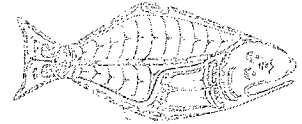


Information Bulletin



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ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS - 1977

The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) receives weekly Arctic Ice Cover Charts from the U.S. Navy Fleet Weather Facility. The charts are prepared from satellite photographs and outline the extent of ice cover over the Bering Sea. They also provide sea surface temperatures for the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska. The conditions indicated for 1977 are warmer than any other year since 1973 when the charts became available. Information from oceanographers of the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service indicates ice conditions to date are similar to those of 1968, the least severe during the last 10 years.

Bristol Bay has been ice free this year. The ice edge was about 100 miles north of St. Paul Island (about 59° 15' N., 170° W.) on March 1 and was receding. Farther west at 175° W., the ice edge only extended south to about 59° 15'. Based on records from previous years, vessels fishing for halibut in the Bering Sea this spring are not likely to encounter any ice on the fishing grounds of Areas A and B. The Corridor Ground in Area C, which has been ice covered during most of the spring seasons since 1970, is ice free at this time. The pack ice in the Bering Sea is free floating and wind conditions can rapidly change the observed positions. Ice reports are received by IPHC on Monday of each week and Captains interested in obtaining information later in March can contact the Commission's office.

The sea surface temperatures of the Gulf of Alaska also were higher during January and February 1977. In the previous years, water temperatures of 2° C (35.6° F) often have extended over much of the Gulf. This year, the 2° C surface water has occurred only in Shelikof Strait and Cook Inlet. Other sources report a similar warming trend along the coast of southeastern Alaska and British Columbia. If the warmer conditions prevail during the spring, the annual shoreward movement of halibut is likely to occur earlier than in the past few years.