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INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION

ESTABLISHED BY A CONVENTION BETWEEN CANADA
AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

B1 July IPHC letter to Council - Item 4
OCTOBER 2014

DIRECTOR
BRUCE M. LEAMAN

2320 W. COMMODORE WY, STE 300
SEATTLE, WA 98199-1287

TELEPHONE:
(206) 634-1838

FAX:
(206) 632-2983

July 30, 2014

Mr. Eric Olson, Chairman
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
605 W. 4th Avenue, Suite 306
Anchorage, AK 99501-2252

Dear Chairman Olson:

At its 2014 Annual Meeting the Commission considered a draft report from its Halibut Bycatch Project Team. The report set out to address four objectives: (1) understand the amount of halibut bycatch occurring in each regulatory area, (2) understand the impact of bycatch on the conservation and allocation of the halibut resource and on the available harvest, (3) explore options for reducing the overall level of halibut bycatch, and (4) explore options for mitigating the impact of bycatch in one regulatory area on the available harvest in other regulatory areas. In the course of discussing this report, the Commission determined that it would like to meet with the Council. The intent of this meeting would be to, "...facilitate discussion and collaboration on potential bycatch reduction targets, management measures, and monitoring programs that fall under the Council's authority." The Commission is well aware of the diversity of responsibilities placed on the Council in terms of managing fisheries for target species, as well as the bycatch mortality that accompanies these fisheries. The Commission also recognizes that the fishing industry responsible for this bycatch mortality has undertaken several measures that have reduced the bycatch mortality of halibut over the past decade. However, the declines in exploitable biomass available to the directed halibut fishery have resulted in much larger reductions in this directed fishery over the same period.

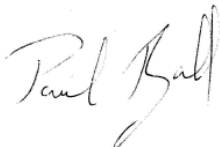
The Council's Purpose and Need statement for its motion on potential halibut bycatch reduction in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands fisheries articulates the elements of the bycatch and halibut stock issues well. The Commission was pleased to see this motion passed by the Council and in concert with the foregoing paragraph wishes to expand on this initiative and work with the Council on a coordinated approach to bycatch management. At the June Council meeting, the IPHC staff presentation introduced a proposed new approach to mortality accounting, which the Commission will be considering during this year. This potential framework directly accounts for U26 bycatch mortality within the halibut yield calculations, whereas accounting for U26 bycatch mortality is currently embedded within the target harvest rate for the O26 exploitable biomass.

The Council and the Commission have separate management authorities, each of which involves a component of halibut mortality, but it is the total mortality experienced by the halibut population that governs the available yield. As such, the Commission sees a strong need for coordination with the Council on managing this total mortality and addressing our respective

mandates. To that end, the Commission proposes to meet with the Council in the fall of 2014, to build on the Council's initiative from the June meeting and begin development of such a coordinated mortality management framework. If this is agreeable to the Council, I suggest that the Executive Directors of the Commission (Dr. Bruce Leaman) and the Council (Mr. Chris Oliver) work to develop an agenda and timeline for this meeting.

Look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Ryall". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "P".

Paul Ryall
IPHC Commissioner and 2014/15 Commission Chair

cc: IPHC Commissioners
Bruce Leaman, Executive Director, IPHC
Chris Oliver, Executive Director, NPFMC