

The Wheel Watch

a newsletter of the

Fishing Vessel Owners= Association
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Dear Longliner:

This newsletter will bring you up-to-date on actions before the North Pacific and Pacific Fisheries Management Councils, IPHC, Washington, D.C. events, and marketing developments.

**** North Pacific Council****

Council Appointments. Governor Sarah Palin has nominated Duncan Fields, Jeff Stephans, and Gale Vick to replace Doug Hoedel from Kodiak. Duncan Fields has received the nod from the Governor. Mr. Fields has represented the interests of Old Harbor and native interests from Kodiak. The nominees for the second seat from Alaska are Beth Stewart, Nancy Munro, and Sam Cotton to replace current Chairwoman, Stephanie Madsen. Beth Stewart received the Governor's nod. She represents limit seine and trawl operations in the King Cove and the Sand Point area. Congratulations to all!

Freezer Longline Pacific Cod, Bering Sea. A buy-out program was put in place on Sept. 29, 2006. Approximately, three vessels were bought out for a value of about \$36,000,000. It is to be paid back on a fee of up to 5% of the ex-vessel value of cod catches. Additionally, the freezer longline vessels are trying to form a co-op to be even more efficient. Such an action requires 100% of the vessels to cooperate. It is reported that the Fishing Company of Alaska is holding out and federal legislation is being sought by the others to form a co-op with less than 100% cooperation. The cod and other non-pollock fisheries in the Bering Sea received the Council vote for rationalization in June of 2006. These events will greatly enhance the efficiency of the cod operations.

VMS in Alaska. This can be confusing. If you fish Pacific Cod or Pollock, you need it. If you fish in the Aleutians for sablefish or halibut only, there are six (6) coral gardens so you need it when fishing in that area, but not in other areas. The Council was to take action at the February meeting in Portland for Gulf VMS but the State of Alaska's new Governor, I believe, pulled the plug on this, at least, for awhile. So IFQ only operations for halibut and sablefish in Alaska, other than in the Aleutians, do not need VMS. Stay tuned. If you have a VMS unit, you must log in with NMFS. That number is (907) 586-7703.

Charter Boat Halibut. (1) At the annual IPHC meeting, the commission recommended a one fish bag limit for six (6) weeks in Area 2C and a 2-week, one-fish bag limit in 3A. The Secretary of Commerce has announced they will not accept this recommendation. It is anticipated, however, that Commerce will put a trophy limit in 2C which is a one fish any size and the second fish, 45 inches. There will not be any such help in 3A unfortunately.

(2) The Council is scheduled to take final action on a moratorium on charter vessel entry. Current options are fairly all inclusive of existing participants.

(3) The Council will consider giving a blessing to amending the Halibut Act and granting the State of Alaska authority to manage Halibut Charter regulations. If the Council were to give a yes on this, it would take about 2 or 3 fishing seasons to be effective.

(4) The Council will look at regulations to restrict Area 2C charter boat activity for the 2008 season. This could be the same as the trophy fish option mentioned above. Currently, there is not a similar regulation being prepared for Area 3A, but we are pushing for 3A restrictions.

(5) There is a discussion paper on halibut allocation, which will probably mean a new look at a hard allocation between charter and commercial interests which will replace the Guideline Harvest Level (GHL). The commercial people will likely have to give up some more fish to get a final hard allocation.

(6) The State of Alaska has put into effect on an emergency basis, that charter operations, their crews and skippers, cannot fish for their clients for the 2007 season in both areas 2C and 3A.

****Pacific Council****

Sablefish. The season is anticipated to begin May 1, 2007, when you can retain halibut north of Point Chehalis. The Council meets April 2-6, 2007, and will finalize this regulation. The incidental catch of 100 lbs. of halibut to a 1000 lbs. dressed blackcod is anticipated to stay the same for 2007. The tiered levels are finalized. They are as follows:

Tier 1	48,500 lbs. round
Tier 2	22,000 lbs. round
Tier 3	12,500 lbs. round

Dr. Jack Tagart has been representing our interests during the full review process of the updated sablefish assessment. This will be completed in July or August of 2007. He should have a report by the end of the month.

VMS – Lower coast style. If you land one pound of groundfish on any size vessel, you need a VMS unit. The Open Access fleet will be hit with this requirement in August, according to NMFS.

Trawl IFQ Program. There is an option that would allow for trawl quota to be harvested with pots or longline gear. The program would require you to purchase a trawl permit of appropriate vessel length before you could fish this quota. The details of the trawl ITQ program are in flux and moving forward. There could be a final vote later this year.

****IPHC******2007 Harvest Limits**

AREA	Allocation Pounds	Percentage of change
2A	1,340,000	Same as 2006
2B	11,470,000	13%↓
2C	8,510,000	19%↓
3A	26,200,000	4%↑
3B	9,220,000	15%↓
4A	2,890,000	13%↓
4B	1,440,000	13%↓
4C	1,866,500	15%↑
4D	1,866,500	15%↑
4E	367,000	15%↑

The Commission did not adopt the scientific harvest recommendations of the staff this year. However, the Commission did lower Area 2B in Canada by 1.75 million pounds, half of the recommended reduction. The B.C. commercial fishermen have been asking for a reduction in 2B for three seasons. The reason it has not occurred until now is because of the struggle with allocation of the 2B quota between Canadian Charter and sports activity versus commercial usages. The lower quotas would have forced the allocation issue in Canada last year and would have required sports to have some restrictions. Governments are good at sloughing off decisions for today that can be passed to the newly elected tomorrow. It seems this has occurred in BC and Alaska.

Area 2C, at the request of the fishermen, took 75% of their recommended reductions. 3A received an unexpected 4% increase. 4CDE got a surprise 15% increase. Areas 3B, 4A, and 4B took unexpected decreases.

As you know, the Commissioners did not adopt the staff recommendations for quota in 3A and Areas west. I have talked with the head scientist at IPHC regarding their new model and asked if they truly believe in their new modeling and the migration effect on each area. I got a definitive "yes" to that question. When I asked if the staff would reload and submit again the new model, I also got a "yes." The following information you should be aware of and perhaps it will assist you in how your area might be impacted by the new model.

I got the following recruitment information from Dr. Bill Clark. The following are recruitment estimates coastwide at age 8 in millions of fish.

1995 - 27	2000 - 9	2005 - 17
1996 - 20	2001 - 8	2006 - 29
1997 - 12	2002 - 19	2007 - 33
1998 - 10	2003 - 23	
1999 - 9	2004 - 16	

The 8 year olds of 1995 and 1996 were the 1987 and 1988 year classes, which were the largest ever observed. Beginning in 2002 (1994 year class) there has been a run of strong year classes. The last two values are poorly estimated at this time, but if they pan out, they will set a new record.

The following are the results of ongoing tagging experiments.

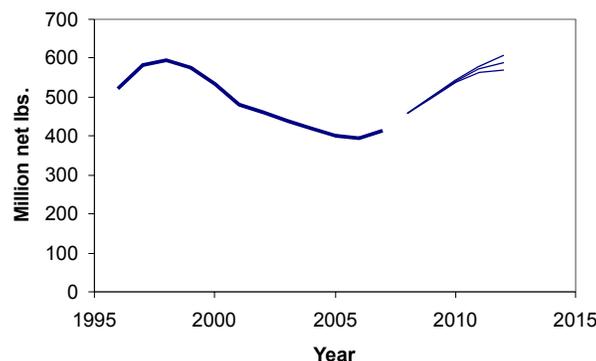
**Percent of Tag Recoveries 3 years after
Release by Area**

Release area	2B	2C	3A	3B	4A
2B	96	4	0	0	0
2C	15	84	1	0	0
3A	4	1	86	10	0
3B	4	4	31	61	1
4A	23	16	23	7	28

These results show a minor movement of 5% from 2B to 2C and a 15% southern movement out of 2C. Area 3A shows 5% movement south and east and 10% moving back to 3B. Area 3B shows an out migration of 31% to 3A, 4% to 2C, and 4% to 2B. In other words, 39% of 3B is moving east and south in a 3-year period. Area 4A shows 72% moving east and south over a three-year period. The big recipient over three years from 4A are 3A getting 23%, 2C recruiting 16%, and 2B recruiting 23%.

The migration numbers for 4A should not surprise anyone. They confirm old experiments from the Bering Sea and 4A. The Bering Sea may be thousands of miles from 3A and 2C, but these areas are dependent on a recruitment of migrating fish from west to east. The bycatch in the Bering Sea over a 10 year period amounts to many millions of pounds of quota lost to all areas in the Gulf of Alaska. It was disappointing when Jack Knutsen and I were the only ones to testify on this issue from industry at the June 2006 Council meeting in Kodiak. Those of you with big loans on halibut should be more active on this subject. We only got a token 5% reduction in the Bering Sea halibut trawl bycatch. The following graph shows the IPHC staff's five year forecast for exploitable biomass. It looks good. It could have been better if the Bering Sea trawl bycatch had been lower.

Exploitable Biomass



In closing, Commissioner Ralph Hoard was a champ on the Charter boat issues by recommending a 1 fish bag limit. Even though it was not accepted by Commerce, he definitely got the attention of the people back east and the NPFMC. The staff also deserves applause for making the recommendation to begin with.

****Second Watch****

Our condolences to Betty Cox and family on the loss of Elwin in February 2007. Elwin was a long-time supporter of FVOA and fished out of Fort Bragg, California. He was an early blackcod fishermen off the lower coast and fished all areas of Alaska on his schooner, the F/V Norcoaster. He will be missed.

Alaska fines \$254,500. The F/V Alaska Juris, its manager and three captains, were assessed \$254,500 in fines. "The investigation focused on identifying patterns of significant interference and efforts by vessel captains and crew to hinder or bias the observer's samples and procedures," said NOAA Special Agent, Michael Killary.

Alcohol and Drug Certification. This applies to all commercial vessels. Drug testing must be completed 32 hours following a serious marine incident. Urine drug testing can only be conducted by personnel trained in specimen collection. The USCG will be enforcing this in 2007. You need a certified person on the vessel. Classes can be found at Swedish Medical in Ballard – Contact Janet at (206) 781-6242/781-6229 or at the NPFVOA (they've just added a class for April 2nd) at (206) 285-3383.

Please welcome as new 'Associate' members to FVOA – Walter F. Sargent, F/V Major, from Kodiak, AK; Dan Veerhusen, Castle Cape Fisheries, Homer, AK., Kenneth Mack Sr., Anchorage, AK., and Erik Fellows and Todd Hoppe, F/V Deliverance/Valkyrie, Homer, AK. ***Also welcome as a 'Sustaining Sponsor'*** - Mr. Harold Wittlesy of Satellite Technical Services, and Paul Anderson of the Law office of Paul L. Anderson, Seattle, WA. Thank you for your support!

America's Most Dangerous Jobs! The U.S. average is four fatal occupational injuries per 100,000 workers. Farmers have a fatality rate of 41.1 and police officers 18.2 per 100,000. Fisheries are 118.4 per 100,000, loggers 92.9, pilots 66.9. Average salary, fishermen \$29,000, loggers, \$31,290; pilots, \$135,040. **MSN Careers.**

Mercury. The State of Alaska just completed mercury studies on several Alaska fish. Large halibut came out high. "Halibut caught by Alaska commercial fishing industry pose minimal risk for consumers because average weights are about 25 lbs." **Office of the Governor of Alaska.**

****Markets****

Well, halibut smoked off the starting line at \$5.50 a pound paid in Homer and \$5.25/pound in Juneau during the first week of fishing. Prices the second week were between \$4.25 and \$4.80 in Homer. As the season progresses, I expect the average price

this year to be higher than last year, but there is definite market resistance at the \$5 level. Halibut are moving into the white table cloth markets. The MSC certification is having an impact.

March 5, 2007 through March 22, 2007

Area	Species	Vessel Landings	Total Catch Pounds	Allocation Pounds	Remaining pounds
2c	Halibut	106	499,105	8,510,000	8,010,895
3A	Halibut	96	1,647,726	26,200,000	24,552,274
3B	Halibut	2	39,427	9,220,000	9,180,573
4A	Halibut	0	0	2,890,000	2,890,000
4B	Halibut	0	0	1,152,000	1,152,000
4C	Halibut	0	0	933,250	933,250
4D	Halibut	0	0	1,306,550	1,306,550
4E	Halibut	0	0	0	0
Total		204	2,186,258	50,211,800	48,025,542

The FDA has announced that halibut is the number one fish for vitamin D. The Seattle Times ran a story that, Seattle with its' clouds, prevents people from producing enough vitamin D during the winter. Vitamin D helps absorb calcium and maintains strong bones, protects from osteoporosis, hypertension, cancer and several auto-immune diseases. You need 400 units per day and 3 ounces cooked halibut gives you 680. Catfish is second at 570 units and canned pink salmon gives you 400 units. One cup milk is only 100 units. If you don't get enough sun, just eat halibut.

Sablefish. At the time of this newsletter, not many landings have been made. FVOA boats received last year's fall prices in Juneau for the week of March 17, 2007, 4.85 for 7's, 4.65 for 5-6's, 3.85 for 4-5's, 3.65 for 3-4's.

March 5, 2007 through March 22, 2007

Area	Species	Vessel Landings	Total Catch Pounds	Allocation Pounds	Remaining Pounds
AI	Sablefish	0	0	3,716,956	3,716,956
BS	Sablefish	0	0	2,627,883	2,627,883
CG	Sablefish	13	54,721	10,917,179	10,862,458
SE	Sablefish	33	643,307	7,429,502	6,786,195
WG	Sablefish	1	5,433	4,356,290	4,350,857
WY	Sablefish	6	151,200	4,402,586	4,251,386
Total		53	854,661	33,450,396	32,595,735

****Eat on the Wild Side!****

MSC. The Marine Stewardship Council voted in November of 2006 that they will not consider giving MSC certification to introduced fisheries. People who harvest Barent Sea Red king crab were told that King crab introduced in the North Sea from the western Bering Sea, were an invasive species, and were not eligible for MSC certification.

Not Farmed. The MSC announced at its annual meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, in mid-November, that its eco-label program will not include farmed seafood.

Boycott. The Humane Society announced that more than 2000 chefs are boycotting Canadian seafood because of the Atlantic seal hunt.

Farmed Fish. A French chef won \$26,000 for winning first place at the European International Cook-Off. He used farmed halibut, crab, and chicken.

Spanish Fisheries. Pescan Ova will invest around \$464.5 million in turbot production to be built in Portugal. It will have a 7,000 ton capacity.

Fish Coloring. The California Supreme Court agreed to decide whether supermarkets can sell farmed raised salmon without labels disclosing that the gray fish have been fed chemicals to give their flesh the orange color of wild salmon. After a similar suit in Seattle in 2003, Safeway, Albertsons, and Kroger agreed to label appropriately.

From Yahoo. Trident and Icicle Seafoods have entered into the farmed salmon business in Chile. The salmon harvest value in Alaska has fallen 75% from a value of \$738 million to \$300 million, largely due to farmed competition. Both companies have used Chilean Farmed Salmon for sometime. These investments were good corporate investments for both companies. **Gunnar Knapp.**

Cargo Coverage. FVOA has set up a Cargo Pool for halibut and sablefish IFQ holders. If you are interested, please call us at (206) 284-4720.

RICKEY AND ASSOCIATES



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****Calendar of Events****

Week of March 26, 2007	NPFMC Meeting	Anchorage Hilton Anchorage, AK
Week of April 2, 2007	PFMC Meeting	Seattle Marriott Hotel Seattle, WA
Week of June 4, 2007	NPFMC Meeting	Sitka, AK
Week of June 10, 2007	PFMC Meeting	Crown Plaza Mid Peninsula Foster City, CA
To be determined	Fishermen's Fall Festival	Fishermen's Terminal Seattle, WA
Week of Sept. 9, 2007	PFMC Meeting	To be determined
Week of October 1, 2007	NPFMC Meeting	Anchorage Hilton Anchorage, AK
Week of November 9, 2007	PFMC Meeting	Hyatt Regency Islandia San Diego, CA
Week of December 3, 2007	NPFMC Meeting	Anchorage Hilton Anchorage, AK

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Gone fishin!