

# The Wheel Watch

*a newsletter of the*

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Dear Longliner:

This newsletter will bring you up-to-date on the actions of the Halibut Commission at their annual meeting, events in Washington, D.C., North Pacific Council, and Pacific Council activities, and market events.

## **\*\*Halibut Commission\*\***

The IPHC meet the week of January 17, 2005 in Victoria. It was the most agreeable meeting since 1976 that I can recall. The Commission approved the following harvest limits for the 2005 season.

Seasons for Alaska and Canada open **Noon, February 27, 2005 and close noon, November 15, 2005.**

<b>Regulatory Area</b>	<b>2004 Setline Catch limit</b>	<b>2005 Setline Catch Limit</b>
2A	1.48	1.33*
2B	13.80	13.25*
2C	10.50	10.93
3A	25.06	25.47
3B	15.60	13.15
4A	3.47	3.44
4B	2.81	2.26
<u>4CDE</u>	<u>3.79</u>	<u>3.99</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>76.51</b>	<b>73.82</b>

\* -- includes sports

The following is my personal observation of what might be expected in 2006. There seems to be continued drops in the commercial CPUE in 4B and 3B. Both commercial and survey CPUEs are dropping in these areas. These two areas may be recommended for additional cuts in 2006. Area 3A and 2C seem stable, however, 2C is at record harvest levels and the survey CPUE is dropping in 2C. Area 4A has falling survey and commercial CPUEs. Area 4D shows strength, but with the new rule that allows 4C fish to be harvested in 4D, things could change. Everything depends on new year class strength over the next four years. I expect a general decrease in various areas over the next several years.

The Commission established a .200 harvest rate for legal size fish in areas west of 3A and lowered the harvest strategy to .225 from .250 in areas 3A and to the East.

The following is a chart of the monthly delivery patterns by area for 2004.

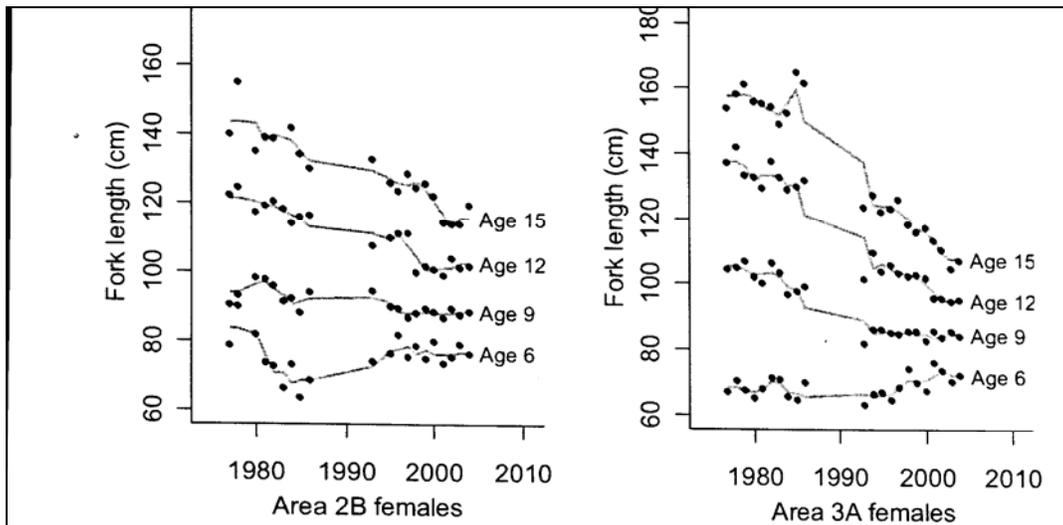
**Table 6. The total pounds (thousands, net weight) of 2004 commercial landings (not including research catch) of Pacific halibut for Alaska and British Columbia by regulatory area and month (preliminary).**

Regulatory Area	March <sup>1</sup>	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Total
2B	2,131	1,532	1,347	849	1,153	1,503	1,431	1,354	786	12,068
2C	1,287	1,601	1,893	1,445	1,091	1,024	730	822	286	10,179
3A	3,549	3,399	4,561	3,137	2,200	2,839	2,309	1,955	653	24,602
3B	630	1,124	3,132	2,817	2,424	2,558	1,547	724	378	15,334
4A	20	27	351	496	970	806	465	224	33	3,392
4B <sup>2</sup>	53	29	208	462	573	819	421	56	51	2,672
4C <sup>2</sup>	1	-	-	253	330	172	118	76	6	956
4D <sup>2</sup>	-	18	-	61	631	706	196	21	-	1,633
4E <sup>2</sup>	-	-	34	110	79	49	34	4	-	310
Alaska Total	5,540	6,198	10,179	8,781	8,298	8,973	5,820	3,882	1,407	59,078
Total	7,689	7,732	11,526	9,657	9,494	10,537	7,264	5,237	2,193	71,146

<sup>1</sup> March includes deliveries made on February 29

<sup>2</sup> based on NMFS monthly catch ratios of IFQ landings

The size at age seems to have leveled off. Fish are still smaller at the same age compared to 1980. This is thought to be due to the lack of feed relative to the large biomass of halibut.



**Figure 4a. Mean length at age of females in recent IPHC setline surveys. Averages include sublegals.**

The following are graphics of commercial catch, commercial and survey CPUEs, age 8 recruits, and biomass trends per area.

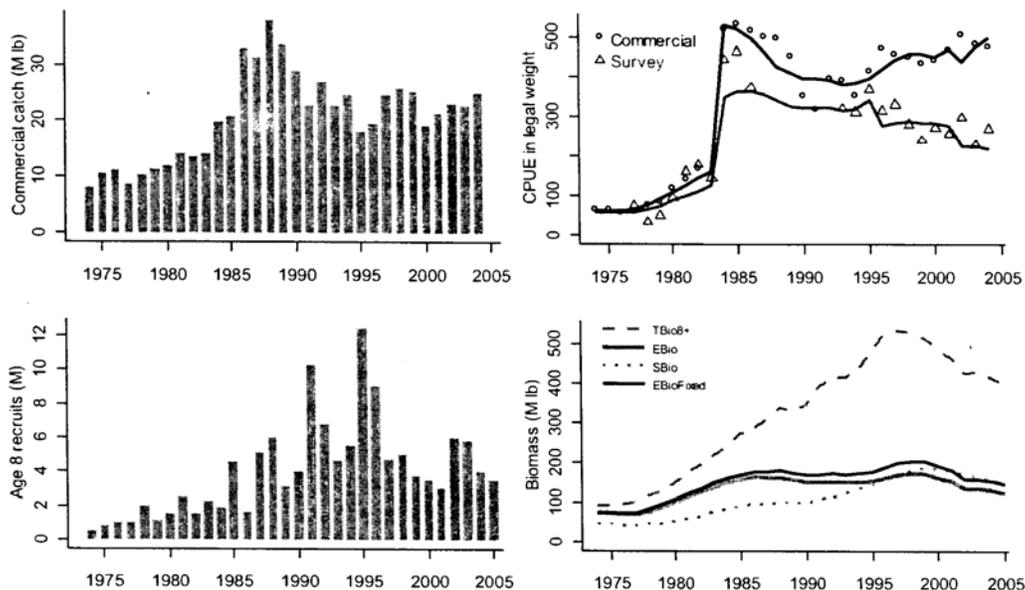


Figure 2c. Features of the 2004 assessment in Area 3A.

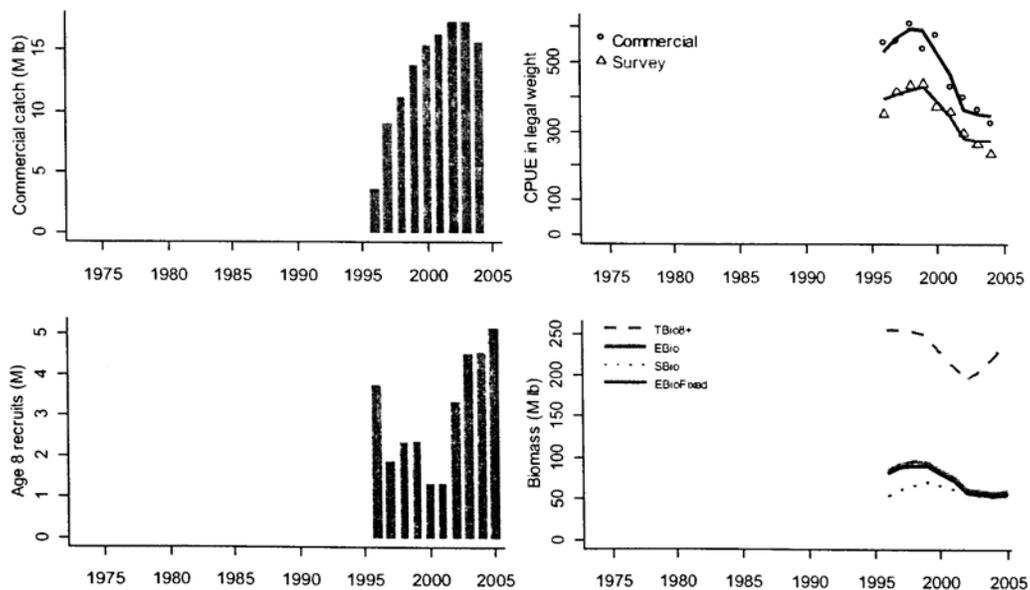


Figure 2d. Features of the 2004 assessment in Area 3B.

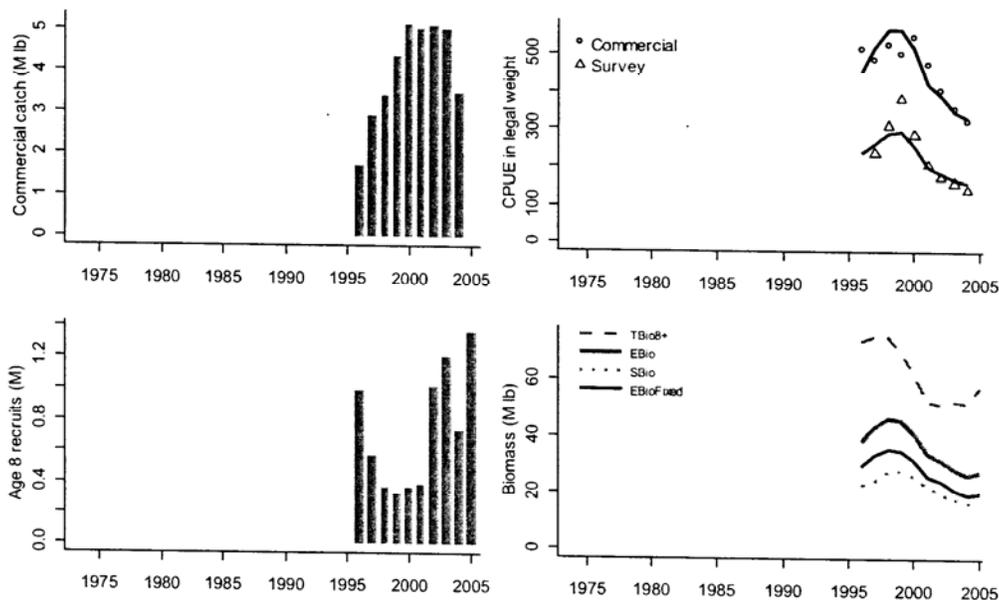


Figure 2e. Features of the 2004 assessment in Area 4A.

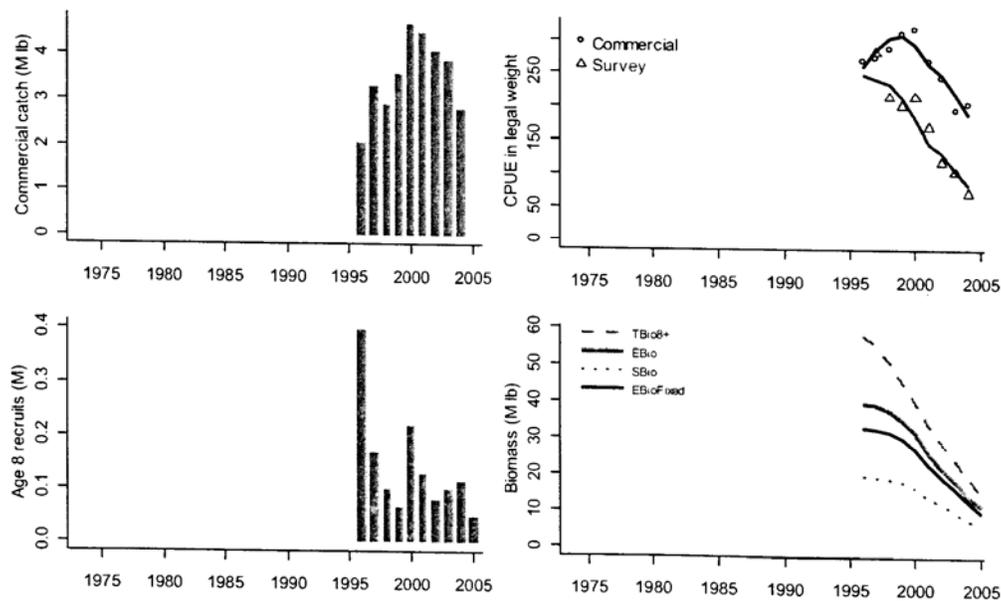


Figure 2f. Features of the 2004 assessment in Area 4B.

## **\*\*North Pacific Council\*\***

The major action item affecting longline fishing was action on Essential Fish Habitat and Habitats of Particular Concern. The council closed, to all gears, several small coral gardens in S.E. Alaska, and six small areas on the Aleutians. These areas will become “no fishing” areas, probably effective in 2006. There were a number of areas, mostly in the Aleutians, that will become closed to bottom trawling. Bowers Ridge will have no bottom trawling. We will send out a colored chart reflecting these areas later this year.

## **\*\*Pacific Council\*\***

The Council is working on a final package for HAPC (Habitat of Particular Concern) and EFH (Essential Fish Habitat) restrictions. Oceana has proposed closures in every canyon from Juan de Fuca to San Diego. Some of these closures may affect fixed gear operations. The 2005 stacking harvest limits in round pounds will be:

<b>Tier 1</b>	<b><u>64,000</u></b>	<b>Tier 2</b>	<b><u>29,100</u></b>	<b>Tier 3</b>	<b><u>16,600</u></b>
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The sablefish season begins April 1, 2005 and ends October 31, 2005. Halibut can be retained north of Grays Harbor after May 1, 2005. The numbers are in round pounds.

## **\*\*Washington, D.C. Issues\*\***

**Magnuson Act** – Senator Stevens has designed his Commerce Committee, such that, he is in charge of anything important to fish and technology. He is expected to hold hearings and produce a draft this year that will likely address new IFQ programs, IFQ requirements, habitat issues, and processor shares. He will re-establish an Oceans Committee, as well. Senator McCain, who has been a thorn in Senator Steven’s side of late, has been artfully cut out of fish issues and will be Chair of Indian Affairs.

## **\*\*Market Information\*\***

**Halibut.** I talked to the fish sales person at Larry’s Market. He says that halibut is the fish that jump-starts fish sales in the early spring. They are much geared to the halibut opening. I expect similar prices as last year, perhaps a bit more than 2004 due to the reduced harvest levels for halibut.

**Sablefish.** The U.S. devalued the dollar this fall. This is good for exports, such as sablefish. The yen versus the dollar is currently at 103 compared to 107 to 110 last year. The inventories in Japan of sablefish are reported to be 1000 tons less than last year. I would expect a 5%-7% increase over 2004 prices.

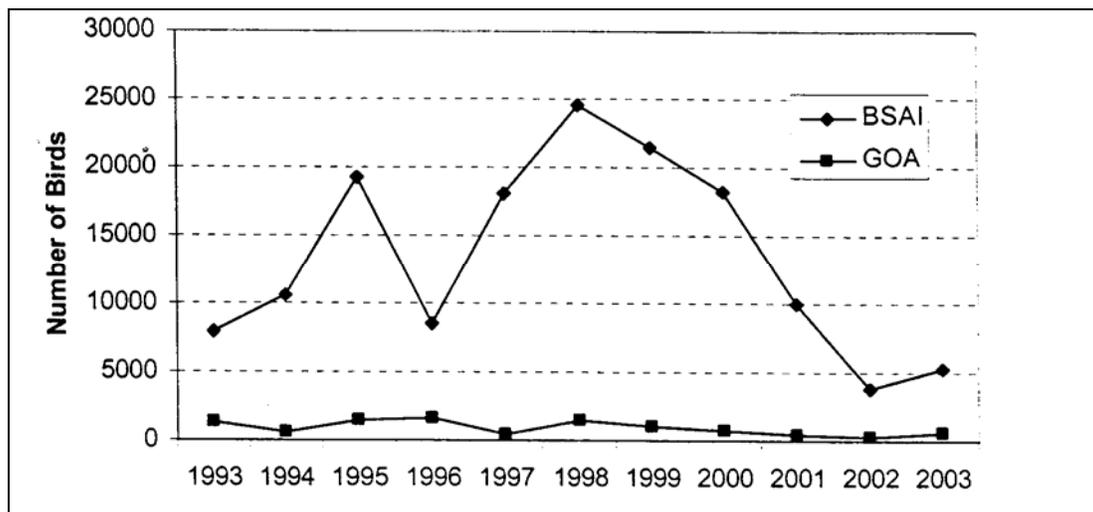
## **\*\*Second Watch\*\***

**Answer to the Questions** – The question in the last newsletter was: Explain how Ambassador John Negroponte, the recent representative of the U.S. to the U.N., is

associated with the halibut industry, and how Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy is associated to our industry. **Answers:** Ambassador Negroponte, currently the Ambassador to Iraq, previously the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, was the lead negotiator for the U.S. in 1978 when the Halibut Commission renegotiated with the Canadians. His famous line on the last day of negotiations was, "Are we going to fish or cut bait?" His Canadian counterpart, who was actually a Frenchman, responded, "It is time to fish," and the halibut convention was extended. Only Linda Kozak of Kozak & Associates and Erik Olsen of Farm Credit, got this right. Each will receive a \$75 gift certificate to Ray's Boat House.

No one got the second half of the question. Supreme Court Justice, Anthony Kennedy, while on the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals, wrote the unanimous opinion supporting Amendment 14 that established sablefish as principally a longline species in the Gulf of Alaska in 1985. This was his last legal opinion on the 9<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court before he became a Supreme Court Justice.

**Good News** – I know tory lines can be awkward to tow, but here are the results of your bird avoidance measures. Good work!



**From NOAA, Department of Justice** – Unimak Fisheries, operating the trawler, Unimak, was fined \$500,000.

“Manipulation of by-catch reporting, by falsifying weekly production reports and causing sample bias in the observer reports, damages the government’s ability to manage fisheries and can lead to serious over-harvesting of fish populations,” said **Assistant Special Agent in charge, Mike Adams, of the NMFS’s Office for Enforcement**. According to Adams, this “pre-sorting” of halibut from the observer’s samples leads to significant under-reporting and the consequent extension of the groundfish seasons beyond when they would otherwise be ordered closed.

**\$25,000 and restitution of \$25,000** to the International Pacific Halibut

Commission; forego employment in the fishing industry for one year; and write an article for publication in a fishing journal explaining their criminal behavior. **In July 2004, another company operated primarily by Mr. Zubko,** Rebecca Irene Fisheries, LLC, which operates a groundfish vessel similar to the F/V Unimak in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska was found guilty of a civil violation for under-reporting halibut by-catch and ordered to pay a fine of \$250,000 and undergo a 60-day suspension of its groundfish permit during the 2005 season.

**Marine Stewardship Certification.** The MSC project for a green label is progressing but very slow. We are hopeful things will be completed by April 2005.

**Eat on the Wild Side.** Here are some numbers to contemplate.

	Calories	Protein (g)	Fat (g)	Saturated Fat (g)	Sodium (mg)	Cholesterol (mg)	Omega-3 (g)
<b>Halibut</b>	140	26.6	2.9	0.4	69	41	0.5
<b>Sablefish</b>	250	17.2	19.6	4.0	72	63	1.8
<b>Ground Beef (lean)</b>	264	17.69		8.31	69	75	0.1
<b>Ham</b>	147	22.32		1.92	1,516	52	0.06
<b>Chicken Thigh w/skin</b>	211	17.27		4.34	76	84	0.14

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