

2.0 Executive summary

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The data collected by the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) each year from the Pacific halibut fishery add to the time-series stretching back to the beginning of the modern fishery in 1888 and are a vital component of the management of the stock in accordance with the IPHC's mandate. In this chapter, we report on Pacific halibut removals from all sectors of the fishery, the sampling and analysis of the commercial catch, and other information related to fishery removals.

In the first series of articles in this chapter we document removals by the different sectors of the Pacific halibut fishery, including the commercial catch (Goen et al. 2017, which also notes regulation changes for 2016), incidental mortality in the commercial fishery (known as “wastage”) (Goen and Stewart 2017), recreational fishery removals (Dykstra 2017a), the personal use harvest (Goen 2017), the allowed retention of Pacific halibut below the minimum size limit (less than 32 inches or 81.3 cm in fork length cm) (U32) in Area 4D/4E (Erikson 2017), and the incidental catch and mortality of Pacific halibut in other fisheries (the mortality due to “bycatch”) (Dykstra 2017b).

The second series of articles report our analysis of Pacific halibut fishery removals, primarily from the sampling performed by the IPHC. Erikson and Kong 2017 describes the IPHC port sampling program and the data it collected. Data derived from the port sampling program include the age distribution of the commercial catch (Forsberg 2017). While the IPHC has been analyzing otoliths since the 1920s, this was the first year that Pacific halibut weight data were collected from all ports staffed with IPHC samplers throughout the fishing season, with the weighing of Pacific halibut integrated into the sampling of Pacific halibut for length and age data. These length-weight data are reported in Webster and Erikson 2017. The pilot program to voluntarily mark the sex of Pacific halibut as the fish are dressed on board commercial fishing vessels at sea was carried out in Area 2B in 2016 and is being recommended to expand coast-wide in 2017 (Loher et al. 2017). This program has the potential to fill an important gap in our understanding of the composition of the commercial catch, particularly as compared to the IPHC's annual fishery-independent setline survey catch.

Also included in this chapter are two supporting reports. Dykstra 2017c describes the Prohibited Species Donation program, in which Pacific halibut caught as bycatch are allowed to be retained for donation to food-bank programs. Finally, Leaman and Stewart 2017 presents a primer on the history and development of the Discard Mortality Rates (DMR) used to account for mortality resulting from various removals. This article forms part of a larger ongoing scientific conversation about DMR which is expected to continue in coming years.

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