

INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION

News Release

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**IPHC Commission Staff Releases Preliminary 2001 Commercial Catch Limit Recommendations
Totaling 74.63 Million Pounds**

The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) and its Staff have reviewed results of the 2000 halibut stock assessment analysis. The resulting Staff recommendations are a 10.6% increase in the coast-wide quota, to 74.63 million pounds. The table below presents the 2000 catch limits and the Staff recommended 2001 catch limits for each regulatory area. The major change in the assessment results for 2000 came from the elimination of the downward correction in recent survey catch rates that was applied last year, to account for a suspected increase in fishing power of the surveys due to a bait change in 1993. Experiments conducted in 2000 have shown that the precautionary adjustment is not required. The stock assessment shows only minor changes for the southern portion of the range (Areas 2A-2C). Improvements in the estimated biomass of the stock in the central Gulf of Alaska Area (Area 3A) are accounted for largely by change in the treatment of historical survey data. We continue to approach harvest from the western portions of the halibut range (Areas 3B and 4) with great caution because of the absence of an analytical stock assessment and the limited knowledge base for these areas. Sharply lower survey catch rates plus the knowledge that the biomass in these areas has accumulated from lower historical exploitation, and therefore cannot be expected to persist at these historical levels with present fisheries, contributes to our cautious approach.

Weight at age for halibut in the central portion of the range increased slightly in 2000 over the very low values of recent years. However, recruitment of year classes born between 1989 and 1993 appears to be poor. The outlook for the stock biomass over the near future is for a decline from the record high levels of recent years until increased recruitment to the stock occurs.

These recommendations, along with public and industry views on them, will be considered by IPHC Commissioners and their advisors at the IPHC Annual Meeting in Vancouver BC, Canada, during January 22-25, 2001. These recommendations are preliminary and may be updated for the annual meeting, as final data are included in the assessment, but are not expected to change significantly.

Proposals concerning changes to catch limits should be submitted to the Commission by December 31, 2000. Catch limit proposal forms are available on the Commission's web page (<http://www.iphc.washington.edu>) or via fax (206-632-2983) from the Commission office.

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2001 IPHC Staff Preliminary Catch Limit Recommendations

Regulatory Area	2000 Catch Limit	2001 Staff Recommended
2A	0.83 ¹	1.14 ¹
2B	10.60	9.99
2C	8.40	8.78
3A	18.31	21.89
3B	15.03	18.50
4A	4.97	4.97
4B	4.91	4.91
4CDE	4.45	4.45 ²
Total	67.50	74.63

¹ Area 2A recommendations include all removals designated in the PFMC catch-sharing plan

² Individual regulatory quotas for Areas 4C, 4D, and 4E are designated by the NPFMC catch-sharing plan

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