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JOINT SABLEFISH LOG COLLECTION PROGRAM BETWEEN IPHC AND NMFS AUKE BAY LAB, ALASKA

The IPHC has again been contracted by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Auke Bay Laboratory (ABL) to collect sablefish log sheets from skippers of vessels landing in the ports where IPHC samplers are located.

Prior to IPHC involvement, there was a voluntary program funded by the fleet to provide CPUE data to the ABL sablefish scientists. The current project was initiated at the request of sablefish skippers, who worked with both agencies on the implementation. In 1999, the initial agreement had IPHC samplers collecting the IFQ distribution log sheets, from the *NMFS Catcher Vessel and Catch Processor DFL Groundfish/IFQ Longline and Pot Gear Logbooks* for sablefish landings. In 2002, the project was expanded to include the collection of sablefish information from vessels under 60 feet using the *IPHC Logbooks*, the *Alaska Hook-and-Line Logbooks* provided by the Petersburg Vessel Owner's Association and Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association, and skipper's logbooks.

The fleet is voluntarily giving the sablefish information to IPHC staff to be given to the NMFS ABL. Any logbook information provided to the NMFS ABL has a skipper's signature acknowledging and agreeing to the following: 'IPHC will forward to Sablefish Assessment, Auke Bay Lab'.

The IPHC has a strict policy concerning the release of any logbook data, due to the confidentiality of the information. Specific location data identified to vessel are not provided to individuals outside the IPHC. Data are published by aggregate, by larger geographic areas and require three or more vessels. IPHC logs are protected from seizure or subpoena. If NOAA Office for Law Enforcement asks for individual logbook information, the request is made in writing to the IPHC Director and the individual cases are reviewed. The IPHC works closely with enforcement, but the IPHC provides information in the aggregate form or answers specific questions without releasing individual logs.

The IPHC and the NMFS ABL scientists established a Statement of Work to facilitate capture of sablefish information for stock assessment purposes, while maintaining the strict IPHC confidentiality policy. To meet the confidentiality requirements, specific set and landing locations will be provided, but each vessel will be assigned a unique number code, thereby preventing the vessel from being identified. This allows ABL scientists to use the information for stock assessment. In addition to this, the data that are provided to the ABL scientists are not subject to and may not be requested under the Freedom of Information Act. All of these factors contribute to ensuring these data are treated and held under the strictest confidence.

The IPHC is asking for sablefish skippers' cooperation with this important project. IPHC port samplers will continue to collect IFQ distribution log sheets from the NMFS IFQ logbooks. For smaller vessels, all halibut and sablefish sets should be accurately recorded in the *IPHC logbook*. Complete catch and set information is very important in determining the correct CPUE. We also ask that this information be made available to the IPHC port samplers. Only information from logs that have been signed, acknowledging their release to ABL, will be forwarded. The fishers' assistance with this very important program is greatly appreciated.

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