

Conference Board Report
85th Annual Meeting
January 12th – 16th 2009
Vancouver, B.C.

United States	Canada
Alaska Charter Association Alaska Longline Fisherman's Association Alaska Travel Association Aleute Corp Fish APICADA Vessel Inc. Atka Fishermen's Association Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association Central Panhandle Longliners Assoc. Charter Halibut Task Force Coastal Villages Region Fund Cordova District Fishermen United Deep Sea Fishermen's Union of the Pacific Fisherman's Advisory Committee of Tillamook Fishing Vessel Owners Assoc. Halibut Coalition HOH Juneau Charter Boat Operator's Assoc. K Bay Fishermen Association Kodiak Assoc. of Charter Boat Operators Kodiak Vessel Owners Association Lower Elwa Makah Fisheries Management North Pacific Fisheries Assoc. Oregon Coast Sportfishing Assoc. Petersburg Vessel Owners Assoc. Quiliute Indian Nation Quinault Indian Nation Recreational Fishing Alliance – Oregon Chapter Seafood Producers Coop SE Alaska Fishermen's Alliance Sitka Charter Boat Assoc. Sitka Halibut & Blackcod Marketing Assoc. Southeast Outside Longliners St. George Fisherman's Association St. Paul Fishermen's Association Tribal Government of St. Paul UFMA – Kodiak Washington Trollers Association West Brothers 2C Halibut Group	Annieville Halibut Association BC Commercial Integrated Groundfish Soc. BC Halibut Longline Fisherman's Assoc. BC Longline Fishermens Asssoc. Canadian Sablefish Association Ditidaht Nation FAS Gulf Crab Fishermen's Association Gulf Troller's Association Halibut Advisory Board Huu-Ay-Aht First Nation North Pacific Halibut Association North Vancouver Island Chef's Association Northern Halibut Producer's Assoc. Northern Trollers Association Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council Pacific Coast Fishing Vessel Owners Guild Pacific Longliners Assoc. Pacific Trollers Assoc. PHMA Seafood 4 Life Products Sport Fishing Advisory Board - Main Sport Fishing Advisory Board - North Sport Fishing Advisory Board - South Steveston Halibut Assoc. Ucluelet F.N. UFAWU

REVIEW CONFERENCE BOARD VOTING ROSTER

The United States section accredited 39 organizations for participation for the 2009 conference board proceedings.

The Canada section accredited 27 organizations for participation for the 2009 conference board proceedings.

SELECT CHAIRPERSONS FROM CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES

On the Canadian side, Chris Sporer 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 has a split recommendation to the Commissioners for the 2009 fishing season. The U.S. commercial section supported a February 28th opening date on a vote of 21 in favor and 2 opposed. This followed a vote of 14 in opposition and 10 in favor of a March 21st opening date. The recreational industry abstained from the commercial opening recommendations.

The Canadian delegation supported a March 21st opening on a vote of 21 in favor and 4 opposed. The Canadian delegation did not support the February 28th opening on a vote of 21 to 3.

The U.S. delegation supported February 28th as the opening date. The rationale for this is to maximize a fresh fish market opportunity, lower rockfish bycatch in both Area 2A and in Southeast Alaska; and minimize sperm whale interactions in the Gulf of Alaska. The U.S. delegation entertained a March 21st opening primarily based on concerns of a unique marketing problem facing Canadian and U.S. processors and distributors having a backlog of frozen inventory. Additionally, two of the Indian nations from Washington felt the halibut did not move in to the Olympic Peninsula area until the 21st of March. The Canadian delegation also considered the marketing concerns with respect to the backlog of frozen inventory; however, their primary rationale for a later opening was to allow migration from 2C into 2B.

The Conference Board unanimously supports a Saturday opening based on distribution requirements.

Area 2A Commercial opening; The Conference Board heard from only one commercial interest from Area 2A, who requested to open the 10 hour openings on the last Wednesday of May (May 27th). This was unanimously supported by the Conference Board.

B. AREA 2A CATCH SHARING

The Conference Board unanimously supports the Pacific Fishery Management Council's proposed Area 2A catch sharing changes for the 2009 season.

C. CATCH LIMIT RECOMMENDATIONS

There was no consensus to support the proposed apportionment recommendation by the staff. The Conference Board considered the following catch limits for 2009:

2A	1.098 million pounds
2B	8.1 million pounds
2C	4.54 million pounds
3A	22.53 million pounds
3B	10.90 million pounds
4A	2.65 million pounds
4B	1.94 million pounds
4CDE	3.59 million pounds
Total	55.35 million pounds

COMMENTS ON CATCH LIMIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Area 2A

The Conference Board's recommendation reflects a 10 percent reduction from the 2008 catch limit as a stop gap measure. There was considerable discussion on concerns with the proposed apportionment scheme. It appeared to some Conference Board members that the survey CPUE numbers in Area 2A were in conflict with the Commission staff's apportionment recommendation. Specifically, the reduction in CPUE in the survey does not suggest dropping the harvest limit from 1.22 million to a 500,000 pound CEY.

On the U.S. side a harvest limit of 1.098 million lbs was supported 15 in favor, 11 against. Those opposed were concerned about staying within the coastwide catch limit recommended by the staff. There were several U.S. supporters of the staff's recommended apportionment scheme. On the Canadian side, this action was supported 19 in favor, 0 opposed. The Canadian delegation felt that a 10 percent reduction from 2008 catch limits was appropriate given the decline in halibut abundance.

Area 2B

The Canadian delegation reiterated their support for the coastwide assessment and opposition to the proposed apportionment scheme. The Canadian delegation noted there were still many unanswered questions and outstanding issues (e.g., catchability) with the proposed apportionment scheme and that they want to continue to work on it with the IPHC and their U.S. counterparts. It was also noted there needed to be more discussion on the setline survey

and its application as an apportionment tool. Canada accepts that there is a decline in halibut abundance. Therefore, the Canadian delegation supported, on a vote of 24 to 0, a 10 percent reduction from the Area 2B 2008 catch limit as an interim measure for 2009 while there are continued discussions and work on halibut apportionment. The Canadian Delegation noted that the Area 2B catch limit includes the recreational and commercial fisheries. The Canadian Delegation also noted that, similar to other areas, Area 2B has taken significant cuts (e.g., at 8.1 million lbs in 2009 Area 2B total removals will have declined 45 percent from the high of 2005).

The U.S. delegation voted 7 in favor and 21 opposed for an 8.1 million pound harvest limit for Area 2B. The U.S. delegation points out that they supported staff recommendation in Area 2C where a 26 percent reduction is recommended and do not feel that an 8.1 million pound harvest in 2B is equitable in sharing the international conservation needs of Area 2. Both areas have had similar declining survey and commercial CPUE numbers and both areas now have similar exploitable biomasses, and the feeling from the U.S. Delegation is that they should have similar reductions.

Alaskan Waters (Area 2C, 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B, 4CDE)

The U.S. Delegation voted 24 in favor and 9 opposed to recommend to the Commissioners harvest limits equal to the staff recommendations in Areas 2C, 3A, 4A and 4B. In Area 3B, the U.S. delegation is concerned with declining survey and commercial CPUEs and therefore recommends last year's harvest limit of 10.90 million lbs. In Area 4CDE, the US delegation Conference Board recommendation of a 3.59 million lbs. harvest limit is based on not using the hook correction adjustment. It was felt the scientific hook adjustment information was better developed for areas outside 4CDE and therefore should not be used in these northern areas at this time.

In Area 2C the U.S. Delegation discussed an amendment to the above recommendations from the charter boat groups to reduce the commercial CEY in 2C to 3.97 million pounds and increase 3A to 22.56 million pounds. The U.S. Delegation voted this down 8 to 25, principally because the staff recommendation for 2C reflects the intent of regulations to be in place for 2009 by NMFS on the charter boat industry.

The U.S. Conference Board had two minority statements regarding catch limits in Alaskan waters. One was from the West Brothers 2C Halibut Group and the charter halibut organizations.

West Brothers 2C Halibut Group – This group does not believe that they should take any greater reduction in harvest than the fisherman to the area to the south of them (Area 2B) for the following reasons:

1. Our exploitable biomass in Areas 2B and 2C are the same.
2. The actual CEY in 2C is a little above 2B.
3. 2C took 22 percent cut in 2007 and a 27 percent cut in 2008 and 2B did not take similar cuts.

4. In 2004 the IPHC recommended a 100 percent increase in our harvest limit and we took only 22 percent of it.
5. If the NMFS takes the action that they promise, the Charter fleet should take less than they took in 2008.
6. We feel migration is a bigger factor than the IPHC staff has indicated.

Charter halibut organizations – The Charter organizations requested that the Conference Board consider supporting a harvest limit in 2C of 3.97 million pounds and a harvest limit in 3A of 22.56 million pounds. This reflected their belief that other removals should be 3.84 million pounds in Area 2C and 7.12 million pounds in Area 3A. These numbers reflect the ADFG actual guided sports harvest for 2008. It is their opinion that this reflects the best information available, lowers the commercial harvest rate to ensure conservation goals are met and reflects the current legal status regarding charter boat restrictions in Area 2C and 3A. They expressed specific concern that the staff recommendation substituted an arbitrary guideline harvest levels number for best available estimates of removals, contrary to the way the IPHC addresses all other removals. They expressed support for the use of best available estimates for all removals from each area.

IPHC STAFF REGULATORY PROPOSALS: 2009

The Conference Board considered the three regulations found on page 139 and 140 of the Bluebook.

Fishing in multiple IPHC Regulatory Areas (4A, 4B, 4C, or 4D)

Following a discussion with NMFS and IPHC staff, the Conference Board unanimously supported the staff recommendation.

72-hour restriction in Area 2A

The Conference Board unanimously supported the staff recommendation.

Alaska sport fishing regulations

The Conference Board endorses the intent of the language of the staff proposal and acknowledges the continuing collaboration on this issue between NMFS, IPHC staff and the charter industry.

INDUSTRY REGULATORY PROPOSALS 2009

Proposal 1 – Allow retention of 4A IFQ halibut during Bering Sea sablefish pot fishery.

The Conference Board recommends that this proposal be forwarded to the North Pacific Council IFQ Implementation Committee. The Conference Board requests the Council consider this proposal. This proposal should be examined based on the need as a bycatch only measure.

Proposal 2 – Eliminate the legal size limit for the commercial halibut fishery.

There was some discussion of this issue, however it became apparent that there was little support for this proposal. A show of hands vote revealed only 11 delegates in favor. No further action taken.

Proposals 3, 4, 5 & 6

After some discussion these proposals were withdrawn by the proponent.

Proposal 7 – Continued use of electric reels by recreational anglers.

No action taken, already in place.

Proposals 8, 9 & 10

These proposals were dealt with in previous discussions.

Proposal 11 – Develop a harvest tag or ticket for data collection for all AK recreation halibut.

The Conference Board focused on the concept rather on the details of this proposal and requests IPHC send a letter to the NPFMC to help direct a more timely accounting of all recreational harvests (guided and unguided) by the conclusion of the end of each fishing year.

Proposal 12 – Use best catch estimate for guided sportfish removals (not GHL)

This was taken up under previous action. Please refer to the charter industry minority statement on Area 2C catch limits.

Proposal 13 – One halibut bag limit for guided anglers in Area 2C

The Conference Board took action to request the IPHC Commissioners help ensure that all harvest limits and domestic allocations are not exceeded by the respective stakeholders.

The U.S. Delegation supported recommending to IPHC that they entertain an action to establish a one fish bag limit in Area 2C with a maximum size limit of 32 inches to be effective July 1st. This action is recommended in the event that the NMFS proposed June 1st restriction of a one fish bag limit fails to be implemented. This is recommended as a fallback action to ensure that each sector in Area 2C adheres to their expected harvest limits. The U.S. Delegation supported this on a vote of 25 to 4 and the Canadian Delegation supported this on a vote of 5 to zero. There would have been an additional 4 votes in opposition from the U.S. section, however part of the charter industry was in discussions with NMFS and IPHC staff on other issues. It should be noted US and Canadian recreational fishing interests

expressed concern that this was a domestic allocation issue and therefore not part of the IPHC purview. Commercial representatives argued this was the responsibility of IPHC as this relates to conservation and IPHC introduced similar regulations two years ago.

Proposal 14 – Comment of Charter Halibut Task Force Proposals esp. ‘At-sea monitoring.’

No action was taken.

Proposal 15 – Area 2C CEY, catch limit & sport size limit.

The Conference Board felt that this was a NPFMC issue and noted previous reports indicated such action could result in greater mortalities than would be saved.

CATCH COMMENTS

All comments had already been dealt with in previous actions with the exception of Comment 2. Comment 2 looked at apportionment based on 15-year historic catch shares, however decisions for 2009 had already been reached and the Conference Board decided that this could be taken away for consideration and possible discussion in 2010.

New Business

1. It was noted that some Conference Board members still have questions and concerns with the proposed methodology for apportioning catch. The Conference Board supported a continued dialogue on this issue between staff, agencies and stakeholders. The Conference Board felt there was a need to work towards solutions as well as consideration of possible alternative apportionment strategies.

The Conference Board envisioned a process to work towards a solution, rather than a single workshop. Some items that may be part of these discussions include selectivity and determining what it would take to move the setline survey from an assessment to an apportionment tool. One Conference Board member was opposed to reopening the apportionment discussion and felt the proposed methodology was adequate and that sufficient answers had already been provided.

Trawl Bycatch

The Conference Board requests for 2009 the IPHC staff put together a process to begin looking at ways to address the bycatch issue, particularly in Alaskan regions where large amounts of juvenile halibut are taken as bycatch. In 2008 the Conference Board requested a workshop to consider bycatch issues. See text below from the 2008 Conference Board report:

The conference board expressed increasing frustration with the lack of progress on this issue. The United States has just finalized rationalization

options for the large trawl operations on flounders and cod in the Bering Sea. The coops that were formed in this rationalization process are anticipated to be able to significantly reduce their prohibited species catches. The conference board requests that IPHC staff meet with Canadian and US industry members and agencies during 2008 to consider additional bycatch management and reduction options that should be available with this new management regime in the Bering Sea. Additionally, the United States observer program in the Gulf of Alaska is not accurately recording discard mortalities in portions of the trawl fleet that are not covered by observers. It is requested that additional measures be supported by the Commission to get better bycatch estimates in the Gulf of Alaska through appropriate changes in the GOA observer program. The conference board noted that bycatch can and has been addressed citing the significant actions that have been taken in 2B and 2A.

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