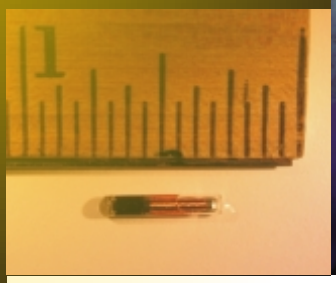
Science

PIT tag insertion


Passive Integrated Transponder tags were used to mark over 65,000 halibut throughout the range of their distribution, from California to the Aleutian Islands. Never before has such a marking experiment of this magnitude been undertaken with a marine species.

Excellence and Innovation

The International Pacific Halibut Commission was the first management body to enact conservation of a Pacific coast marine resource, pre-dating all other trans-boundary management. The Commission pioneered the use of scientific stock assessment and remains a global leader in producing science-based stock management. Knowing that proper stock management requires the best possible information on fishing and catches, the Commission established a network of port samplers throughout Alaska and British Columbia in the 1930s to obtain logbook information from harvesters and biological samples of the catch. This contact network has been a cornerstone of the cooperative relationship of the IPHC and the halibut industry.

The IPHC is a world leader in accounting for all removals (commercial, recreational, ceremonial and subsistence, bycatch, and wastage) in its management program. It has only been through knowledge of all these removals that the Commission has been able to understand changes in stock behavior and abundance. The Commission has played a central role in reducing halibut mortality in non-target fisheries by over 30% in the past decade, to the benefit of the halibut industry. Agencies and stakeholder groups of the U.S. and Canada rely on the Commission to develop sound recommendations based on an accurate understanding of all removals.


The decades-long tradition of collecting biological data in the major landing ports continues today.

International Pacific Halibut Commission

Conductivity, temperature, and depth recorders have been deployed off IPHC-chartered research vessels. Because of the extensive coverage of its setline surveys, IPHC research vessels make ideal platforms for collecting oceanographic and other-species data. In conjunction with other organizations, government agencies, and institutions of higher learning, IPHC has conducted studies on endangered birds, sharks, rockfish, and additional threatened species.

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Pop-up Satellite Transmitting Archival Tags have been used to track halibut movement over time.

The IPHC has been a leader in scientific innovation. Incorporation of new technologies to genetically detect halibut rearing grounds allows the Commission to understand halibut stock structure. In addition, pop-up satellite tags that record temperature and depth of migrating fish help to make the link between summer feeding areas and winter spawning aggregations that can be up to a thousand miles apart, spanning international boundaries.

The dynamics of halibut are closely related to changes in oceanographic conditions throughout the North Pacific Ocean. IPHC scientists have pioneered the understanding and incorporation of climate changes into the assessment and prediction of halibut dynamics. The prime determinant of halibut recruitment changes (the "Pacific Decadal Oscillation") was named by an IPHC scientist and its consideration is an integral component in determining optimal harvest policy for halibut. The large-scale nature of these changes has encouraged the IPHC to partner with many other agencies in understanding the ecosystem of the northeast Pacific Ocean. Our partners include agencies of the federal governments in the U.S. and Canada as well as state and provincial agencies, universities, Native American, and non-governmental organizations.

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