

The Wheel Watch

a newsletter of the
Fishing Vessel Owners' Association

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Thank you for your support

Dear Longliner:

This newsletter will bring you up-to-date with regards to action of the Halibut Commission, North Pacific Council, Pacific Council, and market information.

****IPHC****

The Commission adopted the following harvest quotas:

	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>% up/down</u>
2A	830,000	760,000	-8%
2B	13,000,000	12,100,000	-7%
2C	10,500,000	10,490,000	-1%
3A	26,000,000	24,670,000	-5%
3B	11,000,000	13,370,000	+22%
4A	3,500,000	4,240,000	+21%
4B	3,500,000	3,980,000	+14%
4C	1,590,000	2,030,000	+28%
4D	1,590,000	2,030,000	+28%
4E.	<u>320,000</u>	<u>390,000</u>	<u>+22%</u>
	71,830,000	74,060,000	+4%

Area 4B Clearance Change. If you go into Area 4B, you will still have to clear in person going into Area 4B however, you may now clear out using VHF and you need not be in sight. The Commission looked at the same allowance in Area 4A, but decided against it. The Commission may have a transponder option for 2000.

Season Dates. The season will open on March 15 and close on November 15, the same as it has been the last four seasons. Beginning in the year 2000, the seasons will likely change. An opening date of March 1 and closing date of November 30 are being contemplated. The Commission will also review the winter migration issue between 2C and 2B, the ability of NMFS to issue quota share cards, and enforcement issues with regards to a 12-month opening for halibut. The season dates are being reconsidered in light of aqua-culture activities that are occurring and which will target our markets during the closed seasons. The object is to maximize the opportunity to defend ourselves in the fresh fish market.

We know that there are North Atlantic halibut aqua-culture farms and there could be some started this year in Eastern Canada. It became clear that there was interest in Western Canada as well.

A Canadian fishermen landed 9000 pounds of live fish in 1998 and put them in a live pen. They were not allowed to be fed. After the season, they were sold to live markets. The fishermen got about \$5.00 Canadian for them or \$3.00 U.S. This option of landing live fish generated a heated debate; however, it is apparently legal. It could provide fresh wild Pacific Halibut on the market during closed periods.

Prince Rupert was not easy flying into; however, it was one of the best, meetings I have attended. Those present from FVOA were Jack Knutsen, Per Odegaard, Steven Lindahl and Bob Alverson. A party every night, we were obligated to attend-it's a Canadian thing!

****SABLEFISH SPECIAL REPORT****

Mike Sigler from, the National Marine Fisheries Service in Juneau, presented a report on the

sablefish resources to members of the Association last month. He had a lot of good information and presented an underwater video on sablefish taking bait on hook and line gear. His presentation and time taken on a Saturday were greatly appreciated. Some of the information given was as follows:

- (1) New aging analysis put sablefish longevity somewhere between 60 and 100 years;
- (2) The 95 and 97 year classes are probably above normal
- (3) Mr. Sigler admitted that the survey is primarily an adult survey and the only way to be sure of new recruits is to cut otoliths, which the observers will begin to do this year, They will also determine the sex Mike Sigler said help from the crew would be appreciated;
- (4) The new IFQ logbooks will be used for developing a CPUE index for all geographical areas, similar to what the Halibut Commission does;
- (5) There has been 200 sablefish tagged with a depth-sensitive device surgically placed inside the gut cavity of the sablefish. The device can operate up to 10 years taking readings. It then will shut off and remain active for another 10 years. These fish have yellow outside tags on them and there is a \$500 reward for returning the tags to NMFS.
- (6) An underwater experiment showed that 90% of the sablefish you will catch have taken the bait within the first three hours; 50% of the sablefish you will catch have taken the bait within the first hour.

Thanks again to Mike for coming down and making a presentation!

PACIFIC COUNCIL - PENNIES FROM HEAVEN

Lawsuit. The lawsuit of Kline vs. Daley, which challenged the sablefish tiered program, as well as the 16,000 pound minimum landing requirement, is now over. In a surprise move, the attorney for those bringing the case have filed with the court to "dismiss the case with prejudice". This means they give up but still do not like the situation. The Magnuson Act bars lawsuits that are not timely filed and only the Kline group filed a protest, so no other group can now challenge the tiered program or minimum poundage requirement, unless they petition the Council for a change.

This now opens discussion on what's next? How does the fleet want to fashion their fishing operations? There is growing support to allow stacking of permits. The question is still how is this accomplished? If you buy a second permit, do you get extra time to fish your two permits? Do both permits need to meet length restrictions or only one of the permits? Should there be a rockfish endorsement for those who have been targeting rockfish? Can we begin to move to a six month season and allow you to stack and catch the fish when it is best for you?

The last idea is banned from implementation until October 2000, because the Magnuson Act does not allow for new IFQ programs until that date. A growing number in the trawl fleet have been meeting and talking about an IFQ program for themselves. One concept would make all permits, both trawl and fixed gear sablefish available to either gear type. This option could create a large gear fight between the groups. The most expeditious idea might be for each gear group to design their own program for their own direct fisheries.

An additional impact from the dismissal of the lawsuit has been that permit values have jumped according to local brokers; however, no reported sales have taken place to validate the increased

values.

Apparently, some folks are trying to trade Chatham permits for Washington coast blackcod permits. This maybe in anticipation of reduced harvest levels in Chatham. Did you ever think you would see that? Check with Access Unlimited in Port Angeles, Lynn Walton, for more information.

Habitat. The Groundfish Habitat Committee will be meeting at the next Council meeting in March and reviewing impacts of trawl and longline gear on habitat.

Observer. This **issue comes** up at the April meeting.

NORTH PACIFIC COUNCIL

We went up on a Monday and got home midnight the next Sunday. These meetings are getting too long. Five days were spent on Sea Lions and impacts from the American Fisheries Act. Karl Vedo, Steve Lindahl and myself participated in the week of narcissistic interlude. The temperature dropped to 30 below zero without a wind chill factor. The heat went off in part of the Hilton. Room temperatures dropped to below 60 and Mr. Lindahl took his bedding and slept in the hallway, which was warmer than the rooms.

Birds Karl, Steve, and I gave presentations on towing bird-bags, tory lines, and weighting the gear with seine leads similar to what Mark Lundsten did in the 1998 season. The Council has put out for public comments three new regulatory options to protect seabirds. There are two sub-options that are of concern. The first is a requirement that gear be set only at night, but due to the limited night time during the summer in Alaska, this probably won't go anywhere. There is an option to require lining tubes where the gear is set below the water line for all freezer vessels and vessels over 60 feet. There is evidence that properly weighted gear and tory lines produce fewer bird interactions and mortality than the lining tubes. We need to watch this issue carefully. Final action may come at the April Council meeting.

Estimated seabird bycatch in the Alaska longline fishery								
	Short-tailed Albatross	Laysan Albatross	Black-footed Albatross	Northern Fulmar	Gull spp	Shearwater spp	Other spp	TOTAL
Bering Sea / Aleutian Islands								
1993	0	475	11	4367	920	482	24	6,255
1994	1	350	40	6,606	1,918	968	35	9,883
1995	1	550	52	11,911	3,097	1,765	56	17,376
1996	1	237	23	5278	1,339	725	43	7,604
1997	2	439	27	12,156	3,095	1,141	42	16,960
5 yr total	5	2,051	153	40,318	10,368	5,182	199	58,078
annual avg.	1	410	31	8,064	2,074	1,036	40	11,616
Gulf of Alaska								
1993	0	459	647	1,684	160	114	11	3,065
1991	0	414	803	1,451	145	94	8	2,904
1995	0	266	984	1,279	148	101	9	2,778
1996	0	277	496	1,208	107	66	6	2,153
1997	0	110	123	604	64	37	4	939
5 yr total	0	1,526	3,053	6,117	621	412	38	11,837

Sports Charter Allocation. A (Chasde Halibut) representative from the sports division of ADF&G, proposed a higher level of potential charter expansion into areas 2A and 3A. There is a proposal to limit the expansion of area 3A and 2A charter operations. This option provides a fixed amount of poundage and would not go up or down with harvest levels. If quotas ever were reduced to 1974 levels, there would be virtually no commercial 2C fishery. Area 2C halibut IFQ holders better wake up and get motivated. The final action of the Council was once again delayed on this issue until the December meeting. Area 3A is also vulnerable to action being proposed. The value of particularly Area 2C Q.S. should reflect this allocation uncertainty and that allocation uncertainty will also impact 3A QS. Call your favorite ADF&G personality in Juneau and begin asking questions.

Observer Requirements. New proposed observer requirements for CDQ species were discussed and approved except for ice vessels less than or equal to 80 feet. The new requirements for freezer vessels operating on CDQ species will require two (2) full-time observers. This applies to freezer longliners.

Additionally, a CDQ observer cannot be required to work on deck more than nine hours. During the six hours that both observers are not on deck, the vessel cannot haul gear. All fish must be observed. Also, a 6' x 8' space must be provided observers. These regulations were to apply to ice vessels also. Karl Vedo and I testified that ice vessels, as a class by themselves, should not be required to have the two observer requirements, but should stay at 30% coverage. This action was made in a motion by Dr. Fluharty. The State of Alaska insisted on putting an 80 foot limitation on ice vessels and limited the vessels to those which had done CDQs in the recent past. This functionally eliminates all ice vessels except for 4 or 5 current CDQ participants. Those vessels available for CDQ operations, the best that I can figure, are the Heritage, Lisa Marie, Ocean Harvester, and Melissa Beth. The Augustine is 91 feet in length and was arbitrarily axed. We are working on this. The CDQ representatives on the Council opposed this restriction, because it limits their markets for vessels.

The added proposed requirements for all CDQ vessels of two full-time observers almost appears to be designed to run ice vessels and smaller freezer longliners out of the CDQ business. Some of the larger freezer LL vessels are opposed to the new requirements and justifiably so. The Zenith and others have had to weld and cut their decks to comply, and the cost of two observers is nonsense as well as the restrictions on hauling gear. These new proposals come from NMFS enforcement and the observer program. It was disappointing to see the lack of opposition from the Council industry members on some of the freezer processor new requirements.

However, Dennis Austin, Dave Fluharty, Joe Kyle, Robin Samuelsen, and Wally Pereyra did help on the ice boat situation and helped to achieve some level of fairness and logic.

**** MARKET INFORMATION ****

Wild Pacific Halibut. The market appears to be looking good for the March 15" opening. Let's

1998 Halibut Removals	
*Commercial	70,100,000 Ibs.
"Sports	8,400,000 Ibs.
*Bycatch	13,100,000 Ibs.
"Wastage	2,000,000 Ibs.
*Personal Use	700,000 Ibs.
Total	94,300,000 Ibs.

hope the weather is as accommodating. The cold storage reports for the end of December 1998 showed 6,932,000 lbs. in cold storage compared to 14,439,000 lbs. in 1997. This is a 52% reduction from last year and a 22% reduction from the month before. There has been imports coming through Seattle from Japan and Russia. It is reported the quality is much better than the year before. We will attempt to get import numbers for you. Some of the fish are nice size-20-40's~a good share are "ping pong paddles.

Sablefish. If your market depends on Japanese consumption, there are some positive signs. The Japanese have jumped back into the Bering Sea Opilio market. They left the market in 1997. The Japanese negotiated for a higher price for pollock this winter. The yen versus the dollar has been in the 115 to 118 range for about two weeks. This is about 17 percent better than last year when the yen weakened to a low of 145 last summer. Sablefish prices could be slightly up this year, but the general economy in Japan is not healthy.

Pacific Cod. The Japanese are back in the cod market. New England cod production has been cut from 14,000 tons to about 6,000 tons in the Gulf of Maine North Atlantic production is down as well. Association vessels have been getting \$0.33/lb. round in Kodiak, but \$1.29 frozen in Dutch Harbor.

****SAFETY CLASSES****

The following First Aid and CPR classes have been scheduled through Washington Sea-Grant for the upcoming dates:

March 1 S-16, 1999 @ Fishermen's Terminal at the Nordby Building

The cost of the class is \$70, of which 1/2 is reimbursed by the Seattle Fishermen's Memorial Committee. This is a day-and-a-half class but very much worth your time. We believe it far exceeds the generic American Red Cross classes we have offered in the past, but we can still set those up if you desire. Please call Sarah Fiske at Washington Sea-Grant at (206) 543-1225 to schedule your spot in these classes.

Northwest Center for Occupational Health and Safety, Dept. of Environmental Health, University of Washington is offering a class in "**Safety and Health in Commercial Fishing**" on April 8, 1999 in Seattle, WA. This course will address common safety and health problems in the commercial fishing industry and strategies for preventing them. Participants will: understand common ergonomic problems in fishing and fish processing, learn about recent research into crab asthma, get tips on respiratory protection during maintenance activities, learn about responding to medical emergencies, and hear legal experts discuss implications of the Jones Act for health and safety. Credit available. Fee: \$95.00 before March 19, 1999; \$145.00 thereafter. For more information call (206) 543-1069 or e-mail ce@u.washington.edu.




1999 Quota SHARE POOLS (QSPs) AND TOTAL ALLOW CATCHES (TACs)

1999 HALIBUT AND SABLEFISH QSPs AND IFQ TACs			
Species & Area	1999 Quota Share Pool (units)	1999 IFQ TAC (pounds)	Ratio (QS:IFQ)
Halibut 2C	59,551,257	10,490,000	5.667
3A	184,907,401	24,670,000	7.495
3B	53,903,791	13,370,000	4.032
4A	14,503,009	4,240,000	3.421
4B	9,284,774	3,184,000	2.916
4C	3,969,186	1,015,000	3.911
4D	4,869,276	1,421,000	3.427
4E	139,999	0	0
All Areas	331,128,693	58,390,000	
Sablefish S E	65,967,848	7,054,720	9.351
WY	53,207,225	4,023,395	13.224
CG	11,103,423	9,858,971	11.262
WG	35,951,012	3,209,898	11.200
AI	31,518,176	1,825,409	17.266
BS	18,587,476	1,181,666	15.730
All Areas	316,264,160	27,154,059	

Notes:

- The "ratio" displays the number of units of QS that yield one pound of 1999 IFQ.
- QS Pools include small amounts of QS in "Reserve" (QS that is yet to be issued) and QS that is "Restricted" (QS that has been issued, but which does not yield IFQ to its holder).
- TACs do not include pounds that have been set aside for the CDQ program.
- Halibut weights are displayed in net pounds, sablefish weights in round pounds.

Verified: February 1, 1999


 Philip J. Smith Administrator
 Restricted Access Management
 Alaska REgion NMFS



1999 QS USE CAPS & VESSEL IFQ CAPS

Halibut QS Use Caps		
Applicable % of '96 QSP	Size of 1996 QSP	QS Use Cap
1% of 2C QSP	59,979,977 QS units	599,799 QS units
.5% of 2C, 3A, & 3B QSPs	300,564,647 QS units	1,502,823 QS units
1.5% of All Area 4 QSPs	33,002,937 QS units	495,044 QS units
Halibut Vessel IFQ		
Vessel Use Cap %	1999 IFQ TAC	Vessel Use Cap
1% of 2C IFQ TAC	10,490,000 net pounds	104,900 net pounds
.5% of All IFQ TAC	58,390,000 net pounds	291,950 net pounds
Sablefish QS Use Caps		
Applicable % of '99 QSP	Size of 1999 QSP	QS Use Cap
1% of SE QSP	65,967,848 QS units	659,678 QS units
1% of All QSPs	316,264,160 QS units	3,162,642 QS units
Sablefish Vessel IFQ		
Vessel Use Cap %	1999 IFQ TAC	Vessel Use Cap
1% of SE IFQ TAC	7,054,720 round pounds	70,547 round pounds
1% of All IFQ TAC	27,154,059 round pounds	271,541 round pounds

Notes and Explanations:

- QSP = Quota Share Pool or Pools; IFQ = Individual Fishing Quota; TAC = Total Allowable Catch.
- Halibut QS Use Caps were permanently established in February, 1997 using 1996 QS Pools.
- Vessel IFQ Caps are calculated on the IFQ TAC only; CDQ TACs are not included in the calculations.
- Halibut weights are expressed in net (headed and gutted) pounds, and sablefish weights are expressed in round pounds.

Verified: February 1, 1999

Philip J. Smith, Administrator
Restricted Access Management
Alaska Region, NMFS

****CALENDAR OF EVENTS****

March 8-12, 1999	PFMC	Columbia River Doubletree Portland, OR
March 15-16, 1999	Washington Sea-Grant First Aid & CPR	Nordy Building Fishermen's Terminal, Seattle
April 5-9, 1999	PFMC	Red Lion Sacramento, CA
April 19-23, 1999	NPFMC	Hilton Hotel Anchorage, AK

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