

Conference Board Report  
83<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting  
January 16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> 2007  
Victoria, B.C. Canada

<b>United States</b>	<b>Canada</b>
Alaska Charter Association	Annieville Halibut Association
Alaska Longline Fisherman's Association	Canadian Sablefish Association
Alaska Travel Association	Gulf Crab Fishermen's Association
Alaska Trollers Association	Gulf Troller's Association
Aleutian Pribilof Is. Association	Halibut Advisor Board
APICADA Vessel Inc.	Huu-Ay-Aht First Nation
Area 3B /4A False Pass	North Pacific Halibut Fishermen's Association
Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association	Northern Trollers Assoc.
Coastal Villages Region Fund	Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council
Cordova District Fishermen United	Pacific Coast Fishing Vessel Owners Guild
Concerned Area M	Pacific Longline Halibut Fisherman's Association
Deep Creek Charter Boat Association	Pacific Troller's Association
Deep Sea Fishermen's Union of the Pacific	SFAB - South
Fishing Vessel Owners Association	SFAB - North
Halibut Coalition	SFAB – Main
K Bay Fishermen Association	Steveston Halibut Association
Kodiak Assoc. of Charter Boat Operators	T. F. N.
Kodiak Longliners Association	Ucluelet F.N
Kodiak Vessel Owners Association	
Lake & Peninsula Borough	
Makah Fisheries Management	
North Pacific Fisheries Association	
Pelican Advisory Panel Board	
Petersburg Charter Boats Association	
Petersburg Vessel Owners Association	
Quiliute Indian Nation	
Quinault Indian Nation	
Seafood Producers Coop	
SE Alaska Fishermen's Alliance	
Sitka Charter Boat Assoc.	
Sitka Halibut & Blackcod Marketing Association	
St. Paul Fishermen's Association	
Tribal Government of St. Paul	
United Fishermen of Alaska	
Washington Trollers Association	
Westport Charter Association	

## **REVIEW CONFERENCE BOARD VOTING ROSTER**

The United States section accredited 36 organizations for participation for the 2007 conference board proceedings.

The Canada section accredited 18 organizations for participation for the 2007 conference board proceedings.

## **SELECT CHAIRPERSON FROM CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES**

On the Canadian side, George Cormier was selected as Chair.

On the United States side, Robert Alverson was selected as Co-Chair.

## **CONFERENCE BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS TO IPHC**

### **A. SEASON DATE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL AREAS**

The Conference Board presents to the Commission a split decision from the harvesters for an opening date.

The United States section supports an opening date of Sunday, March 4 for the following reasons:

1. In area 2A there is a problem with the bycatch of yellow eye rock fish. The bycatch is minimized with an early March opening date as opposed to a later opening.
2. There is a similar bycatch problem in area 2 C with yellow rock fish and demesel shelf rock fish which is mitigated with an earlier March opening date.
3. The market has gained acceptance for an earlier March availability of fresh halibut. In March 2006 the Canadians and U.S. fishers landed 7 million pounds in the month of March. (pg 15 bluebook) A later opening is going to require this fish to compete against fish landed later in the year.
4. The industry is still concerned about maximizing the availability of wild caught halibut versus any availability of farmed raised halibut.
5. With regards to migration concerns the staff presented data that showed the harvest of halibut in SE Alaska for both inside and outside waters. It did not appear the migration was large from the amount of fish being caught.

Canada's position during the discussion on opening dates was March 25<sup>th</sup>. Canadian delegates continue to have concerns over the interception of 2B fish by SE Alaskan fishermen in late February and early March. IPHC knowledge of winter spawning migration of halibut remains sketchy and there is no clear determination of how many fish are in a given area at a given time. Canadian delegates are hopeful that the PAT tag releases scheduled for February and March 2007 will further clarify the migration issue for future years.

## B. CATCH LIMIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Some members of the Conference Board are concerned by the dramatic changes presented in this year's assessment and the short time frame available for industry and scientific review. In particular, we are concerned by, as yet, unanswered questions about selectivity, migration and using the surveys for apportionment. Changes in the apportionment process have significant economic impacts and should be carefully discussed, evaluated and peer reviewed through the scientific communities. We urge the Commission to establish an Industry Workgroup in 2007 with representatives from all areas tasked with reviewing model assumptions, survey techniques and alternative apportionment processes.

In making catch limit recommendations, the Conference Board took each area up separately. Several members wished the record to express that their support for an individual area catch limit did not necessarily reflect support for the new model's apportionment system.

### CATCH LIMIT RECOMMENDATIONS – ALL AREAS

The Conference Board's recommendations for 2007 are as follows:

2A	1.34 million pounds
2B	11.97 million pounds
2C	8.51 million pounds
3A	26.01 million pounds
3B	12.83 million pounds
4A	3.98 million pounds
4B	1.97 million pounds
4CDE	3.65 million pounds
Total	70.26 million pounds

### COMMENTS ON CATCH LIMIT RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Area 2A

The representatives that participate in 2A want the Commissioners to be aware there appeared to be several anomalous conditions that occurred during the 2006 set line survey. These conditions included excessive dogfish in the area of the Olympic peninsula, activities of the at sea whiting fleet in the Astoria area and Northern Olympic Peninsula, and oxygen dead zones off of Oregon. The 2A recommendation is based on using the old 2005 method. Commercial CPUEs from the Tribes and non-treaty participants do not track with a 43% reduction that occurred in the set line survey.

## **Area 2B**

Area 2B representatives believe that the coast wide method of apportionment proposed by IPHC staff requires additional work and/or analysis on selectivity, migration, and further discussion with regard to the use of set line surveys to determine area apportionment. In line with this rationale, the 2B representatives recommended a catch limit which is in line with the old 2005 method. The recommended catch limit is 1.25 million pounds less than the 2006 harvest limit. This is 36% of the staff's recommended reduction in 2B.

## **Area 2C**

The harvest limit in 2C represents a 2.1 million pound reduction from the 2006 harvest limit. This is 75% of the staff's recommended reduction in 2C. There were three participants in opposition. The one from Pelican wanted to see a 10% overall reduction. The other two wanted to see staff recommendations. None of the participants from 2C believe it would be fair to take this amount of reduction and be required to absorb any GHV overages from the charter boat fleet.

## **Area 3B and 4A**

The Conference Board is supporting staff recommendations. There was one in opposition in area 3B and 4A who wanted 2006 harvest limits retained for an additional year.

## **Area 4B and 4CDE**

There were no oppositions to the staff recommendations.

## **IPHC STAFF REGULATORY PROPOSALS: 2007**

### **Catch sharing plans 2A**

The Conference Board unanimously supported the staff recommendation found in the PFMC catch sharing plan for area 2A. By supporting the 2A catch sharing plan the sport fishing possession limits in California were also accommodated.

### **Reporting Date for the CDQ managers for area 4D and 4E**

The Conference Board accepted the staff recommendations.

### **Careful release of halibut**

The Conference Board supported the staff recommended wording change which would allow fish to be brought on board and measured for size.

### **Hook Straightening**

Currently restrictions in the freezer longline fishery for Pacific cod allows for hooks to be straightened out as part of the careful release program. Concerns were expressed by some members that they were seeing increased numbers of halibut with broken jaws. It is unknown if the cause is from the methods of careful release therefore the Conference Board would like a report from the NMFS Observer Program regarding careful release and viability of the released fish.

### **Determining the minimum size of sport caught halibut in Alaska**

The Conference Board supported this recommendation and notes it applies to catcher vessels in Alaska.

### **Achieving sport harvest targets in Area 2B, 2C and 3A**

Area 2B delegates indicated that a process for insuring that the 2B recreational fishery remains within its share of the Canadian CEY will be undertaken in time to insure no recreational overage in 2007. Therefore, the Canadian delegation does not want to make any recommendation to Commissioners on this matter, preferring to resolve it using the aforementioned process.

Area 2C and 3A: The U.S. section of the Conference Board endorsed staff recommendations and urges the Commission to take corrective action in 2007 to keep the guided sport sector in 2C and 3A to domestic harvest limits unless comparably effective measures are implemented by June 15, 2007, through the Council, the Secretary of Commerce or ADFG. This was supported by 30 commercial groups and opposed by 6 charter group organizations from the U.S. section.

The Conference Board set up a working group of five charter organizations and five commercial organizations to see if a compromise could be reached on this issue. The working group report is as follows:

#### 2C and 3A CONFERENCE BOARD WORKING GROUP MINUTES

##### Conference Board Working Group

Dan Hull, Cordova District Fishermen United  
Tory O'Connell, SE Alaska Fishing Alliance  
Per Odegaard, Fishing Vessel Owners Assoc.  
Linda Behnken, Alaska Longline Fishermen's Assoc.  
Tom Ohaus, Sitka Charter Boat Owner's Assoc.  
Larry McQuarrie, Sportsmen Lodge/ATIA  
Peter Hanson, Dall Island Group  
Chaco Pearman, Kodiak Association of Charterboat Operators  
Julianne Curry, Petersburg Vessel Owner's Assoc.  
Rex Murphy

The Working Group met for several hours Tuesday night and again Wednesday morning to discuss IPHC staff charter sector management recommendations. The

group could not come to agreement on any compromise positions on management actions by the IPHC for the charter sector in 2C and 3A. The charter sector does not believe that the IPHC is the appropriate body to decide this issue, and that it belongs instead in the NPFMC (Council) process. The commercial sector believes it is appropriate for the IPHC as well as the Council.

Working group consensus points:

1. The group supports the conservation mandate of the IPHC.
2. There are allocation implications either way the IPHC acts on this issue.
3. Although there's no agreement on management measures by the IPHC for 2007, the group supports the Council process to develop management measures for 2C for 2008.
4. The group supports the State of Alaska's commitment to use its Emergency Authority to prohibit the retention of halibut by skipper and crew, and to limit the number of lines fished to the number of paying customers in both 2C and 3A for 2007. The group also asks that the IPHC take into account the effects of these measures when setting the charter sector's catch limits in 2C and 3A for 2007.
5. While a moratorium is not a management tool to control charter harvest, it is an essential step. Therefore, the group strongly encourages the Council to develop and implement a moratorium that effectively reduces effort and holds to the 2005 control date, taking into consideration the concerns expressed by communities with underdeveloped charter fleets.
6. The group strongly encourages the Council to make the development and implementation of a permanent solution a top priority by providing appropriate levels of staffing and resources. The group also strongly encourages NMFS to make its administrative role of review and approval in the Council regulatory process a top priority to prevent delay of resolution to this issue.

The U.S. commercial section feels the IPHC is the appropriate management body to take interim restrictive measures, such that, the existing domestic allocations approved by the Secretary of Commerce between charter boat and commercial interest are complied with in areas 2C and 3A. The IPHC informed the NPFMC of the unregulated charter industry in 1993. The United States government set the allocation between the commercial and charter interest on August 8, 2003, as found in the Federal Register for Rules and Regulations of the United States. The NPFMC passed those allocations in 2000 and reaffirmed them unanimously in April 2006. The NPFMC does not have regulatory authority at this time to enforce the current allocations between charter and commercial interests. If IPHC takes no action they will be reallocating the resource away from the commercial fleet, a sector that has not exceeded their allocation in ten years. In the event that regulations are not developed by the NPFMC, Secretary of Commerce, or the State of Alaska by June 15'

2007, the interim restrictions of the IPHC would be in place and provide a mechanism to enforce U.S. allocations in area 2C and 3A.

There was a minority statement to this action. It is as follows:

The guided sport members of the conference board, who represent all sectors of the charter halibut industry, wish to go on record regarding recommendations from the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) staff for achieving sport harvest in areas 2C and 3A. We request that the Commission take no action on the proposal to limit the charter halibut as it is a matter of domestic allocation that should remain with the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC).

We support the short and long-term goals currently underway with the NPFMC and believe the best result for user groups will come from the council process. Alaska Department of Fish & Game is moving toward a statewide limited entry program for charter vessels and permanent solutions are moving through the Council process at this time. We are committed to a fast track resolution of this issue and urge all of the members of the U.S. delegation of the conference board, IPHC staff and the IPHC Commissioners to express their concerns over the lack of progress to the NPFMC. We also urge you to support the recommendations of the charter halibut stakeholders committee of the NPFMC in its efforts to establish a moratorium by 2008.

### **INDUSTRY REGULATORY PROPOSALS 2007**

#### **Retention of halibut in sablefish trap gear {Area 2B only} Proposals 1 and 6**

Two proposals were received related to this subject - one from an industry association and one from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. The two proposals were different. The proposal from the industry association requested that sablefish trap vessels be allowed to retain and land halibut during the halibut season and be given a mortality allowance for its estimated halibut mortality in sablefish traps during the closed period. The proposal from DFO requested that sablefish trap vessels be allowed to retain and land halibut during the halibut season. The requests are being made in light of the new Groundfish Integration Pilot Program being implemented in Canada, where all groundfish fleets are accountable for specific groundfish bycatch and must secure quota for retained/landed or an assessed amount of release mortality.

After some discussion and clarification questions, a request was made of the Conference Board to support the common aspect of each request, which was support for halibut retention in sablefish trap gear during the open halibut season. The Conference Board did not support the request.

It was pointed out there are a number of fisheries other than sablefish that catch halibut during the halibut season and the closed seasons and the implications of halibut bycatch retention go far beyond that of the sablefish trap fleet in Canada.

**Proposal 2 - March 15<sup>th</sup> opening**

The Conference Board had dealt with this issue earlier in the agenda.

**Proposal 3 - prohibited filleting of charter boat halibut in 2C**

The Conference Board supported this action for area 2C, if adopted by the Commission this would require charter boats in area 2C to bring their fish in whole or bring in the carcass with the fillets. There was one group in opposition for the U.S. Section which was the Alaska Charter Boat Association. All other groups supported this. The principle area of concern is where to dispose of the carcasses. The Conference Board was informed that 90% of charter-delivered halibut in Sitka is not being assessed for size and weight.

**Proposal 4 - require circle hooks**

This proposal was dropped as IPHC intends to do a viability study on different types of hooks.

**Proposal 5 - reduce guide sport bag limit**

This was addressed under previous Conference Board activity

**Other Business**

1. The Conference Board supported a motion to continue the tagging and research in areas 4CDE and area 4B.
2. The Conference Board supported a motion to have IPHC staff coordinate a working group that would include all interested parties from the United States and Canada that would be tasked with reviewing the new model assumptions advanced by staff at the 2007 Annual Meeting and assessing alternative apportionment processes.