

News Release



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INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION INTERIM MEETING 2015 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 1 and 2, 2015. 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 2015 Stock Assessment

As has been the case since 2012, this year's stock assessment is based on an ensemble of models, thereby incorporating the uncertainty within each model as well as the uncertainty among models. This approach reduces potential for abrupt changes in management quantities as improvements and additional data are added to individual models, and provides a more realistic perception of uncertainty than any single model, and therefore a stronger basis for risk assessment. As in 2014, the models included in the ensemble consist of two long time-series models, reconstructing historical dynamics back to the beginning of the modern fishery, and two short time-series models incorporating data from 1996 to the present, the period when all sources of removals and surveys are available for all regions. For each time-series length there are two models, one fitted to coastwide aggregate data and the other to data disaggregated into geographic regions.

The results of the 2015 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 smaller than those observed during the 1980s and 1990s. Since then, the estimated female spawning biomass appears to have stabilized near 200 million pounds, with slightly increasing trends. Comparison with previous stock assessments indicates that the 2015 results are very consistent with estimates from 2012 through 2014 for the recent time period.

An executive summary of the 2015 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 2016

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 2016 (the rows) as measured by different stock and fishery metrics (the columns). 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 in January. Alternative metrics of performance, as well as different increments of total removals, may be considered in the Commission's decision-making process.

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Table 1. 2016 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 darker shaded area in middle of 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 2015.

2016 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 2017		In 2019		In 2017		In 2019		In 2017		In 2019		In 2016		In 2016
				is less than 2016	is 5% less than 2016	is less than 2016	is 5% less than 2016	is less than 30%	is less than 20%	is less than 30%	is less than 20%	is less than 2016	is 10% less than 2016	is less than 2016	is 10% less than 2016	is above target		
No removals	0.0	0.0	F _{100%}	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	0		
FCEY = 0	11.6	0.0	F _{79%} 60%-84%	<1	<1	<1	<1	1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1		
	20.0	8.2	F _{68%} 49%-75%	<1	<1	3	<1	2	<1	1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1		
	30.0	18.0	F _{58%} 39%-67%	3	<1	28	9	2	<1	2	<1	4	2	5	2	7		
Blue Line	38.7	26.6	F _{51%} 33%-61%	19	<1	45	32	2	<1	6	<1	44	33	44	35	50		
status quo FCEY	41.4	29.2	F _{49%} 31%-59%	28	<1	48	38	3	<1	7	<1	53	44	50	44	62		
Maintain 2015 SPR	42.9	30.7	F _{48%} 30%-58%	32	<1	50	40	3	<1	8	<1	58	49	53	48	68		
	50.0	37.6	F _{43%} 27%-54%	45	3	64	48	3	<1	14	<1	90	74	82	68	96		
	60.0	47.4	F _{41%} 23%-50%	50	22	73	55	4	<1	23	1	>99	99	>99	97	>99		
				a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m		

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Harvest Policy Results for 2016

The most recent apportionment estimates and the current harvest policy produce the “Blue Line” harvest option of Table 1 (shown as the darker shaded row in the table), with a coastwide Fishery Constant Exploitation Yield (FCEY) of 26.6 Mlb. 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 – are presented in Table 2. For comparison, the 2014 and 2015 Blue Line catch levels and the *status quo* of carrying the 2015 catch levels forward for 2016 are also presented in Table 2. Catch tables for other choices of removals will be provided in the Report of Assessment and Research Activities.

Table 2. Apportionment and summary catch table results* for the 2016 Blue Line, with the Blue Lines for 2014, 2015, and the *status quo* of maintaining the 2015 adopted FCEYs for 2016 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 2016

Apportionment	2.8%	15.3%	15.6%	31.2%	11.4%	6.2%	3.8%	13.6%	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	3.1%	16.8%	17.1%	34.2%	9.4%	5.1%	3.1%	11.1%	100.0%

Summary of the 2016 Blue Line catch table

Total O26 non-FCEY	0.12	0.88	1.58	3.05	0.74	0.55	0.23	2.61	9.76
Total FCEY	1.02	5.22	4.63	9.37	2.67	1.30	0.91	1.44	26.56
TCEY - Total O26	1.13	6.10	6.21	12.43	3.41	1.85	1.14	4.05	36.31
Total U26	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.63	0.23	0.19	0.04	1.26	2.39
Total mortality	1.14	6.13	6.22	13.05	3.64	2.05	1.18	5.30	38.70

FCEY comparison table

2014 Blue Line	0.72	4.98	4.16	9.43	2.84	0.85	0.82	0.64	24.45
2015 Blue Line	0.75	4.96	4.30	10.10	2.46	1.39	0.73	0.52	25.22
<i>Status quo</i> (2015) FCEYs	0.97	7.04	4.65	10.10	2.65	1.39	1.14	1.29	29.22
2016 Blue Line	1.02	5.22	4.63	9.37	2.67	1.30	0.91	1.44	26.56

TCEY comparison table

2014 Blue Line	0.86	5.72	5.47	12.06	3.74	1.56	1.16	2.91	33.48
2015 Blue Line	0.84	5.75	5.85	13.00	3.51	1.95	1.10	3.48	35.48
2016 Blue Line	1.13	6.10	6.21	12.43	3.41	1.85	1.14	4.05	36.31

* 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, as well as incidental mortality for both.

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How to Submit Catch Limit Proposals for 2016

The Commission invites public comment or proposals regarding the 2016 catch limits or harvest advice. Proposals or comments should be submitted to the Commission *by December 31, 2015*. 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 will be posted on the IPHC website.

Looking Ahead to the 2016 Annual Meeting

The Ninety-Second Annual Meeting of the International Pacific Halibut Commission will be held from Monday, January 25 through Friday, January 29, 2016 in Juneau, AK at the Centennial Hall Convention Center. This year's meeting is scheduled to open on Monday with presentations on the fishery, the 2015 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 and their recordings will be posted on the Commission website.

The Goldbelt Hotel (51 Egan Drive) has reserved rooms for \$139/night. Reservations can be made by calling the hotel directly and identifying yourself as part of the "IPHC Annual Meeting" at either (888) 478-6909 or (907) 586-6900. *The block rate is available through December 24, 2015.*

The Westmark Baranof Hotel (127 North Franklin Street) has reserved rooms for \$147/night. Reservations can be made by calling the hotel directly and identifying yourself as part of block "International Pacific Halibut Commission" at either (800) 544-0970 or (907) 586-2660 or online using the block code 'INTE012316' at <http://www.westmarkhotels.com/destinations/juneau-hotel/>. *The block rate is available through December 28, 2015.*

The IPHC has negotiated a 7% discount on Alaska Airlines for travel to and from the Annual Meeting in Juneau between the January 22 and January 31, 2016. To use the discount, please go to <http://www.alaskaair.com/planbook> and enter the code "ECMW535" in the "Discount Code" box.

The 2016 IPHC Annual Meeting schedule and the corresponding convention center meeting room locations will be released as they become available. 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 as the meeting date approaches, including the agenda and meeting reports, webcast information, and presentations.

Commission Membership

The United States Government has announced the appointment of Jeffery Kauffman of Wasilla, Alaska as an IPHC Commissioner, effective December 13, 2015. Mr. Kauffman will be taking the seat currently occupied by United States Commissioner Donald Lane of Homer, Alaska.

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