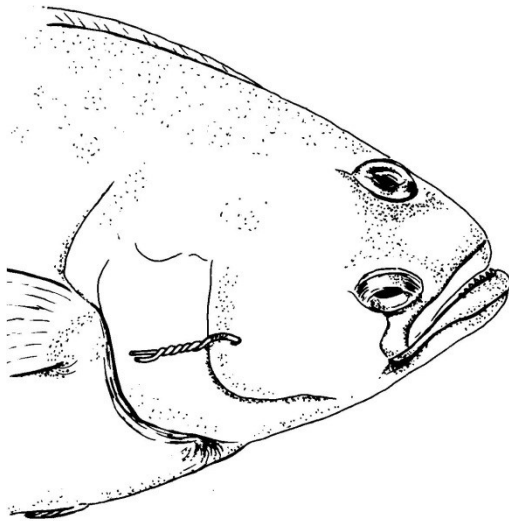
IPHC has samplers in Dutch Harbor, Kodiak, Homer, Seward, Sitka, Juneau, and Petersburg, AK as well as Prince Rupert, Port Hardy, and Vancouver in BC throughout the commercial halibut season. IPHC also has samplers in Sand Point, AK from June to August and in St. Paul, AK during July and August. If the recovery vessel is landing in an IPHC-staffed port, IPHC port samplers will redeem recovered tags and collect the tag and data. Alternatively, if a federal groundfish observer is on board the vessel or present at the offload facility, the observer can remove the tag and forward it with the following information: recovery date, recovery location (latitude/longitude preferred), fish length, sex, and ear bones (if possible), and finder's name and address to the IPHC's Seattle office.

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If a tagged halibut is recaptured on a vessel not carrying an observer or fish are offloaded at a port not staffed by IPHC or federal observers, harvesters should remove the tag and forward it with the recovery information described above to the IPHC's Seattle office. Include the vessel and finder's name and address so a reward can be mailed. IPHC strongly encourages harvesters, observers, and plant personnel to watch for and retain all tagged halibut, and to return the tags with as much information as possible.



Tag to be used in trawl tagging project that will begin in 2015.



Location of tag on fish.

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