

2.5 Retention of U32 Pacific halibut in the 2016 Area 4D/4E CDQ Pacific halibut fisheries

Lara M. Erikson

Abstract

Since 1998, commercial Pacific halibut vessels fishing for certain Community Development Quota (CDQ) organizations in Area 4E have been permitted by the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) to retain U32 Pacific halibut (less than 32 inches or 81.3 cm in fork length), under an exemption requested by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. Beginning in 2002, the retention allowance was expanded to also include vessels that land all of their annual catch in IPHC Regulatory Areas 4D or 4E. The amount of retained U32 Pacific halibut has ranged from 3,590 pounds (1.6 t) in 1998 to as much as 30,267 pounds (13.7 t) in 2001. In 2016, a total of 5,457 pounds (2.5 t) was reported by three CDQ organizations, an increase of 17% from 2015. This harvest is in addition to the subsistence harvest reported by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game for these regulatory areas.

Program history

At its 1998 Annual Meeting, the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) approved a two-year exemption to the regulation requiring the discard of U32 Pacific halibut (<32 inches or 81.3 cm fork length), applicable only to vessels fishing in Regulatory Area 4E, and a reporting requirement was added for the 1999 fishery. Another two-year exemption was approved at the 2000 Annual Meeting, covering the 2000 and 2001 fishing seasons. At the 2002 Annual Meeting, the IPHC agreed to extend the allowance to Community Development Quota (CDQ) organizations with allocations for Regulatory Area 4D, and to amend the regulation to apply only to vessels that land all of their catch in Areas 4D or 4E. The IPHC also agreed to review the regulation at the end of 2002 to see if the exemption was still necessary under the subsistence fishery regulations being drafted, at the time, by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and National Marine Fisheries Service.

In 2007, the IPHC made a minor change in the reporting requirements. In previous years, the organizations were required to report their retained amounts to IPHC staff by 15 November. This date was originally established as it coincided with the closure of the Individual Fishing Quota fishery at that time, and was believed to provide sufficient time for data compilation and subsequent submission by the affected organizations. In later years, it became apparent that local fishers in Areas 4D and 4E were concluding their fishing well before November. At the same time, IPHC staff found that the original reporting date did not provide sufficient time to receive and compile the reports for Commission review and consideration. At the 2007 Annual Meeting, a proposal to move the reporting date to 1 November was approved and went into effect that year.

The harvests reported herein are reported separately from the household survey conducted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game for the subsistence harvest, where survey participants are instructed to exclude any U32 Pacific halibut retained during commercial fishing. Thus, a complete accounting of subsistence harvests should also include the numbers reported in this document.

Results for 2016

Reports for 2016 were received from three organizations: Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation (BBEDC), Coastal Villages Regional Fund (CVRF), and Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (NSED). The reports are summarized below, and the reported amounts of retained U32 Pacific halibut are shown in [Table 1](#). Overall U32 landings in 2016 totaled 5,457 pounds (2.5 t), up 17% from 2015. Generally, annual changes are a reflection of the amount of effort by the local small boat fleets and the availability of fish in their nearshore fisheries. Additional details are provided in the following sections.

Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation

BBEDC requires their fishers to record the lengths of retained U32 Pacific halibut in a separate log, which are tabulated by BBEDC at the conclusion of the season. The lengths were converted to weights using the IPHC length/weight relationship and summed to estimate the total retained U32 weight. Pacific halibut were landed by BBEDC vessels primarily at Togiak, with a lesser amount landed in Dillingham and a minor amount landed in Naknek.

BBEDC reported 20 fishers landed 403 U32 Pacific halibut for a total of 3,456 pounds (1.6 t) (net). This was up 40% from 2015. The fish had an average size of 8.6 pounds (3.9 kg) (net) and 94% of the Pacific halibut were 26 inches (66 cm) or greater in fork length.

Coastal Villages Regional Fund

The report from CVRF was received on 8 November 2016. In 2016, CVRF reported that no Pacific halibut were landed by their fishers or received by their facilities. This is the second year that CVRF has reported no catch.

Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation

NSED's report was received on 28 November 2016. NSED required their fishers to offload the U32 Pacific halibut for weighing. Ice was removed but the fish were not washed nor the heads removed. The U32 Pacific halibut were then returned to the fishers. U32 fish were retained from landings made from 28 July through 19 August, earlier than previous years. NSED reported 230 U32 Pacific halibut weighing 2,269 pounds (1.0 t) in "head-on with slime" weight, or 2,001 pounds (0.9 t) net weight. The fish had an average weight of 8.7 pounds (3.9 kg) (net). All fish were caught in the local CDQ fishery, and delivered to the Nome plant. The amount retained in 2016 was a decrease of 9% from 2015.

Table 1. Reported annual amount (pounds, net weight) of U32 (<32 inches in fork length) Pacific halibut retained by Community Development Quota harvesters fishing in IPHC Regulatory Areas 4D and 4E.

Year	Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation	Coastal Villages Regional Fund	Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation	Total
1998	2,690	900	-	3,590
1999	418	7,483	-	7,901
2000	3,772	9,618	-	13,390
2001	10,773	19,494	-	30,267
2002	6,593	7,473	4,371	18,437
2003	6,346	5,034	2,961	14,341
2004	4,826	7,120	4,242	16,188
2005	8,750	11,335	3,136	23,221
2006	2,836	13,467	3,407	19,710
2007	3,135	11,398	4,516	19,049
2008	1,816	12,926	6,924	21,666
2009	922	4,277	6,060	11,259
2010	2,155	3,924	3,438	9,517
2011	2,752	9,909	4,206	16,867
2012	5,095	10,424	4,668	20,187
2013	3,493	5,250	1,290	10,033
2014	3,456	963	1,114	5,533
2015	2,460	0	2,206	4,666
2016	3,456	0	2,001	5,457
% Change 2015-2016	+40.5	0	-9.3	+17.0
Average 2012-2016	3,592	3,327	2,256	9,175