



Review of the use of pot gear in the Gulf of Alaska 2017-19

PREPARED BY: IPHC SECRETARIAT (30 DECEMBER 2019)

PURPOSE

To provide the Commission with data and observations from three years of experience with the retention of Pacific halibut caught in pot gear incidental to the sablefish fishery in the Gulf of Alaska.

BACKGROUND

In 2016, the IPHC approved the retention of Pacific halibut caught in pot gear incidental to the Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) sablefish fishery in the Gulf of Alaska. From the minutes of the 2016 Annual Meeting (AM092):

8) The IPHC approved longline pot gear as a legal gear for the commercial halibut fishery in Alaska when NMFS [NOAA Fisheries] regulations permit the use of this gear in the IFQ sablefish fishery. The IPHC will review the measure in three years.

Mr. Alverson noted that the IPHC would like an MRA [Maximum Retention Allowance] to ensure that halibut is not targeted in the pots, but instead remains an incidental catch inside this fishery. However, there is not yet any data on which to base a limit. The three year review will include that analysis.

At the time of the adoption of this regulatory change, the Commission expected the necessary NOAA Fisheries rule to be in place for the 2016 fishing season. It was not implemented until March 2017, however, which was noted by the Commission at the 2017 Annual Meeting (AM093):

From [IPHC-2017-AM093-03](#):

AM92.13	Sablefish pots: Staff to schedule review of retention of halibut in sablefish pots prior to 2018 Interim Meeting.	Pending: Nil progress to date. Suggested action revision: As the new pots regulation go into effect in 2017, this review should be rescheduled for completion in 2020, thereby encompassing three years of data under the new regulation.
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The 2019 fishery was the third year of implementation, thus occasioning this report to the Commission.

DISCUSSION

Table 1 lists the landings of Pacific halibut caught in pot gear incidental to the IFQ sablefish fishery in IPHC Regulatory Areas 2C, 3A, and 3B for the three years that this regulation has been in effect.

Table 1. Landings with pot gear in IPHC Regulatory Areas 2C, 3A, and 3B 2017-19

Year	Landings		
	<i>tonnes (t)</i>	<i>pounds (lb)</i>	<i>percentage of landings</i>
2017	12	27,025	0.18
2018	23	49,983	0.38
2019*	29	63,701	0.47

*Preliminary data (through 20 December 2019)

A small fraction of the overall commercial landings in these IPHC Regulatory Areas is taken with pot gear, indicating that fishers do not appear to have shifted to targeting Pacific halibut with pot gear, and that an MRA is not currently necessary to limit retention by this gear type.

Note that landings using pot gear are now being reported by the IPHC Secretariat as part of its regular fishery statistics reporting (see paper IPHC-2020-AM096-05), which will allow the Commission to continue monitoring the relative use of this fishing gear in the commercial fishery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Commission:

- 1) **NOTE** paper IPHC-2020-AM096-INF02, which provides data and observations from three years of experience with the retention of Pacific halibut caught in pot gear incidental to the sablefish fishery in the Gulf of Alaska.
- 2) **NOTE** that the IPHC Secretariat now reports landings using pot gear as part of its regular fisheries statistics reporting, which will allow the Commission to continue monitoring the relative use of this fishing gear in the commercial fishery.

APPENDICES

None