

The personal use harvest of Pacific halibut through 2008

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Abstract

Halibut is taken throughout its range as a personal use harvest by several sources. The main harvests are the treaty Indian ceremonial and subsistence fishery occurring in the waters off northwest Washington State, the First Nations food fish fishery in British Columbia, and the subsistence fishery off Alaska. Estimates of the coastwide personal use harvest in 2007, the most recent year for which data for all areas are available, totaled 1.49 million pounds, virtually unchanged from 2006. Data for 2008 are incomplete as of this writing and only available for Areas 2A, 2B, and 4D/4E Community Development Quota operations. Harvests in most Alaskan areas were down slightly, which was countered by a new estimate for Area 2B which was 35% higher than previous estimates. The Alaskan subsistence fishery harvest has been fairly stable since 2003, averaging 1.13 million pounds annually.

Introduction

The removals of Pacific halibut which are accounted for in the stock assessment include commercial and sport catch, bycatch, wastage, and personal use. Personal use includes removals from a variety of sources, several of which are supported by very little documented data. Personal use harvests are taken in (1) the federal subsistence fishery in Alaska, (2) the sanctioned First Nations Food, Social and Ceremonial (FSC) fishery conducted in British Columbia, (3) ceremonial and subsistence removals in the Area 2A treaty Indian fishery, and (4) sublegal sized halibut retained in Areas 4D and 4E under International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) regulations. These removals are summarized for 2007, the most recent year for which full information is available, in this report. In addition, data available for 2008 are also provided.

Estimated harvests by area

The coastwide personal use harvest was estimated by IPHC at more than two million pounds in 1991, declined rapidly through 1995, and became relatively stable over the following two years (Table 1). Harvest estimation methods were revised in 1998, and the resulting estimates were subsequently somewhat higher and remained fairly stable through 2002. Harvests took another jump in 2003 (Table 2) following the implementation of new subsistence fishery regulations in Alaska and a more comprehensive harvest estimation survey. It is important to note that many of the changes seen in the harvest estimates prior to 2003 were due primarily to changes in estimation methods and may not necessarily have reflected actual changes in harvest levels. The majority of the personal use harvest was taken from waters off Alaska.

Alaska

IPHC began estimating the personal use harvest in Alaska in 1991. Documentation of estimation methods cannot be located but the available estimates indicated that personal use in Alaska totaled 1.95 million pounds that year. The estimate for 1992 dropped in half, to one million

pounds. Estimates were subsequently made for each IPHC area independently, but not necessarily annually for all areas.

A methodology was developed by Trumble (1999) to estimate personal use. He used halibut catch information gathered by household interviews and postal surveys conducted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). The surveys did not distinguish between sport and personal use harvests, so Trumble made assumptions about the amount of sport and personal use in native and non-native households. The resulting estimates were used for Alaska for 1998-2002, with the annual changes being the amount of sublegal poundage retained by the Area 4E Community Development Quota (CDQ) fishers.

In 2003, the subsistence fishery for halibut off Alaska was recognized by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, and a separate set of fishery regulations was created, which vary according to IPHC regulatory area. One provision of the subsistence fishery management program was the establishment of an annual survey of fishers to determine the annual harvest. The voluntary survey of the 2007 fishery, the fifth since the surveys began in 2003, was conducted under contract to the National Marine Fisheries Service by the Subsistence Division of ADF&G. Results for 2007 have been reported by Fall et al. (in press). The estimates from the 2007 survey totaled 1,032,000 pounds (net weight) in Areas 2C through 4E (Table 2). This represents an 8.5 percent decrease from 2006.

The ADF&G survey indicated that roughly 51 percent of the total subsistence harvest in Alaska occurred in Area 2C, with 36 percent harvested in Area 3A. The five subareas of Area 4 totaled 87,200 pounds, or 8.4 percent of the subsistence harvest off Alaska. The communities within Area 4E accounted for 60 percent of the subsistence harvest within Area 4, which is a pattern similar to previous years.

IPHC also adds the amount of sublegal halibut retained by the Area 4D/4E CDQ fishery. The CDQ organizations are required to report to IPHC the amounts retained (Williams 2009). The ADF&G subsistence survey reported by Fall et al. (in press) included all registered fishers and households in all Areas, but Area 4D and 4E fishers were instructed to exclude any retained sublegal halibut caught during commercial fishing. Also, fishers who retained sublegals as part of their Area 4D/4E commercial harvest were not required to register for the subsistence fishery and therefore should not have participated in the survey. Therefore, the sublegal harvests described by Williams (2008) were added to the subsistence harvest estimates reported by Fall et al. (in press) to fully account for the total 2007 personal use harvest. Table 2 also provides the amount retained in 2008.

British Columbia

The primary source of personal use harvest in British Columbia was the First Nations food fish fishery. In past years, IPHC received some logbook and landing data for this harvest from the Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) but those data have not been adequate for IPHC to make an independent estimate of the food fish fishery harvest. Thus, IPHC relies on DFO for an estimate. Through 2006, DFO estimated this harvest to be 300,000 pounds annually. Since 2007, this harvest has been estimated at 405,000 pounds (G. Logan, DFO, pers. comm.). In the commercial fishery, take-home fish was considered personal use harvest prior to the implementation of the Individual Vessel Quota (IVQ) program. Currently, in the IVQ program all halibut landed by a vessel is weighed by the port monitors at the time of the offload and any take-home fish is taken from this quantity; thus, personal use is included as part of the vessel's catch.

Washington, Oregon, and California

In Area 2A (Washington, Oregon, and California), the Pacific Fishery Management Council allocates the catch limit to directed and incidental commercial fisheries, sport fisheries, and treaty Indian fisheries operating off northwest Washington. The Treaty tribes further subdivide a portion of their allocation to their own ceremonial and subsistence fishery. For 2007 and 2008, the treaty tribes allocated 33,000 and 30,000 pounds, respectively, to their ceremonial and subsistence fishery.

State regulations require that personal use fish from the commercial hook and line halibut fisheries be recorded on the fish tickets. This reporting requirement causes the personal use catch to be included in the commercial catch, which is consistent with the procedure used in the quota share fisheries in other areas, and therefore are not reported here.

References

- Fall, J. A., Koster, D. and Turek, M. *In press*. Subsistence harvests of Pacific halibut in Alaska, 2007. AK Dept. Fish and Game, Tech. Paper. 342. 155 p.
- Trumble, R. J. 1999. 1998 estimates of personal use. Int. Pac. Halibut Comm. Report of Assessment and Research Activities 1998:61-64.
- Williams, G. H. 2009. Retention of sublegal-sized halibut in the Area 4D/4E CDQ fishery: 1998-2008 harvests. Int. Pac. Halibut Comm. Report of Assessment and Research Activities 2008: 67-70.

Table 1. Estimates of the personal use harvest (thousands of pounds, net weight) of Pacific halibut by IPHC regulatory area from 1991-2002.

Year	Regulatory Area						Total
	2A	2B	2C	3A	3B	4	
1991	10.0	50	720	-----1,000-----		230	2,010
1992	14.2	100	-----1,000-----				1,114
1993	15.8	300	108	328	59	121	932
1994	10.9	300	108	328	59	121	927
1995	14.2	300	n/a	97	37	94	542
1996	15.0	300	n/a	97	37	94	543
1997	14.8	300	n/a	97	37	94	543
1998	10.5	300	170	74	20	166	741
1999	10.5	300	170	74	20	170	745
2000	17.5	300	170	74	20	175	757
2001	16.0	300	170	74	20	192	772
2002	16.0	300	170	74	20	180	760

Table 2. Estimates of the personal use harvest (thousands of pounds, net weight) of Pacific halibut by IPHC regulatory area since 2003. Estimates for most recent year are preliminary.

Year	2A	2B	2C	3A	3B	4A	4B	4C	4D	4E	4D/4E CDQ	Total
2003	27.0	300.0	628.0	279.6	27.6	20.7	2.5	23.8	4.4	54.5	14.3	1,382.4
2004	19.4	300.0	677.1	403.6	33.5	28.9	0.9	9.7	10.9	28.5	16.2	1,528.7
2005	36.0	300.0	598.1	429.3	46.2	35.6	1.4	7.7	5.8	54.0	23.2	1,537.3
2006	33.0	300.0	580.1	381.9	48.6	27.0	2.8	8.5	8.3	70.7	19.7	1,480.6
2007	33.0	405.0	524.9	372.2	47.7	14.9	2.0	15.0	3.2	52.1	19.0	1,489.0
2008	30.0	405.0	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	21.8	n/a