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INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION

ESTABLISHED BY A CONVENTION BETWEEN CANADA

AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
DAVID T. WILSON

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

TELEPHONE:
(206) 634-1838

FAX:
(206) 632-2983

EL2026037
4 November 2026

Jonathan M. Kurland
Regional Administrator
NOAA Fisheries, Alaska Region
PO Box 21668
Juneau, AK 99802-1668

Re: 2026 IPHC FISS index

Dear Mr Kurland,

In December 2021, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) took final action supporting abundance-based management (ABM) of the Pacific halibut Prohibited Species Catch (PSC) limit as a method to be used to set the Pacific halibut PSC for the Amendment 80 trawl sector in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands Management Area Fishery Management Plan (BSAI FMP).

The Council action identifies a two-dimensional lookup table, dependent on the Eastern Bering Sea (EBS) trawl survey index and the IPHC FISS index (developed from the IPHC Fishery-Independent Setline Survey (FISS))[1] and the EBS trawl survey observations. Breakpoints for these two indices define categories from which the PSC limit is determined (Table 1). The EBS trawl survey index is categorized as low or high, and the IPHC FISS index for ABM is categorized into very low, low, medium, and high categories. NOAA Fisheries has published a final rule to implement this action as Amendment 123 to the BSAI FMP (88 FR 82740[2]).

The IPHC's methods for estimating IPHC FISS indices remain unchanged in 2026 from prior years. A description can be found in IPHC-2021-IM097-INF05[3]. It is important to note that FISS indices are estimated using a space-time model, and all years of the index are updated with the addition of a single year of data. Therefore, past IPHC FISS indices for ABM will be updated with the addition of data each year. This letter presents the updated IPHC FISS index, comparing it to the value of the previous year.

2026 IPHC FISS index for ABM

The IPHC FISS all-sizes WPUE, combined across IPHC Regulatory Areas 4A, 4B, and 4CDE (Fig. 1), is 26.3 net lbs/skate for 2026. This translates to an IPHC FISS ABM index for 2026 of **6,798, which is in the "low" category** of the lookup table (Table 1). The units for the IPHC FISS

[1] https://www.iphc.int/data/fishery-independent-setline-survey-fiss/fiss-dashboard/
[2] Federal Register: Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands [Pacific] Halibut Abundance-Based Management of Amendment 80 Prohibited Species Catch Limit
[3] https://www.iphc.int/uploads/pdf/im/im097/iphc-2021-im097-inf05.pdf

ABM index are nautical miles squared times net pounds per skate, where the total area of IPHC Regulatory Areas 4A, 4B, and 4CDE combined is 258.55 NM^2. The 95% credible interval for the 2026 IPHC FISS ABM index ranges from 5,730 to 8,137, with a very small chance that the index is in the very low category and a very small chance that the index is in the medium category (Fig. 2). The IPHC FISS ABM index for 2025 is also updated to 6,652, which was previously 6,664, using results up to and including 2025.

Table 1. The NPFMC's two-dimensional lookup table for the determination of Pacific halibut PSC limits for the Amendment 80 fleet in the BSAI FMP (updated for precision/clarity from Table 58 to part 679 in 88 FR 82740).

		EBS shelf trawl survey index (mt)	
		Low **< 150,000**	**High** **≥ 150,000**
IPHC FISS index in IPHC Regulatory Areas 4A, 4B, & 4CDE (NM^2 * net lbs /skate)	**High** **≥ 11,000**	1,745 mt (current limit)	1,745 mt (current limit)
	Medium **8,000 – 10,999**	1,396 mt (20% below current)	1,571 mt (10% below current)
	Low **6,000 – 7,999**	1,309 mt (25% below current)	1,396 mt (20% below current)
	Very Low **< 6,000**	1,134 mt (35% below current)	1,134 mt (35% below current)

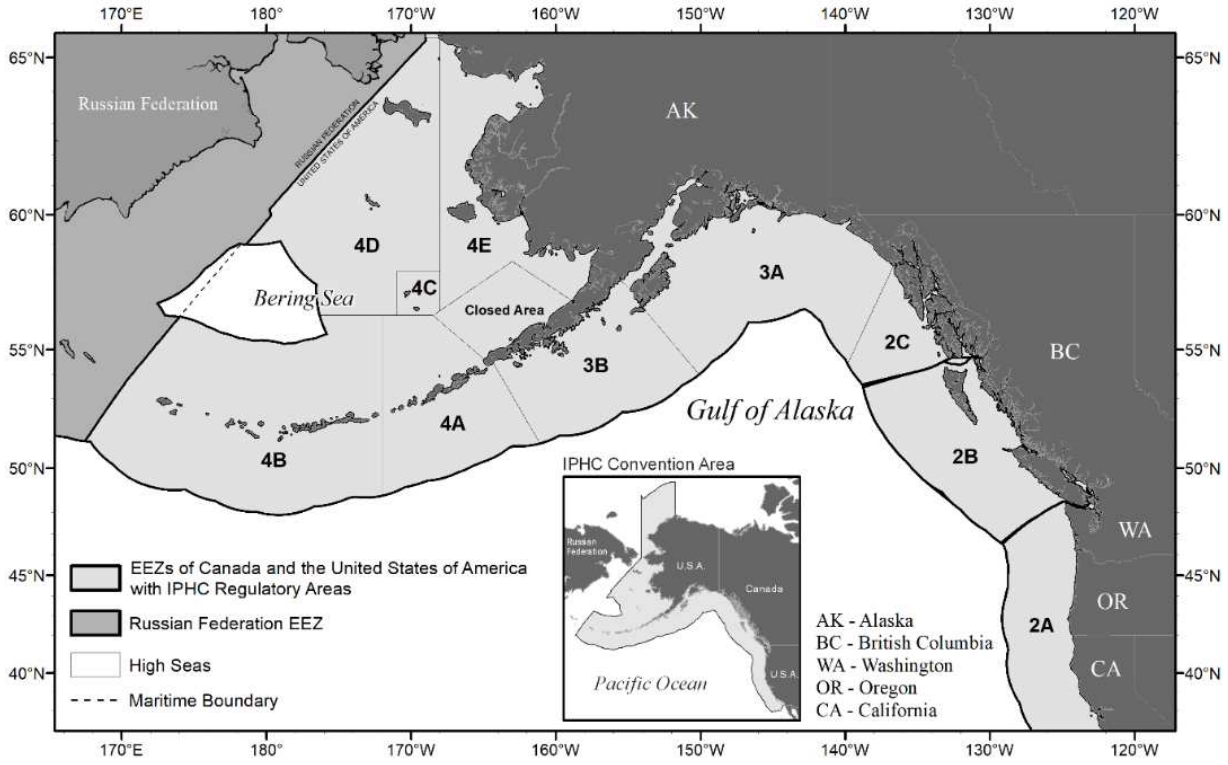


Figure 1. IPHC Convention Area (inset) and IPHC Regulatory Areas.

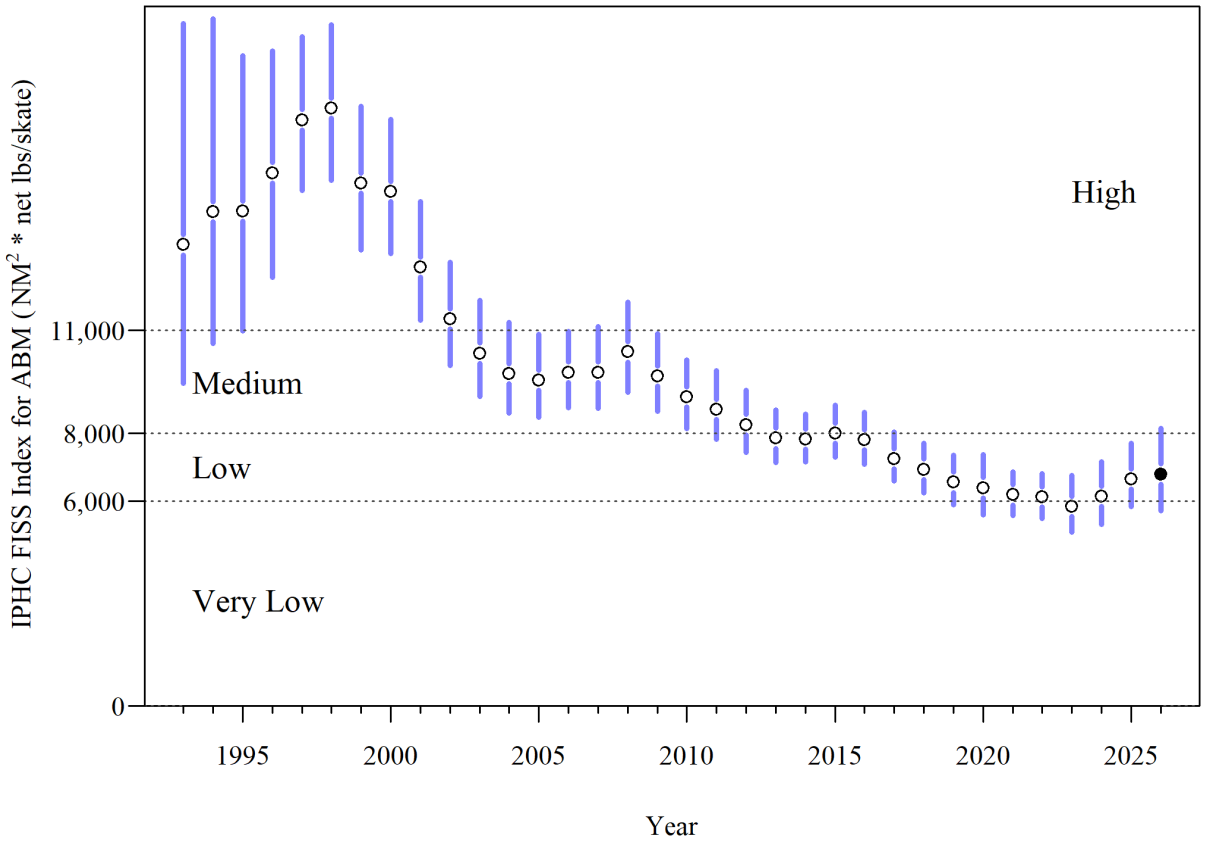


Figure 2. IPHC FISS ABM index calculated using the 2026 IPHC space-time model from 1993 to 2026 shown as circles, with the filled circle representing the 2026 IPHC FISS ABM index. The 95% credible intervals are shown as blue vertical lines. The four categories of the IPHC FISS ABM index (Table 1) are delineated by horizontal dotted lines.

Yours sincerely,

David T. Wilson

David T. Wilson, Ph.D.
IPHC Executive Director

CC:
IPHC Chairperson, Mr Mark Waddell
IPHC Vice-Chairperson, Mr Jonathan Kurland
IPHC Commissioners
NPFMC Executive Director, Diana Evans
Performing the Duties of the AFSC Science and Research Director, Dr Jamal Moss