

# Retention of U32 halibut in the 2011 Area 4D/4E CDQ fishery

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## Abstract

Since 1998, commercial Pacific halibut vessels fishing for some Community Development Quota organizations in Area 4E have been permitted by the International Pacific Halibut Commission to retain U32 halibut (<32 inches fork length), under an exemption requested by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. Beginning in 2002, the retention allowance was expanded to also include vessels that land all of their annual catch in Areas 4D or 4E. The amount of retained U32 halibut increased from 3,590 pounds in 1998 to 30,267 pounds in 2001, but has varied without any significant trend over the last ten years. In 2011, a total of 16,866 pounds was reported by three CDQ organizations, an increase of 77% from 2010. This harvest should be added to the subsistence harvest reported by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game for a full accounting of annual subsistence removals in Alaska.

## Program history

At its 1998 Annual Meeting, the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) approved a two-year exemption to the regulation requiring the discard of U32 halibut, applicable only for vessels fishing in Area 4E. A reporting requirement was added for the 1999 fishery. Another two-year exemption was approved at the 2000 Annual Meeting, covering the 2000 and 2001 fishing seasons. At the 2002 Annual Meeting, the IPHC agreed to extend the allowance to Community Development Quota (CDQ) operations with allocations for Area 4D, and to amend the regulation to apply only to vessels that land all of their catch in Areas 4D or 4E. The IPHC staff also agreed to review the regulation at the end of 2002 to see if the exemption was still necessary under the subsistence fishery regulations being drafted at the time by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council and National Marine Fisheries Service.

For 2007, IPHC made a minor change in the CDQ groups' reporting requirements. In previous years, the organizations were required to report their retained amounts to IPHC by November 15. This date was originally established as it coincided with the closure of the IFQ fishery, and was believed to provide sufficient time for data compilation and subsequent submission by the affected organizations. In later years it became apparent that local fishers in Areas 4D and 4E were concluding their fishing well before November. At the same time, IPHC staff found that the original reporting date did not provide sufficient time to receive and compile the reports for Commission review and consideration. At the 2007 Annual Meeting, a proposal to move the reporting date to November 1 was approved and went into effect that year.

The harvests reported herein are reported separately from the household survey conducted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game for the subsistence harvest, where survey participants are instructed to exclude any sublegal halibut retained during commercial fishing. Thus, a complete accounting of subsistence harvests should include the figures reported in this document.

## **Results for 2011**

Reports for 2011 were received from three organizations: Bristol Bay Economic Development Corp. (BBEDC), Coastal Villages Regional Fund (CVRF), and Norton Sound Economic Development Corp. (NSEDC). These reports are summarized below, and the reported amounts of retained U32 halibut are shown in Table 1. Overall U32 landings in 2011 totaled 16,866 pounds, up 77% from 2010. All three organizations reported higher amounts retained in 2011. Generally, annual changes are a reflection of the amount of effort by the local small boat fleets and the availability of fish in their nearshore fisheries. Additional details are provided in the following sections.

### **Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation (BBEDC)**

BBEDC's report was received on October 17, 2011, and a revised report was submitted on November 8. BBEDC requires their fishers record the lengths of retained sublegal halibut in separate logs, which are then tabulated by BBEDC at the conclusion of the season. The lengths were converted to weights using the IPHC length/weight relationship and summed to estimate the retained U32 net weight. Halibut were landed by BBEDC vessels primarily at Togiak, with a minor amount in Dillingham.

BBEDC reported that 10 fishers landed 356 U32 halibut for an estimated total of 2,752 pounds (net). This was up slightly from 2010 (Table 1). The fish had an average size of 7.7 pounds (net); 73% of the halibut were 29 inches or greater in length.

### **Coastal Villages Regional Fund (CVRF)**

The report from CVRF was received on November 1, 2011. Crews at Coastal Villages Seafood's facilities in six ports separated U32 halibut during offloads and then weighed them separately from the commercially legal-sized halibut. Once this was completed, the plant's record keeper recorded on a tally sheet the fisher's name, number of halibut landed, and the poundage of the U32 halibut retained by the fishers. Each plant sent the tally sheets to the Coastal Villages Seafood's headquarters on a weekly basis, where the information was entered onto a spreadsheet. CVRF has followed this same procedure for several years.

In 2011, plants in Chefornak, Hooper Bay, Kipnuk, Mekoryuk, Toksook Bay, and Tununak recorded U32 halibut caught between June 12 and August 10. CVRF reported that 10,111 pounds (head-on, dressed, washed) were landed, resulting in an estimated net weight of 9,909 pounds, a 153% increase from 2010 (Table 1). A total of 1,100 halibut was recorded, for an average weight of 9.0 pounds (net). Toksook Bay tallied the largest share of the number of retained U32 fish at 44%, followed by Mekoryuk (42%).

### **Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation (NSEDC)**

NSEDC's report was received on November 1, 2011. NSEDC required their vessels to offload the U32 halibut for weighing. Ice was removed but the fish were not washed nor heads removed. The U32 halibut were then returned to the fishers. U32 fish were retained from landings made during August 10 through October 12, similar to previous years. NSEDC reported 447 U32 halibut weighing a total of 4,779 dressed pounds in a "head-on with slime" weight form, or approximately 4,206 pounds net weight. The fish had an average weight of 9.4 pounds (net). All fish were caught in the local CDQ fishery, and delivered to the Nome processing plant. The amount retained in 2011 increased 22% from 2010.

**Table 1. Reported amount (pounds, converted to net weight) of U32 (sublegal-size, <32 inches) halibut retained by Community Development Quota harvesters fishing in IPHC Areas 4D and 4E.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Bristol Bay Economic Development Corp. (BBEDC)</b>	<b>Coastal Villages Regional Fund (CVRF)</b>	<b>Norton Sound Economic Development Corp. (NSEDC)</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>1998</b>	2,690	900	-	3,590
<b>1999</b>	418	7,483	-	7,901
<b>2000</b>	3,772	9,618	-	13,390
<b>2001</b>	10,773	19,494	-	30,267
<b>2002</b>	6,593	7,473	4,371	18,437
<b>2003</b>	6,346	5,034	2,961	14,341
<b>2004</b>	4,826	7,120	4,242	16,188
<b>2005</b>	8,750	11,335	3,136	23,221
<b>2006</b>	2,836	13,467	3,407	19,710
<b>2007</b>	3,135	11,398	4,516	19,049
<b>2008</b>	1,816	12,926	6,924	21,666
<b>2009</b>	922	4,277	6,060	11,259
<b>2010</b>	2,155	3,924	3,438	9,517
<b>2011</b>	2,752	9,909	4,206	16,866
<b>% change 2010 - 2011</b>	<b>+28%</b>	<b>+153%</b>	<b>+22%</b>	<b>+77%</b>
<b>2007-2011 Average</b>	<b>2,156</b>	<b>8,487</b>	<b>5,029</b>	<b>15,671</b>

