



IPHC Closed Area - Removal

PREPARED BY: IPHC SECRETARIAT (30 DECEMBER 2016)

PURPOSE

To remove the IPHC Closed Area, as defined in IPHC Regulation 10, which applies to 'halibut fishing' only.

BACKGROUND

In 1967, the IPHC designated an area in Bristol Bay as being closed to longline fishing (within regulatory Area 4E). The justification for the closure was that it was considered to be a nursery area for juvenile Pacific halibut.

In 1990, Area 4E was expanded into 'inner' Bristol Bay, reducing the closed area to its current boundaries as described in Regulation 10 of the IPHC Regulations (2016).

At the time of the closure's implementation, limited trawling occurred in Bristol Bay. However, over the years, trawling has expanded substantially in the region, and now includes Bristol Bay, thereby negating any likely benefits of a closed area for the directed fishery only.

At the 92nd Session of the IPHC Interim Meeting (29-30 November 2016), the Commission reviewed the draft regulatory proposal from the IPHC Secretariat, and made the following comments/requests:

Removal of the IPHC Closed Area.

IM092, Para 66: *The Commission **REQUESTED** that additional supporting information be provided for consideration at the 93rd Session of the IPHC Annual Meeting, including any supporting evidence for the area as a nursery ground and the likely impacts of the directed fishery being allowed access.*

IM092, Para 67: *The Commission **AGREED** that as appropriate, information on other gears which are currently permitted to fish in the IPHC Closed Area (i.e. trawl), and their impact (i.e. bycatch of juveniles), along with information on the history of the lines marking Areas 4CDE, and past considerations by IPHC and the NPFMC.*

IM092, Para 68: *The Commission **NOTED** that the IPHC Secretariat considers Regulatory Areas 4CDE and the IPHC Closed Area to be a single unit for assessment purposes.*

DISCUSSION

- 1) In response to the Commission's requests detailed in paragraph 66 of the IM092 Report, the IPHC Secretariat have searched and found no scientific evidence/basis indicating that the Area is a nursery ground of any significance, relative to any other grounds, for Pacific halibut. Thus, allowing the directed fishery would have no clear negative impacts on the area as a nursery ground.

- 2) In response to the Commission's request for any other appropriate pertinent information should be provided, (IM092, Para 67), the IPHC Secretariat notes the following:
- *Additional information is provided in Information Paper IPHC-2017-AM093-INF03*
- 3) Noting that the current IPHC Closed Area was previously with Area 4E, the Commission may wish to decide to reincorporate the IPHC Closed Area into Area 4E, as permitted by Article II, para. 3(a) of the IPHC Convention. Reference to the IPHC Closed Area would need to be removed from IPHC Regulation 6, paragraphs 6, 8 and 10 accordingly.

Conclusion: Retaining the IPHC Closed Area (IPHC Regulation 10 (2016) in its current form, whereby the directed fishery is prohibited from fishing within the area, is unfounded, as the designation as a nursery ground has no basis or relevance to the directed Pacific halibut fishery

Sectors Affected: Directed fishery.

SUGGESTED REGULATORY LANGUAGE

Regulation 10: Remove IPHC Regulation 10, Closed Area prior to the opening of the 2018 Fishing Season in 2018, as follows [edits highlight]:

~~10. Closed Area~~

~~All waters in the Bering Sea north of 55°00'00'' N. latitude in Isanotski Strait that are enclosed by a line from Cape Sarichef Light (54°36'00'' N. latitude, 164°55'42'' W. longitude) to a point at 56°20'00'' N. latitude, 168°30'00'' W. longitude; thence to a point at 58°21'25'' N. latitude, 163°00'00'' W. longitude; thence to Strogonof Point (56°53'18'' N. latitude, 158°50'37'' W. longitude); and then along the northern coasts of the Alaska Peninsula and Unimak Island to the point of origin at Cape Sarichef Light are closed to halibut fishing and no person shall fish for halibut therein or have halibut in his/her possession while in those waters except in the course of a continuous transit across those waters. All waters in Isanotski Strait between 55°00'00'' N. latitude and 54°49'00'' N. latitude are closed to halibut fishing.~~

OR, to add a sunset clause to the IPHC Regulations, at the end of Regulation 10, as follows:

10. Closed Area

All waters in the Bering Sea north of 55°00'00'' N. latitude in Isanotski Strait that are enclosed by a line from Cape Sarichef Light (54°36'00'' N. latitude, 164°55'42'' W. longitude) to a point at 56°20'00'' N. latitude, 168°30'00'' W. longitude; thence to a point at 58°21'25'' N. latitude, 163°00'00'' W. longitude; thence to Strogonof Point (56°53'18'' N. latitude, 158°50'37'' W. longitude); and then along the northern coasts of

the Alaska Peninsula and Unimak Island to the point of origin at Cape Sarichef Light are closed to halibut fishing and no person shall fish for halibut therein or have halibut in his/her possession while in those waters except in the course of a continuous transit across those waters. All waters in Isanotski Strait between 55°00'00'' N. latitude and 54°49'00'' N. latitude are closed to halibut fishing. This Section shall expire on 1 March 2017 [or 2018].

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION / REFERENCES

IPHC-2017-AM093-INF03

APPENDICES

Nil.