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## Summary

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**Meeting dates:** August 5-6, 2016

**Agenda item:** Pacific Halibut Management Overview – Briefing

**Presenter(s):** Michele Culver, Regional Director

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**Background summary:**

Pacific halibut are managed by the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) established in 1923 by a Convention between the U.S. and Canada. Its primary focus is on research and management of the Pacific halibut stock throughout its range off Alaska, British Columbia, and the West Coast to northern California. IPHC conducts an annual survey, produces an annual stock assessment, and adopts an annual Total Allowable Catch (TAC, or quota) for the stock throughout this range.

This TAC is then apportioned among regulatory areas based on habitat distribution. Broad fishing regulations for both nations are approved by IPHC and, for the U.S., implemented by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Fishery-specific allocations and regulations are approved through the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) process through a “Catch Sharing Plan” for West Coast fisheries (tribal, commercial, “incidental,” and recreational), which is implemented by NMFS.

IPHC also has two stakeholder advisory groups (Conference Board and Processor Advisory Group), a Research Advisory Board (which includes stakeholders), a Scientific Review Board (independent stock assessment review), and a Management Strategy Advisory Board (focused on developing longer term fishery objectives and strategies).

WDFW participates in meetings and discussions with IPHC and NMFS on halibut matters, and engages on the PFMC on fishery allocation matters. Attached, for reference, is a WDFW report from September 2010 that provides some background on how the PFMC Catch Sharing Plan evolved and how the incidental allowances (in place for the sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis and the West Coast-wide salmon troll fishery) were developed.

WDFW is also responsible for monitoring and sampling of halibut fisheries, producing catch estimates for Washington recreational fisheries, and coordinating and implementing inseason management actions upon projected quota attainment. We coordinate and communicate with halibut fishery stakeholders and provide annual reports to IPHC regarding our catch estimation methods, management performance, and enforcement efforts.

Additionally, while the Washington coastal subareas have extremely short halibut seasons (typically 3-4 days long), the Puget Sound season has been reduced over the past several years from 17 days to 8 days as catch estimates have regularly exceeded the subarea quota. WDFW recently revised its catch estimation method for the Puget Sound recreational fishery. Also attached, for reference, is a WDFW report from June 2016 that provides an update on our Puget Sound catch estimation revisions.

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**Policy issue(s) you are bringing to the Commission for consideration:**

None

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**Public involvement process used and what you learned:**

WDFW holds annual public meetings to set annual Puget Sound recreational halibut seasons, solicit changes to PFMC's Catch Sharing Plan, and discuss halibut fishery legislative and regulatory proposals, as appropriate.

Puget Sound Anglers has proposed a WDFW dedicated Catch Record Card (CRC) for Puget Sound halibut with a requirement to have it submitted on an earlier timeline and a potential penalty for non-returns. While WDFW employs a dockside sampling program to estimate catch, the CRC is used as an additional, independent mechanism to ground-truth the catch estimate from the sampling program. However, given that the catch record card currently has multiple species, anglers do not submit their cards until 11 months after the season has closed and, by the time the cards are processed, the data are typically two years old. Having a dedicated CRC, which would be submitted immediately after the season ended, would provide more recent information for management and would help us identify the universe of Puget Sound halibut anglers. WDFW is supportive of this proposal and we have added it into our broader Wild Futures license proposal package.

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**Action requested:**

None – briefing only.

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**Draft motion language:**

N/A

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**Justification for Commission action:**

N/A

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**Communications Plan:**

Continue annual stakeholder outreach and communication efforts with public meetings typically held in early February, August, and October, and additional meetings to discuss specific legislative and regulatory proposals. The next meeting is scheduled for August 12th in Montesano.

# Commission Request to Department "Blue Sheet"

Date of Request: 4/8/2016

Title of Request: Halibut Management Briefing

Commissioner: Wecker

**Priority Level (put one check in each row):**

Importance:     High             Medium             Low

Urgency:         High             Medium             Low

Request Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Knowledge or Action Being Requested (narrative). Describe what you want to know. Be specific.**

Explanation of Regulatory/management system <sup>international</sup> for conservation <sup>federal +</sup> and allocating halibut harvest. <sup>state</sup>

**Output Requested (e.g., telephone call, memo, material from files, new report, presentation, other):**

Briefing

For Commission Executive Assistant Use

Date Assigned: \_\_\_\_\_  
[At Debrief]

Assigned To: \_\_\_\_\_  
[Program]

revised 8/07/12 -eg