The Wheel Watch

A newsletter of the Fishing Vessel Owners' Association

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Markets

The halibut market started out hot and continues to be hot. Deliveries are behind last year with only 12% of the season's quota in by May 3rd. One reason for this is that now that many are using various forms of pot gear for sable fish there are not as many mixed loads of sablefish and Halibut. Prices started in the eight dollar range in March. Halibut reached 9.25 \ 9.55 \ 9.75 by mid-April in for a delivery into Bellingham. Inventories coming out of winter were light.

Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Allocations and Landings

				|---- TAC ----|		
Area	**Species**	**Vessel Landings**	**Total Catch Pounds**	**Allocation Pounds**	**Remaining Pounds**	**Percent Landed**
2C	halibut	230	917,666	3,510,000	2,592,334	26
3A	halibut	292	1,466,199	9,550,000	8,083,801	15
3B	halibut	18	129,313	3,350,000	3,220,687	4
4A	halibut	***	***	1,760,000	***	***
4B	halibut	***	***	1,024,000	***	***
4C/4D	halibut	***	***	1,104,000	***	***
	Total	**544**	**2,523,264**	**20,298,000**	**17,774,736**	**12**

The ban on Russian imports may not be such a ban. Russian exports about 3 to 4,000,000 pounds of halibut into America annually. The Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP) only focuses on 13 species and does not require traceability for many Russian products entering the US markets, including Pollock, salmon, and halibut.

Sablefish: With some of the highest quotas in three decades the season has started out early with good catch rates in Southeast and West Yakutat. Early March prices paid were: under 2's $1.00; 2-3 $2.10; 3-4 $2.90; 4-5 $4.35; 5-7 $6.80 and 7 up $8.10. Early May prices into Bellingham average 1-2 $1.40; 2-3 $2.40; 3-4 $3.20; 4-5 $4.80; 5-7 $7.70; and 7 up 9.00.

There has been some good demand in North America and Japan. However the yen versus the dollar has slid from 109/dollar to 130/dollar reflecting less purchasing power from Japan for imports. The market seems to be stronger this early season, even with increased potential supply. 20% of the quota is in.

Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) Allocations and Landings

				|---- TAC ----|		
Area	**Species**	**Vessel Landings**	**Total Catch Pounds**	**Allocation Pounds**	**Remaining Pounds**	**Percent Landed**
AI	sablefish	***	***	8,549,439	***	
BS	sablefish	20	861,926	4,642,888	3,780,962	***
CG	sablefish	117	3,347,115	17,575,071	14,227,956	19
SE	sablefish	254	4,021,188	12,489,059	8,467,871	19
WG	sablefish	18	761,451	6,574,117	5,812,666	32
WY	sablefish	113	2,198,971	6,574,117	4,375,146	12
	Total	**525**	**11,443,949**	**56,404,691**	**44,960,742**	33
						20

Total number of vessel offloads containing only halibut IFQ:	542
Total number of vessel offloads containing only sablefish IFQ:	509
Total number of vessel offloads containing both IFQ species:	193

Cod: Norwegian H and G fresh cod is selling at record prices of $5.00/kilo. Russian cod may be banned from Europe and America but seems to be finding ways into the international markets.

Pacific Council

Tier limits

Tier limits for 2022 are as follows:

- Tier 1 – 55,858 lbs.
- Tier 2 – 25,390 lbs.
- Tier 3 – 14, 509 lbs.

The Council set new Allowable Catch Limits for 2023 and 2024. The increase from 2022 to 2023 is 28.4%. They are as follows**:**

Sablefish N of 36°	2022	2023	2024
	6172 MT	**7924 MT**	**7253 MT**

5-year review of tiered limit program

Every 5 years the Council reviews their limited entry programs. The Pacific Council is now reviewing the "tiered" program and is considering the following changes to the program. They will be further discussed at the June Council meeting. The possible changes are as follows:

1. Extend the season from Oct. 31st to Dec. 31st
2. Allow a 4th permit to be fished on a vessel, which would increase the vessel CAP to 4, not the ownership CAP.
3. Assign a rockfish limit to each tiered permit when fishing multiple tiers from the same vessel. This will help eliminate rockfish discards, which are assigned on a bi-monthly basis.
4. Allow longlining endorsed permits to use a slinky pot as alternate gear.

If the Council supports these suggested changes to the program they likely would be voted on at their September or November meeting this fall. Implementation could be later in 2023.

Gear Switching

The Council will also discuss gear switching (GS). The Council seems intent on limiting GS to no more than 29% of the trawl quota of sablefish. However, they are entertaining options that phase GS out altogether. The trawl quota of sablefish has not been obtained in many years. The last two years, millions of pounds have been left unharvest. FVOA had opposed the limitations suggested by the Council and will continue to propose less restrictive actions. This will be on the June agenda.

Second Watch

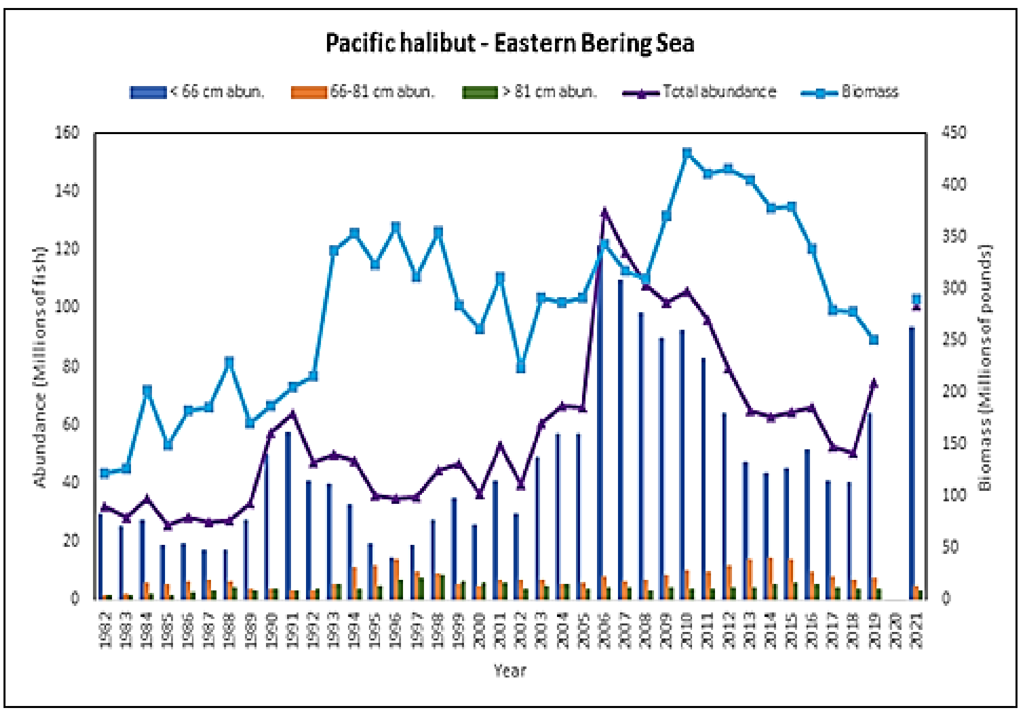
Governor Dunleavy has set up an eleven person by-catch review task force in Alaska. You will recognize several names; the group includes John Jensen from Petersburg, Linda Kozak from Kodiak, Eric Valesko from Homer, and Duncan Fields also from Kodiak. This group is to determine impacts on different fisheries and produce a report later this fall. They will be discussing halibut, salmon, crab and herring by-catch concerns.

Kellie Kyre, has joined NOAA as a Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Fisheries. She has been monitoring the IPHC and NPFMC recently.

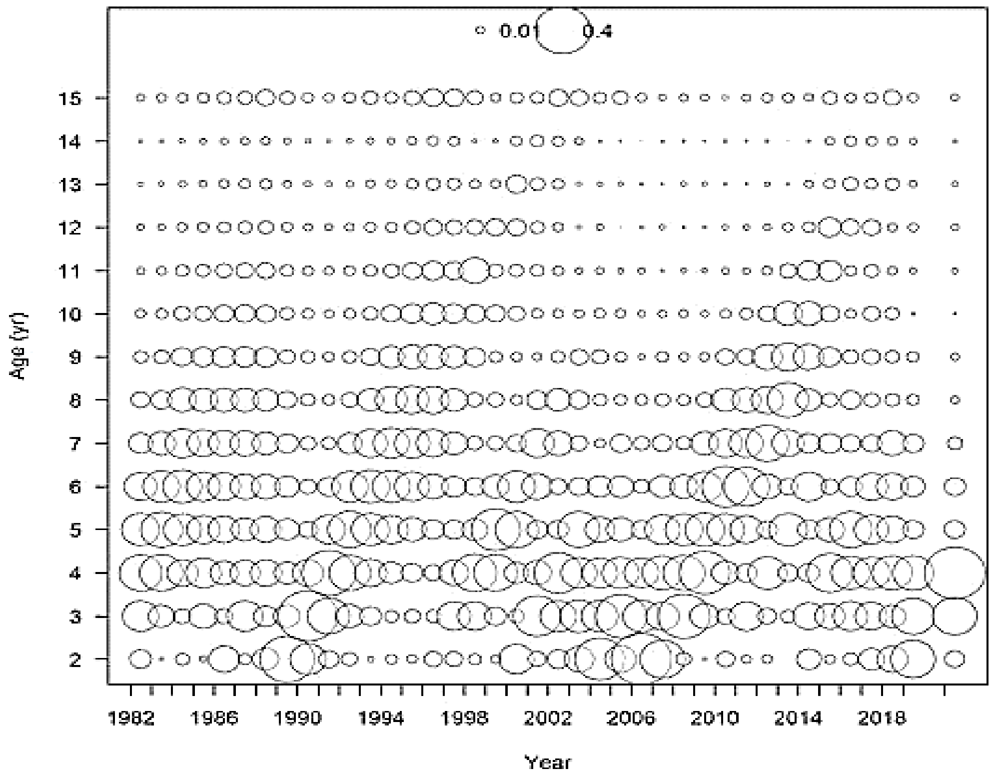
NOAA opened up nearly $200, million in loans for 6 Western Alaska non-profit corporations. These nonprofits are the CDQ companies of the Bering Sea. This funding would have been nice for the for-profit fishing families of Alaska.

IPHC

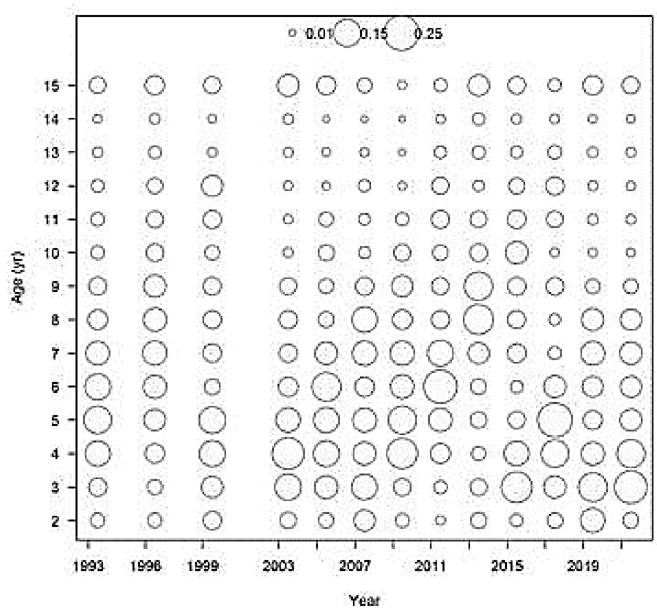
The future year class strength may be coming from the 2017 and 2018 year classes. The Trawl survey in the BSAI and GOA are both showing potential strong year classes from these two years. The chart below showed a rise in juvenile abundance in the 2019 trawl survey. There was no survey in 2020. In 2021, the abundance continued to move up.



The bubble chart below of the Bering Sea shows the large bubbles for the 2017 and 2018 year classes. If you look at 4 year olds and the far right side shows a rather large bubble indicating that year class is abundant as well as the 3 year olds.



Similarly, large abundance of 3-4 year olds in the GOA from the 2021 trawl survey.



NPFMC

Abundance Based Management

This action was voted on in January of 2022 and will lower the halibut by-catch limits in the Bering Sea for the Amendment 80 yellow fin sole trawl fleet. The regulation package is almost complete and will go back to D. C. in August with potential implementation by March 2023.

IFQ - Omnibus amendments

In April the Council voted for the following:

1. Clarify that slinky pots are legal gear to allow biodegradable twine in the door latch or pot tunnel
2. Remove buoy configuration, radar reflector and flagpole requirements but retain "LP" marking requirements
3. Remove the 9 inch maximum width of tunnel opening so it does not apply when a vessel begins a trip with unfished halibut aboard.
4. West Yakutat pot limit increased to 200
5. 7 day gear retrieval all areas of GOA except S.E., which is 5 days
6. 120 pots in S.E. but you can leave them in the water when making a delivery.

These changes should be implemented for the 2023 fishing season.

Council Steps back from halibut catch sharing commitment

The Council is discussing reallocating 3 to 4 % more commercial quota to the charter boat industry. A previous Council voted to allow the charter interest to purchase commercial quota and add it to their existing allocation; this seems to be ignored by the current Council. The federal government has passed legislation to allow for this but it will take some time to implement. In the meantime, the charter interest want to look at reallocation options.

Emergency Action

Emergency action to remove vessel CAP's in areas 4a, 4b, 4c, and 4d was approved. The Council had asked their IFQ committee to meet May 26th 2022. They will review this for a potential amendment to the IFQ program as well as take testimony on the release of small sablefish and other considerations.

Observer Coverage Rates

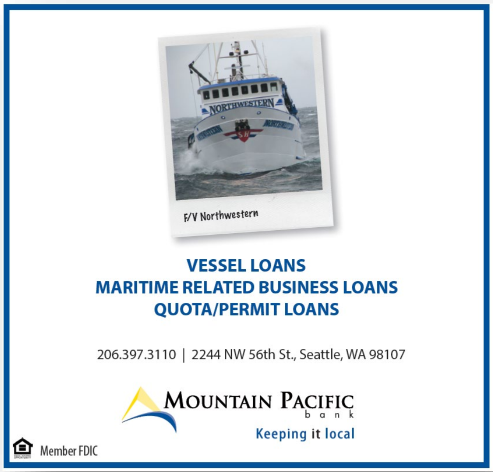
The coverage rates for 2021 ended up trawl 16%; hook & line 15%; pot 15%; fixed gear EM 30%.

Trawl coverage for 2022 is supposed to be 20% and similar coverage rates for pot and hook & line.

June Council Meeting

The Council will receive a report on the 2021 year for observer coverage as well as a report from their May 26th IFQ committee. Hopefully, we can begin to fix the partial coverage observer program now that there is new leadership at NMFS in Juneau. We had a very positive discussion regarding fixing the partial coverage program with Dr. Jon Kurland, the new regional director in Juneau.

The Seymour and The Polaris in Port Townsend



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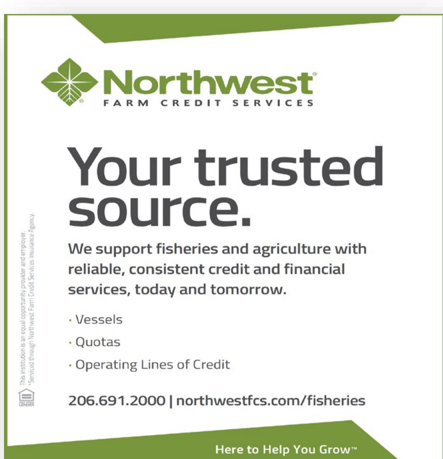

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