

# Halibut Association of North America

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June 30, 2012

**TO:** Mr. Michael Pearson  
Dr. James Balsiger  
Mr. Ralph Hoard  
Mr. Philip Lestenkof

**Cc:** Dr. Bruce Leaman

**Re:** Comment on 2012 Performance Review

Dear Commissioners,

The Halibut Association of North America applauds the IPHC's decision to undergo an independent performance review and are encouraged by the steps IPHC has already taken in response to certain aspects of CONCUR's final report.

HANA members have reviewed the final report and reached a consensus of serious concern on four of CONCUR's final 12 recommendations. We are also deeply troubled that the methodology used was flawed, resulting in skewed results. We believe there are three glaring – if unintended – consequences of CONCUR's methodology.

1. The time given for both individual interviews and completion of all interviews was too short. Interviews produced a “snapshot” of participants' views. This approach – a once-only chance to articulate problems and possible solutions – does not engender the deliberative, contemplative type of problem statement that would have been more valuable. Instead, respondents were likely to focus on issues they knew first-hand and from recent experience. In some cases these perceptions, as reiterated in CONCUR's final report, said more about the interviewee than about the Commission or the Secretariat.
2. CONCUR's interview list did not fairly represent IPHC stakeholders. Despite the statement “The list of interviewees was intended to, in aggregate, provide a balanced cross-section of stakeholder perspectives”, 72% of the list was Commission staff,

government employees, academics, and non-directed fishery members. Of all individuals interviewed, only nine were members of the directed fishery, and not one of those operated any processing plants in Alaska. Only 28% of the total respondents are those whose livelihoods depend on the actions taken by IPHC.

3. CONCUR's survey sample was extremely small: 43 individuals out of the 200-300 that may attend an IPHC meeting, and the several thousand who are directly affected by the health of the halibut stocks. Results taken from such a small sample size cannot reliably represent all stakeholders.

The IPHC annual meeting process is a democratic one. We appreciate the public comment period – also a democratic process – for the CONCUR report, and hope that those who did not have a voice in the review process, will now have a chance to participate.

HANA's comments on CONCUR's twelve recommendations for change at the IPHC follow.

1. **ADOPT CLEAR AND COMPREHENSIVE PROTOCOLS/RULES OF PROCEDURE.** HANA supports this recommendation and notes that in 2008 the Processor Advisory Group (PAG) submitted to IPHC the PAG Policy, Operations, and Structure and Statement of Mission to replace an earlier "Guidelines" directive. IPHC approved it in March 2008. It has served well since then as a reference for new members and for individuals who are not eligible but who would like to address PAG members or audit PAG meetings.
2. **IMPROVE COMMISSION TRANSPARENCY.** HANA supports this recommendation.
3. **REVISIT STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRUCTURE.** In the strongest terms possible, HANA members *do not support* this recommendation. While converting "the current stakeholder advisory arrangement into a unified, integrated body" is laudable in an ideal world, it does not reflect reality. We believe each step listed under this recommendation will actually *remove* individual stakeholder voices and replace them with proxies who may have entirely different interests than individual stakeholders.

The specific imperatives listed under Step 1 of this recommendation presume a chaotic, no-one-knows-where-they-belong or what-to-do-once-they-get there mentality at the annual meeting. This may be true of first-timers, but there is no evidence that it is endemic or widespread. New members of industry or the public are welcome to PAG meetings and the plenary sessions that precede and follow them. We find no need to provide staff for note-taking or independent facilitators at the advisory bodies, specifically for the PAG. We also note that these recommendations would incur significant expenses.

Step 2 under this recommendation calls for a Joint Steering Committee for the 2013 Annual Meeting to integrate positions from the PAG and Conference Board for

public presentation to the Commissioners. Already, members of the PAG and Conference Board exchange information on various proposals before both bodies and try to find common ground. Some years this has been formalized with a joint meeting of the leaders of each group. Always, the information exchange goes both ways – someone from the Conference Board will ask how the PAG is leaning toward an issue, and someone from the PAG will ask the Conference Board where they’re heading on another issue. The status quo works, and can be corrected at any time by a consensus of those involved. Formalization of such a process could hurt the overall IPHC by wasting time and incurring additional expenses. We have no objection to a period of public comment following the individual reports from the advisory bodies.

Step 3 under this recommendation creates a Work Team to create a unified stakeholder body of 20-24 individuals. CONCUR’s comments (i.e. “Votes tied to bodies that do not have set and balanced membership are limited in their utility and credibility as they merely reflect the inherent inequities in participation at the table.”) may be referring to the Conference Board more than the PAG, but we strongly disagree that the current make-up and process of either advisory body is broken beyond repair. Further, we believe it is the ideal structure for what is an essential democratic process giving each participant a voice.

HANA members strenuously object to Step 4 as well.

4. **DEVELOP STRATEGIC APPROACH TO RESEARCH.** HANA supports the concept of linking research projects to overall Commission objectives and believe that is being done to a great extent now. A Five-Year Research Plan, if it does not already exist, is a good idea. It should, however, have enough flexibility to respond to urgent concerns, should they arise. Each of the three recommended actions in this section would require additional funding. We strongly urge the Commission to consider the cost/benefit analysis of each.
5. **STRENGTHEN STOCK ASSESSMENT PROCESS.** HANA’s clear support of this recommendation is tempered by the costs associated with the recommended actions outlined in CONCUR’s report. A Work Team to develop specifics of a peer review, an annual process to review the stock assessment and apportionment methodology, an annual review of the assessment model output, and creating a standing Peer Review body will have attendant, and significant costs. HANA strongly urges the Commissioners and/or Secretariat to find additional funding without compromising IPHC’s current or future research budgets.
6. **EXPAND COMMISSION COMPOSITION.** HANA vigorously opposes this recommendation. Indeed, expansion as CONCUR articulated could harm the IPHC process. We strongly believe that adding alternates on a rotating basis will introduce confusion, eliminate continuity, and provide more opportunities for a Balkanization of the process. What problem statement other than to “broaden representation” does this

recommendation address? Any expansion will also bring significant costs to an already overburdened budget.

7. **BUILD A LONG-TERM STRATEGIC PLAN.** If this does not already exist, HANA supports establishing one. The four recommended actions listed in CONCUR's report address important, but procedural and administrative issues. Our concern here is that IPHC's overall mission to protect Pacific Halibut stocks not be lost in these details.
8. **STRUCTURE STAFF ADVICE TO STRENGTHEN THE DELINEATION BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC ANALYSIS AND POLICY OPTIONS.** HANA supports this recommendation, but notes that many actions are a combination of both scientific analysis and policy options, such as setting the harvest rate. Where this can be accomplished, it should be.
9. **COMMISSIONERS SHOULD SEEK AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITIES TO MODEL AND EXERT LEADERSHIP.** HANA supports this recommendation. In addition, HANA recommends that the federal representatives on the Commission have the authority to make decisions for their respective governments. If this is not possible, those members of each nation's government who do have the authority to decide issues should be in attendance at the meetings.
10. **ELEVATE THE IMPORTANCE OF TRIBES AND FIRST NATIONS.** HANA does not support this recommendation for three reasons. First, Tribes and First Nations are and have been part of the IPHC process through each country delegation. Second, we know of no Tribe or First Nation that has the standing of a country or nation that would receive elevated status outside of Canada or the United States. Third and most important, each country should be appointing the very best candidate for any position in the IPHC – whether as Commissioner, member of the Research Advisory Board, or simply to attend a meeting – regardless of their ethnic affiliation.
11. **STRENGTHEN INTERIM AND ANNUAL MEETING PROCESS.** HANA does not support this recommendation. There is no need for a third annual meeting that includes the public or industry. There may be consensus among Commissioners for a third meeting with the Secretariat but HANA supports the status quo of getting materials on line prior to the annual meeting, and monitoring the Interim Meeting via webcast. If the Commissioners agree to a peer review of the assessment and apportionment process, that meeting would provide more information at an earlier date than is currently available.
12. **IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS.** HANA supports this recommendation.

The IPHC was formed at the behest of the halibut industry and government in 1923. HANA, founded in 1961, has been involved with the IPHC in securing State Department funding, serving on advisory bodies, participating in workshops, acting on the Scholarship Committee, and in many other ways. The processors and harvesters are central to the IPHC. We are concerned that individuals who have been involved in the fishery for decades and who have the most to gain or to lose by the actions of the IPHC have not been adequately represented in this report.

We urge the Commissioners, some of whom may be new to this process, to deliberate carefully before making long-term changes to the Commission and Secretariat. HANA sees room for improvement but not the wholesale restructuring CONCUR's report advocates. Please also consider the unintended bias of the results, due to the report's methodology.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely, \_\_\_\_\_

Peggy Parker  
Executive Director

HANA MEMBERS

AERO TRADING  
APICDA J/Vs  
CANADIAN FISHING COMPANY  
DANA F. BESECKER CO., INC.  
HART SALES

HOONAH COLD STORAGE  
ICICLE SEAFOODS, INC.  
NORTH PACIFIC SEAFOODS  
PACIFIC SEAFOOD GROUP

S.M. PRODUCTS LTD  
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SNUG HARBOR SEAFOODS  
TRIDENT SEAFOODS CORP.  
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