



Stakeholder statements on regulatory proposals

PREPARED BY: IPHC SECRETARIAT (15 AND 25 JANUARY 2021)

PURPOSE

To provide the Commission with a consolidated document containing 'Statements' from stakeholders submitted to the Commission for its consideration at the 97th Session of the IPHC Annual Meeting (AM097).

BACKGROUND

During 2018 and 2019, the IPHC Secretariat made improvements to the [Fishery Regulations](#) portal on the IPHC website, which includes instructions for stakeholders to submit statements to the Commission for its consideration. Specifically:

"Informal Statements by stakeholders should be submitted as an email to the following address, secretariat@iphc.int, which will then be provided to the Commissioners as Stakeholder Statements at each Session.

DISCUSSION

[Table 1](#) provides a list of the Stakeholder Statements received by 1200 on 24 January 2021, which are provided in full in the Appendices. The IPHC Secretariat does not provide commentary on the Statements, but simply collates them in this document for the Commission's consideration.

Table 1. Statements received from stakeholders by received by 1200 on 24 January 2021.

Appendix No.	Title and author	Date received
Appendix I	Statement by James Kearns	24 November 2020
Appendix II	Statement by Linda Behnken	19 January 2021
Appendix III	Statement by Garrett Elwood	24 January 2021
Appendix IV	Statement by Josh Padgett	24 January 2021

APPENDICES

As listed in [Table 1](#).

APPENDIX I

Statement by James Kearns

Requested By:	James Kearns
Requester E-mail	jim@fairweatheradventures.net
Date Requested	11/24/2020
IPHC Regulatory Areas that may be affected	All AK
Fishery Sectors	(field not answered)
Explanatory Memorandum	<p>The Pacific Halibut resource is a public resource that should be equally available to all the public sector users, commercial, recreational, and subsistence. It must be managed so that the resource is sustainable for future generations and each user group must participate in the management plan. I believe that the IPHC should institute a change in the catch sharing plan so that all public sector users of the pacific halibut resource have equal access to the resource. Therefore I propose that there be a recreational fishery allocation for pacific halibut that includes all recreational fishermen, guided and unguided. Additionally, I propose that the recreational allocation be at least 40% of the TAC annually. I also propose that the recreational allocation be managed for all recreational fishermen, guided or unguided, with a one fish of any size daily bag limit along with an annual limit. Further, I believe that the main management tool should be a halibut harvest ticket or punch card that must be completed when a halibut is retained and reported and turned in when it is filled or at the end of each year, whichever comes first. The harvest ticket/punch card should report the size in inches of each halibut retained, the waters from which the halibut was taken, and! the gender of the halibut retained. In addition, I propose that the guided angler fish program be discontinued and that there be no mixing of recreational and commercial allocations. It is inconsistent with recreational fishing purposes that a commercial use of the resource be available for recreational fishermen. In fact, the National Park Service does not allow GAF harvests because commercial fishing is not one of the established purposes of the service. I believe that these proposals will 1) provide a more equitable share of the pacific halibut resource for all public sector users, 2) provide for simplified enforcement of recreational halibut harvest regulations, 3) enhance the accuracy of recreational halibut harvest reporting, and 4) maintain a separation between commercial and recreational harvests of pacific halibut.</p>

APPENDIX II

Statement by Linda Behnken

Post Office Box 1229 / Sitka, Alaska 99835 907.747.3400 / FAX 907.747.3462

January 19, 2021

IPHC Commissioners
2320 West Commodore Way Ste 300
Seattle, WA 98119-1287

Subj: Annual Meeting Comments

Dear Commissioners and Halibut Stakeholders,

I am submitting these comments on the 2021 halibut season opening/closing dates and catch limits behalf of the Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association (ALFA). ALFA members fish for halibut across all Gulf of Alaska management areas and some range into the Bering Sea/Aleutian Island. Our members have significant investment in halibut quota share and depend on the halibut resource for their livelihood.

Season Opening/Closing Dates:

ALFA members support a March 7th opening date and a closing date as late in the Fall as possible. The tides are favorable on March 7th, and from a commercial fishing operational and marketing perspective, the longest possible fishing season is desirable.

Coastwide Target Harvest Rate:

ALFA members support using the F43 coastwide harvest rate and the resultant 39 mlbs TCEY for 2021. The F43 target harvest rate was fully evaluated by the recent management strategy evaluation (MSE) and shown to be robust. Section 3.1 of the IPHC Management Strategy Evaluation report (IPHC-2021-AM097-11) notes that slightly more aggressive harvest rates of F42 or F41 may better meet the B36 target biomass objective of the MSE process under the new multi-area model. However, given the current low level of halibut spawning biomass, ALFA members recommend the more conservative F43 target harvest rate.

Regulatory Area TCEY Distribution:

ALFA members acknowledge that the Interim Agreement defines 2A and 2B apportionments for 2021, **HOWEVER**, new information resulting from the MSE establishes that the 70/30 apportionment formula for Area 2B causes significant negative long-term impacts on all US IPHC regulatory areas. These impacts include:

- The ongoing transfer of yield generated by halibut residing in US waters to Canada. This transfer of yield is caused by including a percentage of coastwide TCEY in Area 2B's apportionment formula which is greater than the relative abundance of the halibut resource in 2B, and results in TCEY reductions in all Alaska IPHC regulatory areas. The reductions in Alaska TCEYs will become more pronounced as halibut abundance shifts back to more historical patterns with relative increases in Region 3. For example, in 2020 the TCEY was reduced in Alaskan IPHC areas by 1.76 mlbs to fund the Area 2B Interim Agreement bonus. In 2021, the magnitude of the reduction will increase to 2.46 mlbs because relative halibut abundance in Region 3 has increased.
- Increased fishing pressure in Area 2B under the Interim Agreement drives a significant decrease in Region 2 spawning biomass. MSE results establish a 17% relative decrease in the Region 2 long-term spawning biomass metric under the Interim Agreement (MP B) vs. a FISS based distribution approach (MP J), which more closely follows local abundance trends. Since spawning biomass is closely related to O32 biomass distribution, Area 2C receives a reduced base share of the overall TCEY plus an additional TCEY deduction driven by the Area 2B apportionment bonus.

- ALFA notes that the MSE model results for MP E establish that the Area 2A Interim Agreement fixed apportionment alone does not cause a significant reduction in spawning biomass in Region 2.

Based on this new information, ALFA members request US and Canadian IPHC Commissioners initiate discussions to re-balance distributions to more closely track Regional/ IPHC Regulatory Area abundance trends and the available yield of the halibut resource surveyed within each contracting parties' waters. The MSAB noted that the FISS survey is currently the best scientific method for estimating stock distribution among biological regions and IPHC regulatory areas. (IPHC-2020-MSAB016 Para 37) Future distribution agreements should be based on the FISS modeled abundance in each IPHC regulatory area and must be fair to each contracting party.

The MSE also found that incorporating a rolling average of FISS O32 abundance minimizes variability at the IPHC regulatory area level while still maintaining long-term fishery yield. **ALFA members support implementing a 3-year rolling average of FISS O32 data for apportionment in Alaska in 2021 as a long-term procedure to improve stability.** While a 3-year rolling average was not explicitly evaluated by the MSE, it falls within the range of distributing TCEY based on the current year of modeled FISS data (MP G) and the 5-year rolling average (MP J) that were evaluated. The table below provides our recommendation for 2021 TCEY distribution incorporating the Interim Agreement and a 3-year rolling average.

I would close by reminding IPHC Commissioners that the US is currently paying 80% to 90% of the cost of operating the IPHC on an annual basis. Of that, five hundred thousand dollars is paid directly by US commercial fishermen through IFQ cost recovery fees. US fishermen are further subsidizing Canada's apportionment bonus through reduced TCEY in all US IPHC Areas—a TCEY reduction of 2.5 mlbs (worth \$15 to \$20 million dollars ex-vessel) in 2021 under the Interim Agreement. This is not an equitable sharing of the management and conservation burden for the halibut resource. ALFA strongly recommends Commissioners develop an equitable agreement between the contracting parties by 2022, if not sooner.

Sincerely,



Linda Behnken
Executive Director

	2A	2B	2C	3A	3B	4A	4B	4CDE	TOTAL
2020 Adopted TCEY	1.65	6.83	5.85	12.2	3.12	1.75	1.31	3.9	36.6
2021 Reference TCEY (Current Yr. FISS)	1.65	7.00	5.16	14.11	3.12	2.51	1.47	3.98	39.00
2021 with 3 yr. FISS Ave	1.65	7.00	5.64	13.41	3.14	2.59	1.58	4	39.00

APPENDIX IIIStatement by Garrett Elwood

Next Generation Fishermen's Association
Comments on 2021 Catch Limits

US IPHC Commissioners,

The members of NGFA are second and third generation IFQ stakeholders primarily invested in the halibut and sablefish IFQ fisheries in the Western GOA. Our members strongly support area TCEY's derived from a consistent harvest policy based on biological distribution and survey abundance of O32 Halibut. We support 3 year smoothing to help account for natural fluctuations in survey performance.

4A Comments:

The decision to implement 4A catch limits dramatically below (22.5%) the reference TCEY in 2020 was a financial blow to the stakeholders invested in the area. Harvesting in area 4A during the COVID-19 pandemic was challenging in 2020. A combination of limited air travel to Dutch Harbor and reduced processor capacity contributed to the 4A quota not fully being utilized. This should not be used as a reason to shift biological fish away from the participants who are catching their IFQ in 4A. It is very disheartening when stakeholders to the West are given second tier consideration to the areas in the East. We all have bills to pay and families to feed. Our members invested in 4A expecting fair access to the biological distribution residing in the area.

3B Comments:

Our members wish to express continued concern regarding the discrepancy in harvest rates between Areas 3B and 3A. It is our firm belief that there is no scientific basis for different harvest rates between regulatory areas in Region 3. Stakeholders can't help but feel that political pressure is the primary factor reducing our access to the fish residing in the area we have invested in. The inequity is best expressed using our primary metrics of the stock assessment.

Comparing 3B and 2B, the spatial extent is nearly identical. 2020 FISS shows a higher CPUE of O32 Halibut in 3B and a greater percentage of biological distribution. However, reference TCEYs for 2021 suggest total removals in 2B would be 124% greater than area 3B at 7M and 3.12M respectively.

Harvest Policy Comments:

The need to fill the vacuum created by the interim harvest policy (70/30) agreement with Canada puts the US commissioners in a challenging position. The unprecedented harvest intensity in area 2B is surely having a negative impact on the 2C FISS performance. Please

consider using a percentage of estimated distribution across all US regulatory areas in Alaska to meet the socio-economic needs of 2C. This approach is the most equitable and shows our resolve in supporting 2C as they cope with the ramifications of the interim harvest agreement. We anxiously await a renegotiation of the harvest agreement with Canada that better reflects the accepted international standards of fishery management.

Thank you for your consideration,
Garrett Elwood
NGFA

APPENDIX IVStatement by Josh Padgett

Josh Padgett, 4A Stakeholder
Comments on 2021 Catch Limits

US IPHC Commissioners,

Please follow the suggested reference TCEY totals and don't shift fish that should be caught in 4A into other areas. It's simply not fair. Uphold the rights of all stakeholders, utilize the biomass equitably. It happened in 2020, with the adopted TCEY being less than the reference TCEY. It has been discussed that this should happen again in 2021, and it should not be allowed to happen. Extenuating circumstances of 2020 should not be used as a reason to allow fish to be stolen from the stakeholders in the 4A area.

The survey data and reference TCEY show that 4A should be increased this year. Please follow the science and right the ship. All stakeholders should be treated fairly.

Thank you for considering,

Josh Padgett
4A Stakeholder