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# INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION

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

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Attachment 1

Mr. H. A. Larkins  
National Marine Fisheries Service  
Northwest & Alaska Fisheries Center  
2725 Montlake Blvd., East  
Seattle, Washington 98112

Dear Bert:

Regarding the Japanese request to relax the depth restriction on foreign longlining, IPHC scientists are concerned about a possible high incidence of halibut during the winter. Although halibut generally are in depths less than 400 m, they are found deeper than this during the winter. Halibut also tend to be more vulnerable to setline fishing during the winter because they concentrate in certain locations. There apparently is some misunderstanding regarding the information Dr. Low obtained from IPHC on the depth of halibut spawning. He states that "potential spawning probably does not take place in waters deeper than 300-500 m". Although information on the winter depth distribution of halibut is incomplete, our understanding is that substantial spawning occurs during the winter at 300-500 m.

In any event, considering the poor condition of halibut stocks, a more cautious approach is needed until better information is available. Specifically, the 500 m depth restriction should remain in effect during the winter, i.e. October-April. The proposed change to 400 m during the remainder of the year is satisfactory. This should give Japanese longline fishermen additional opportunity and also protect halibut.

Hopefully, additional information from observers and research vessels will be available in the next few years to reexamine the question of the proper depth restriction.

Sincerely yours,



Stephen H. Hoag  
Senior Biologist