

BRANSON
Agenda # 10
May 1978

May 2, 1978

North Pacific Fisheries Management Council
P.O. Box 3136 D.T.
Anchorage, Alaska 99510

Gentlemen:

The Fishing Vessel Owners Association and the Deep Sea Fishermens Union would like to bring to the attention of the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council the concerns that we have in dropping the restrictions on the foreign longline fishermen, which prohibited foreign nations from fishing inside 500 meters west of 157 west longitude. The relaxing of the restriction was designed to allow Japanese longline fishermen to begin a new fishery on 7600 M.T. of Pacific Cod (16,750,000 lbs.), because the cut in quota of their primary fishery for blackcod.

The concern that we have is found in the attached computer sheets from the National Marine Fisheries Service. These reports are of Japanese longline vessels conducting a directed fishery on Pacific Cod in depths less than 500 meters in the Bering Sea in February of this year. As to date they are the only such reports available. When the vessels were operating for Pacific Cod in less than 500 meters the incidental catch of halibut was observed to be 18.2% to 23.5%. If these rates of incidental catch were observed in the Gulf west of 157 west longitude and incidental catch of 1383 M.T. to 1786 M.T. of halibut would be caught. (3,048,132 lbs. to 3,936,344 lbs.). The International Pacific Halibut Commission has observed in the past that when conducting tagging experiments from our own vessels that 50% of the hooked fish are not fit to return to the water. (See attached letter from I.P.H.C.)

The I.P.H.C. at the 1978 commission meeting in Seattle reported that the equilibrium yield for halibut in area 3 was 12,000,000 pounds hence a quota of 11,000,000 pounds was set in order to provide for rehabilitation to the halibut stocks. With the new fishery on Pacific Cod and extrapolating the incidental catch of halibut from the Bering Sea observer reports an additional 3,936,344 lbs., could be caught. With the projected mortality of 50% this would eliminate any conservation effort on the part of the U.S. fishermen. (Segment from the IPHC report attached.) This may be even more critical in the Gulf where there is a higher concentration of halibut.

What is primarily upsetting is that the halibut quotas were cut back again for 1978. In particular in the area known as area 3-B by the International Pacific Halibut Commission, which is in the heart of the area west of 157 west longitude, the U.S. fishermen have been asked not to fish. The U.S. and Canadian fleet caught about a million pounds in the area in 1977 during the 3-B opening. In 1978 the U.S. fishermen has been eliminated from the 3-B opening. The presence of the Japanese longline fleet with

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the projected incidental catch ^{will} be more detrimental to the halibut stocks than would have been the domestic fleet if they had been allowed the area 3-B opening.

So to speak the U.S. fishermen were asked to conserve, but it appears to us that the U.S. fisherman gave up a million pounds so the Japanese could have a Pacific Cod fishery. We question the fairness of allowing a new fishery that extracts over 16 million pounds from an area that is important to the rehabilitation of the halibut stocks. The attached IPHC reports show that there is beginning to be an increase in the juvenile fish in all major statistical areas. The action taken in the Gulf Management Plan may well pull the rug out from under the conservation measures the U.S. fishermen have been asked to observe.

Remember prior to the foreign build up in the Gulf of Alaska in 1963 to 1965 we landed 70,000,000 lbs. of halibut (33,000M.T.), in 1970 we landed 54,000,000 lbs. and now we have a quota of 20,000,000 lbs. (9,072M.T.). The foreign longline fishermen are experiencing reduced quotas because of their recalcitrance to U.S. conservation requests prior to the passage of the 200 mile legislation. The Deep Sea Fishermens Union and the Fishing Vessel Owners Association would not have objection to this new fishery if the halibut stocks were in good condition, but they are not. To allow a full blown new fishery for the purpose of easing the economic problems of the foreign fishermen at the expense of the U.S. halibut fishermen is viewed by us as unfair in the light of the restrictions imposed upon us by the IPHC.

The Fishing Vessel Owners Association and the Deep Sea Fishermens Union recognize that there is much unknown to what may happen in the Gulf when conducting a longline fishery for Pacific Cod. The incidental catch may not be a problem, but in the light of the observer information from NMFS we do not wish to gamble with our livelihood.

We believe that there is much need for additional scientific information before a major fishery for Pacific Cod should be conducted, for this reason we suggest the following:

1. That there be allowed three foreign longline vessels into the area west of 157 for a period of 30 days after the Final Management Plan becomes effective to estimate the incidental catch of halibut.
2. We suggest that adequate observers be put on board to determine the incidental catch of halibut.
3. If the incidental catch of halibut is determined to be too high then the foreign longline fleet would be restricted to fishing in depths greater than 500 meters again. An incidental catch of 5% with a mortality

factor of 50% would result in a loss of 418,750 lbs.; a 7% incidental catch would result in a loss of 586,250 lbs and a 10% incidental catch of halibut would result in a loss of 837,500 lbs. We feel that a incidental catch of 5 to 7 percent starts to become a critical factor in the rehabilitation of the halibut stocks at this time.

4. That the Japanese government be contacted immediately concerning this issue.

We feel that this represents a practical approach to the development of a new fishery. This is also commensurate with the 200 mile legislation as from the definition of OY of the Legislative History of the Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976 provides congressional insight into just a similar problem. (page 1099)


"Thus while biologist in the past have tended to regard any unused surplus of a fishery as waste, the resource manager may well determine that a surplus harvest below MSY will ultimately enhance not only the specific stock under management, but also the entire biomass. Conversely, the fisheries manager may determine that the surplus harvest of the entire biomass must be reduced substantially below MSY, in order to restore a valuable depleted stock which is taken incidentally to the harvesting of other species in this biomass. An example where mindless overfishing for haddock has virtually wiped out the species. A zero quota for haddock will not permit that species to restore itself since other fisheries in the N.W. Atlantic cannot be conducted without taking haddock. Accordingly the harvest of these other species must be reduced below their MSY to reduce the incidental catch of haddock."

The halibut stocks, though not in as bad of condition as haddock, fall under a similar situation. We therefore request that you consider our four point suggestion favorably.

Fishing Vessel Owners Ass'n

Deep Sea Fishermens Union


Robert D. Alverson, Manager


Neil Sandvik, President

CRUISE
SPECIES COMPOSITION OBSERVER DATA BY AREA-MONTH-NATION-VESSEL-CLASS

YEAR 78 MONTH 2 AREA BERING SEA I LONGLINEP JAPAN DATE 2/ 3 TO 2/ 9 DAYS CI. GROUNDS 7
 NO. OF SETS 6 HOOKS SAMPLED 1764 TOTAL HOURS 97.6 KG OF SAMPLED SETS 59999 TOTAL HOOKS 87840
 AVE DEPTH/SET 270.0 AVE HOURS/SET 16.4 TOTAL CATCH MT 59 TOTAL SAFELL MT 1.722

RANK	SPECIES CODE	MEAN KG/DAY	MT	MT/HR	PROPORT.	CONFIDENCE		AVERAGE KG/FISH	
						LOWER 90	UPPER 90		
1	202	6857.619	48.003	0.490831	0.00005622	0.77580452	0.02430780	3.82976	PACIFIC COD
2	101	1615.684	11.309	0.115642	0.16645673	0.14457535	0.23241809	4.05668	PACIFIC HALIBUT
3	201	886.229	6.203	0.063431	0.10339356	0.08712582	0.11966130	1.54754	WALLEYE POLLOCK
4	102	389.066	2.723	0.027847	0.04535114	0.03673669	0.05204552	5.46043	GREENLAND HALIBUT (TURBOT)
5	90	234.427	1.640	0.016779	0.02734986	0.01678372	0.03591600	3.49926	SPATE - UNIDENT.
6	60	73.060	0.511	0.005229	0.00652369	0.00419819	0.01264918	15.50000	CLICPUS - UNIDENT.
7	66	41.966	0.293	0.003003	0.00489605	0.00514301	0.00664910	1.63895	SPINY DOGFISH SHARK
8	203	34.621	0.242	0.002478	0.00405921	0.00302410	0.00505431	0.08872	SABLEFISH (BLACK COD)
9	402	29.404	0.205	0.002104	0.00345050	0.00206256	0.00477845	2.58325	MOUTH SCULPIN
10	400	14.232	0.099	0.001018	0.00166040	0.00062655	0.00249425	1.99999	SCULPIN - UNIDENT.
11	103	7.966	0.055	0.000570	0.00092946	0.00047660	0.00138231	1.19999	FLATHEAD SOLE
12	141	2.828	0.019	0.000202	0.00032594	0.00016251	0.00049738	0.60000	FRIGATE MOUTH FLGUNDER (TURBOT)

TOTAL = 10187.099

DATA COMPILED FROM CRUISES 123

On this cruise of 7 days in a depth of 270 meters (average)
 the incidental catch of halibut was 23.56% of primary fishery
 for Pacific Cod.

CRUISE

SPECIES COMPOSITION OBSERVER DATA BY AREA-FORTH-NATION-VESSEL-CLIFFS

YEAR 78 MONTH 2 AREA BERING SEA I LONGLINER JAPAN DATE 2/11 TO 2/26 DAYS OF CRUISING 17
 NO. OF SETS 17 HOURS SAMPLED 6732 TOTAL HOURS 311.0 KG OF SAMPLED SETS 129159 TOTAL HOOKS 314160
 AVE DEPTH/SET 390.5 AVE HOURS/SET 18.2 TOTAL CATCH MT 129 TOTAL SAMPLE MT 4.656

RANK	SPECIES CODE	MEAN KG/DAY	MT	MT/HR	FRCPRT.	CONFIDENCE		AVERAGE KG/FISH	
						LOWER 90	UPPER 90		
1	202	4937.244	83.935	0.269881	0.04963865	0.63183546	0.66744172	3.08535	PACIFIC COD
2	102	1931.913	32.842	0.105602	0.25419968	0.23654816	0.26905108	5.04098	GREENLAND HALIBUT (TURBOT)
3	101	859.776	15.256	0.049183	0.11639190	0.11298670	0.12301708	4.77578	PACIFIC HALIBUT
4	201	309.017	5.253	0.016891	0.04088029	0.03614734	0.04317323	1.66357	WALLEYE POLLOCK
5	203	161.974	2.753	0.002853	0.02131248	0.01850237	0.02412258	1.88030	WALLEYFISH (BLACK COD)
6	82	150.942	2.702	0.004600	0.02091348	0.01792144	0.02390552	2.52951	POLLOCK
7	90	73.436	1.248	0.004014	0.00968277	0.00852652	0.01079901	3.00212	SKATE - UNIDENT.
8	141	16.297	0.277	0.000850	0.00214440	0.00184306	0.00244574	1.51593	AMPCYTOGTH FLOUNDER (TURBOT)
9	400	4.368	0.074	0.000238	0.00057486	0.00043119	0.00071852	1.80000	SHELLFISH - UNIDENT.
10	80	4.355	0.074	0.000238	0.00057207	0.00030083	0.00078531	1.86512	CRAB - UNIDENT.
11	350	1.382	0.023	0.000075	0.00016190	0.00012595	0.00023784	0.73896	SHORTSPINE THORNYHEAD ROCKFI
12	5	0.647	0.011	0.000035	0.00006520	0.00003767	0.00011273	0.49999	CRAB - TANNER
13	250	0.591	0.010	0.000032	0.00007776	0.00004711	0.00010842	0.79999	EELPOUT - UNIDENT.
14	900	0.343	0.005	0.000018	0.00004523	0.00001787	0.00007259	1.00000	MISC - UNIDENT.
15	20	0.129	0.002	0.000007	0.00001704	0.00001153	0.00002254	0.09999	STAFFISH - UNIDENT.
TOTAL =		8500.400							

DATA COMPILED FROM CRUISES 128

On this cruise of 17 days in a depth averaging 390 meters
 the incidental catch of halibut was 18.22% of the primary
 fishery for Pacific Cod.

LETTER FROM THE I.P.H.C.

1 May 1978

Mr. Robert D. Alverson, Manager
Fishing Vessel Owners Association
Fishermen's Terminal, C-3 Building
Seattle, Washington 98119

Dear Bob:

In response to your request we made a tally of nearly all tagging experiments conducted with setline gear from 1960 to 1977. These experiments were conducted throughout the north Pacific Ocean and the Bering Sea. Out of 82,609 halibut caught by the tagging vessel, 44,461 or 54% were not tagged. The percentage of untaggable fish for individual experiments ranged from 23% to 80%. The experiment which produced the 23% untaggable was one in which we tagged all fish that showed any evidence of life. At the other extreme was a few experiments in which sea lions damaged a large number of otherwise taggable fish. In my opinion, the 54% is indicative of the percentage of nontaggable fish caught on setline gear by our research vessels. I should explain that a small percentage of the fish we tag may be more seriously injured than is apparent to our personnel, but the criteria we use assures that the fish we tag have a high probability of survival. On the other hand, we know that many of the fish we do not tag would survive if released. Nevertheless, their chances of survival would be much less than that for the fish we tag.

The following is an excerpt from our Scientific Report Number 55 which is our best estimate of the mortality of longline caught halibut.

"In 1966 the setline vessel Chelsea caught 2,042 halibut of which 471 were considered dead at capture. All remaining fish were tagged; 233 were subjectively classified in "poor" condition and 1,338 as "good" or "excellent". During 1967-1969 the return from the poor-condition fish was approximately half that from the fish in good and excellent condition (12% compared to 25%). This mortality was not affected by fish length. Peltonen (1969) reported that when halibut in apparently good condition were tagged and held in live boxes, 4% died from injuries he associated with tagging. Applying this estimate to the Chelsea data, a total mortality of 32% was calculated. Even if the mortality of fish in good and excellent condition had been as high as 20%, the total mortality of the Chelsea fish would have been only 43%."

I hope this information will be useful to you. If you have any questions please let me know.

Sincerely yours,

Richard J. Myhre
Assistant Director

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Note. The CHELSEA charter experiment which IPHC used to estimate mortality at 32% was also the same charter that recorded untaggable fish at 23%. This charter represents the most favorable situation in the range from 23% to 80% of untaggable fish. This observation was noted by the F.V.O.A. - Seattle.

ABUNDANCE of JUVENILE HALIBUT

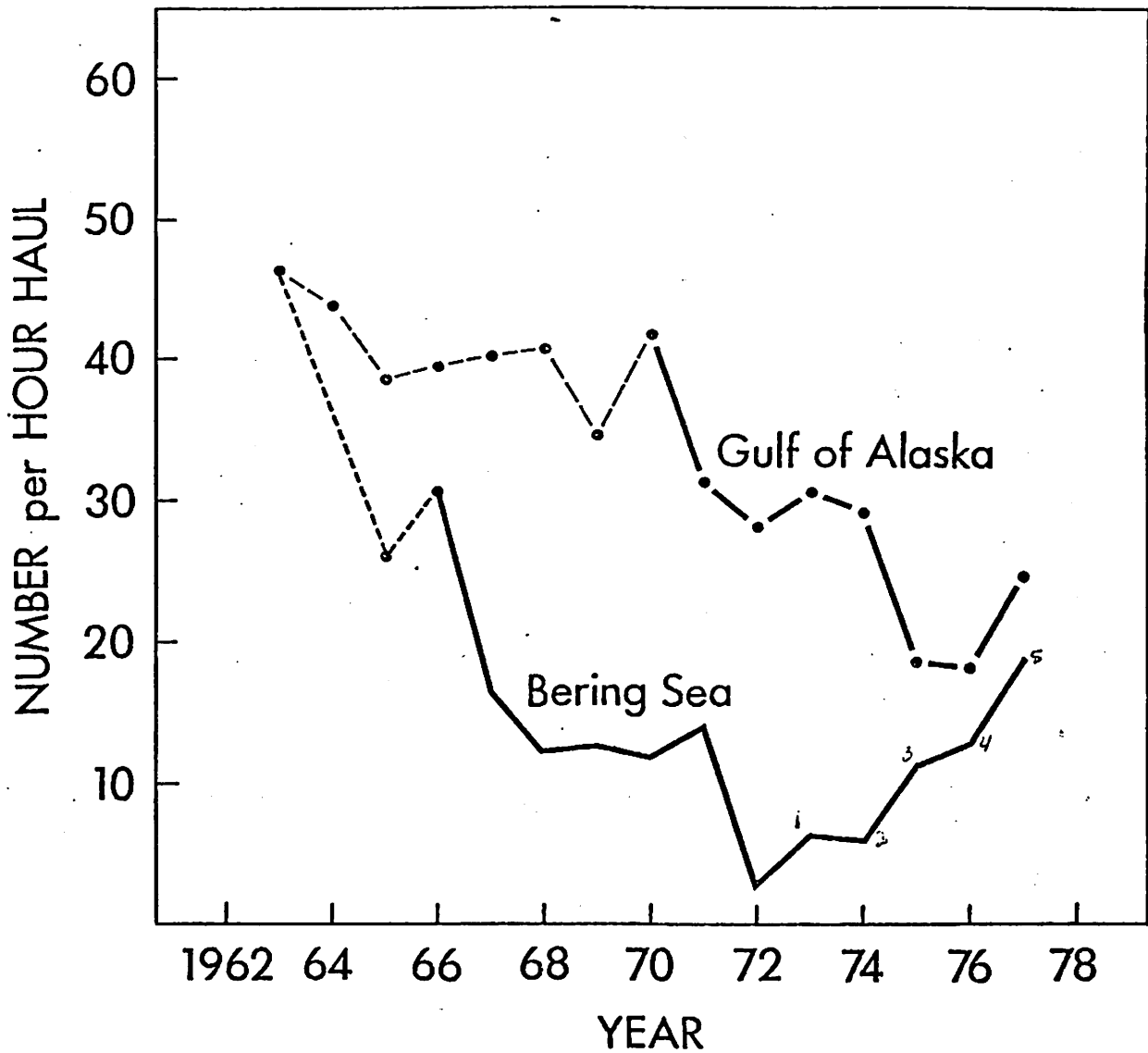


Figure 2. Abundance of juveniles in the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea, IPHC surveys, 1963-1977.

This indicates an increasing abundance of juvenile halibut.

Catch of juvenile halibut at identical stations in four

Gulf of Alaska locations, 1974 - 1977

Year	Cape St. Elias	Cape Chiniak	Chirikof Island	Unimak Island	Total
1975	331	519	746	521	2,117
1976	464	527	545	514	2,050
1977	606	673	803	570	2,652

This shows that juvenile halibut are increasing in major statistical areas in the Gulf of Alaska.

Equilibrium Yield

The equilibrium yield is the yield that can be taken without changing the stock size from one year to the next. If the catch is held below the equilibrium yield, a subsequent increase in stocks should occur. Analyses show that the equilibrium yield of halibut is about 10 million pounds in Area 2 and 12 million pounds in Area 3, These estimates are subject to variability and are affected by several factors such as growth, natural mortality, and recruitment. However, the estimates indicate that continued restrictions on the fishery are necessary to start the rebuilding process.

(From ASSESSMENT OF HALIBUT STOCKS, 1977,
report by Stephen H. Hoag of the I.P.H.C.)