Subsistence Harvests of Pacific Halibut in Alaska, 2016

Division of Subsistence
Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Presentation to the
International Pacific Halibut Commission

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For the full study findings, see:
Project Background

• New subsistence regulations in effect May 2003
• 118 communities and 123 tribes eligible, plus residents of designated rural areas
• Registration requirement (SHARC)
• Regulations have provision for collecting harvest data
• This report covers the 12th year of the harvest assessment program (harvests in 2016)
• Due to funding constraints, the project did not document 2013 or 2015 harvests and will not document 2017 harvests
• If funding available, could continue for 2018
Methods

• Mailed survey is primary data collection method; response voluntary
• Mailed to all persons holding SHARCds during 2016: 8,779
• Three rounds of mailings
• Supplemented by contacts & interviews in 5 communities in southeast and western AK
• Harvests of some non-SHARC holders (146) included in estimates
• Total target group = 8,925 potential fishers
Sample Achievement for 2016

• 5,862 surveys returned, of 8,925 potential fishers
• Sampling fraction of 66%
• High rates of return achieved in most larger communities with the most SHARCs issued
Study Findings: Halibut 2016

• Estimated number of subsistence fishers = 4,408
• Estimated subsistence harvest = 36,815 halibut
• Estimated subsistence harvest = 727,178 lbs net weight (= 75% of round weight) (19.8 lbs/fish)
• 60% of harvest occurred in Area 2C (SE Alaska), 31% in Area 3A (SC Alaska), & 6% in Area 4E (East Bering Sea Coast)
• 75% of harvest taken with setline gear; 25% with hand-operated gear

12-year average = 5,166 fishers

- 2003: 23.7 lb
- 2004: 22.8 lb
- 2005: 21.1 lb
- 2006: 20.8 lb
- 2007: 19.2 lb
- 2008: 18.2 lb
- 2009: 19.0 lb
- 2010: 18.4 lb
- 2011: 18.3 lb
- 2012: 18.5 lb
- 2014: 18.7 lb
- 2016: 19.8 lb
Percentage of Subsistence Halibut Harvest by Regulatory Area Fished, 2016

- Area 4B-West Aleutians: 0.6%
- Area 4C-Pribilofs: 0.6%
- Area 4D-Central Bering Sea: 0%
- Area 4E-East Bering Sea Coast: 5.7%
- Area 3B-AK Peninsula: 2.0%
- Area 3A-Southcentral: 30.6%
- Area 2C-Southeast: 60.0%

N = 727,178 pounds net weight
Subsistence harvests by area ranged from 6.4% in Area 2C to 0.4% in Area 3B
Conclusions: Harvest Survey, 2016

• Overall, 2016 harvest survey was a success: good response rates and overall reliable harvest estimates
• Can discern some general patterns in the fishery since the new regulations came into effect
• Reasons for overall decline in harvests likely complex and require further investigation
• Concerns about nonrenewal of SHARCs, especially in certain regulatory areas
• Need to supplement mailed SHARC survey with in-person survey in portions of Area 4
• Recommendation to continue harvest monitoring
For More Information

• Division of Subsistence Website: www.subsistence.adfg.state.ak.us and go to publications for final report
• Or: call us at 907-465-4147, or 465-3617, or 267-2353
• Or write: ADF&G, Division of Subsistence, 333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK, 99518
• Or contact NMFS at: 1-800-304-4846 (option 2) or www.fakr.noaa.gov/ram/subsistence/halibut.htm