

MRIP Listening Session

Alaska Region

Summary Report

Location: Juneau, Alaska and Anchorage, Alaska

Dates: June 17 and 18, 2008

Purpose: To gather input from the NMFS regional office and science center, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council, the International Pacific Halibut Commission and state partners to assure that the MRIP design we are developing is appropriately tailored to the specific fishery management and stock assessment needs of the region. Further, such an assessment will enable us to begin to identify and prioritize regional needs for MRIP projects for the next round of project funding, with FY 2009 funds.

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Agencies/Groups Represented: NMFS Alaska Regional Office, NMFS Alaska Fishery Science Center, North Pacific Fishery Management Council, International Pacific Halibut Commission, and Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Attachments: Agenda, list of attendees, summary of Alaska recreational sampling programs

Major Points and Comments:

1. The North Pacific Council has developed Fishery Management Plans for salmon, for Gulf of Alaska (GOA) and Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands (BSAI) groundfish, all three of which include recreational fisheries, as well as for scallops and for BSAI crab. The vast majority of recreational catch for these fisheries comes from the state waters of Alaska. Moreover, the recreational catch of these fisheries is small compared to commercial catch. Accordingly, the FMP's do not include provisions for management of the EEZ recreational fisheries for salmon or groundfish. Management of these recreational fisheries is carried out by the State of Alaska. Therefore, neither the Council nor the NMFS Regional Office or Fishery Science Center could identify specific data needs or improvements needed for the current data.

2. Pacific halibut constitute the remaining major marine sport fishery in Alaska. Halibut are managed internationally to achieve stock reference points and

associated annual catch limits (guideline harvest levels or GHL's) established by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. The International Pacific Halibut Commission uses the GHL's to establish commercial catch limits. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council is charged with developing regulations on how to allocate and manage the available harvest of halibut. The Council is developing a catch sharing plan between the charter and commercial fisheries that will set an allocation between the sectors and which may provide a mechanism to transfer allocation between the commercial and charter sectors, on an individual basis. Recreational harvest, particularly from the charter boat sector, is an increasing component of the overall harvest. All parties to halibut management, including NMFS, the State of Alaska, the Council and the Commission have a significant stake in assuring accurate and timely harvest and bycatch estimates and biological sampling data for landed catch. As noted below, these essential data are provided by the State of Alaska.

3. NMFS does not conduct recreational fishery surveys in Alaska. At present, all survey data are developed by surveys conducted by the State of Alaska, Department of Fish and Game. Alaska's surveys consist of several components, including:

a) Statewide Harvest Survey (SWHS): Annual mail recall survey of a stratified random sample of households derived from a directory of fishing license holders. The SWHS produces estimates of participation, harvest and catch. Annual cost = \$725,000.

b) Guide/Business Saltwater Logbook: Detailed trip reporting of all guided/chartered saltwater fishing trips with data recorded by angler license number. Generates census of all fishing effort, catch and harvest for saltwater for-hire fisheries. Annual cost = \$ 450,000.

c) Marine Creel Surveys in Southeast Alaska: Angler intercepts in Juneau, Sitka and Ketchikan generate estimates of effort, target species and catch. These estimates enable in-season tracking of king salmon and other species harvest in the international king salmon management arena. Biological data are also collected. Annual cost = \$ 850,000.

d) Port sampling in South Central Alaska. Program collects biological samples of halibut and groundfish. Annual cost = \$ 250,000.

4. The AK DFG Guide/Business Saltwater Logbook program includes a measure that enables an independent cross-check, or effort to verify, the logbook data. Anglers are selected at random from the submitted logbooks and receive mail surveys for their charter trips. The mail survey and logbook results can be compared. Comparisons to date do reveal differences between the survey and logbook catches. The causes of the differences are not yet known.

5. Prior to FY 2008, NMFS has provided some support for halibut sampling under the Marine Creel Surveys in Southeast and the Port Sampling in South Central. This had amounted to approximately \$300,000-\$400,000 per year of

earmark funds. No longer available in FY 2008, the state is now providing \$490,000 of general fund money to continue this work.

Comments Specific to Data Needs:

1. Alaska Department of Fish and Game has identified a number of survey improvements they would like to implement. These include:
 - a) An electronic point-of-sale license issuing system.
 - b) Revision/redesign of the SWHS to produce more reliable and timely results.
 - c) Electronic reporting of Guide/Business logbooks.
2. The North Pacific Council, NMFS and the IPHC all support these enhancements as they will generate more timely estimates and improved quality of harvest and biological data for halibut.

Comments Specific to Outreach:

None cited during the meetings.

Future Funding Priorities:

1. Pilots of electronic logbooks and point-of-sale data base improvements.
2. A study to assess and examine the causes of differences between survey and logbook-derived catch estimates.
3. A project to research possible solutions for refreshing lifetime license (Permanent ID) data [could apply to multiple regions]
4. A project to research and assess data completion, cleansing and qa/qc options [could apply to multiple regions]
5. A project to address economic data needs [could apply to multiple regions, might be out of scope]
6. A project to examine current comparison and verification methods [could apply to multiple regions, related to item 2 above.
7. A project to examine the impact of ACL and AM requirements on the Alaska FMPs, if applicable.