

The Wheel Watch

a newsletter of the

Fishing Vessel Owners' Association
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Dear Longliner and Sustaining Sponsors:

This newsletter will bring you up-to-date on the Halibut Commission proposals, the North Pacific Council December meeting, the Pacific Council, and Washington, D.C. activities.

****IPHC****

New Commissioners were announced this month. Jeff Kaufman and Bob Alverson have been announced as new interim Commissioners for the next two years. Jeff is the CEO of the Central Bering Sea Fishermen's Association and a member of the NPFMC Advisory Panel. He is also a small boat fisherman out of the Pribilofs and fishes in Bristol Bay. Congratulations to Jeff. I want to thank all of you who sent in supporting letters this year on my behalf. It is greatly appreciated. Don Lane is the out-going Commissioner for Alaska. He was instrumental in testimony before the NPFMC on bycatch reduction and helped in the selection process of a new Executive Director of the IPHC, which will be announced soon.

The following are the recommendations from the IPHC scientists for harvest limits. You will notice since the large reduction in harvest limits in 2013, there has been a steady, though small, increase in overall recommendations in harvest.

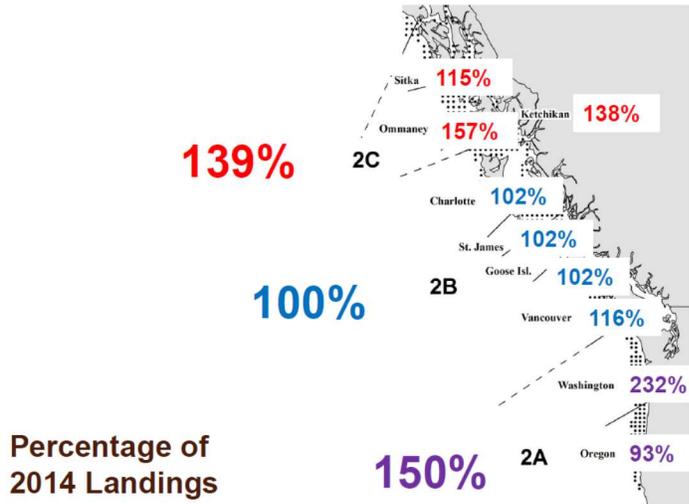
Area	2A*	2B*	2C*	3A*	3B	4A	4B	4CDE	Total
2014 Blueline	.72	4.88	4.16	9.43	2.84	.85	.82	.64	24.45
2015 Blueline	.75	4.96	4.30	10.10	2.46	1.39	.73	.52	25.22
2016 Blueline	1.02	5.22	4.63	9.37	2.67	1.30	.91	1.44	26.56
2015 Harvest Limits	.97	7.04	4.65	10.10	2.65	1.39	1.14	1.29	29.55

*Sport and charter allocations included

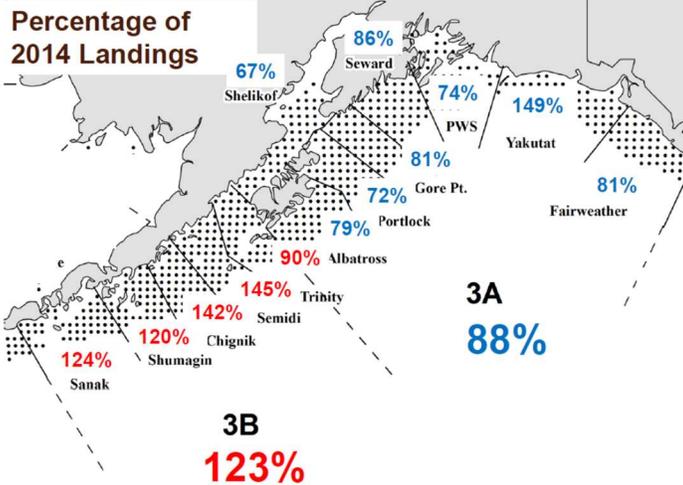
Last year the Commissioners allowed harvest overages in 2A and 2B. In 2C, the Commissioners allowed an additional 300,000 lbs. of harvest. The surveys this past summer have raised recommended 2016 harvest limits to about what was authorize for 2C in 2015. In 3B, the Commission reduced the harvest limit by $\frac{1}{2}$ of the staff's 2015 recommendation. The 2016 surveys have brought the recommended harvest level up to what was allowed in 2015. There were positive signs in the commercial CPUE except in Area 4D. The IPHC surveys were up in more areas than down. These are good signs for the future.

The following charts show the results of all the Commission surveys in 2015. Overall, Area 2 showed very good numbers including rebuilding of the resource. The weak link in survey information is Area 3A. Of the seven surveyed areas in 3A, only Yakutat showed positive signs. Overall, 3A was down 12% or 88% of last year. Hence, the proposed 3A reduction in harvest limit levels for 2016. Area 3B showed very positive signs. This is the first up in 3B in 15 years. Good news! Area 4A was down 15% or 85% of last year. If you remember, two years ago, 4A was down over 30% then up 30% last year. Area 4B had its second up in two years.

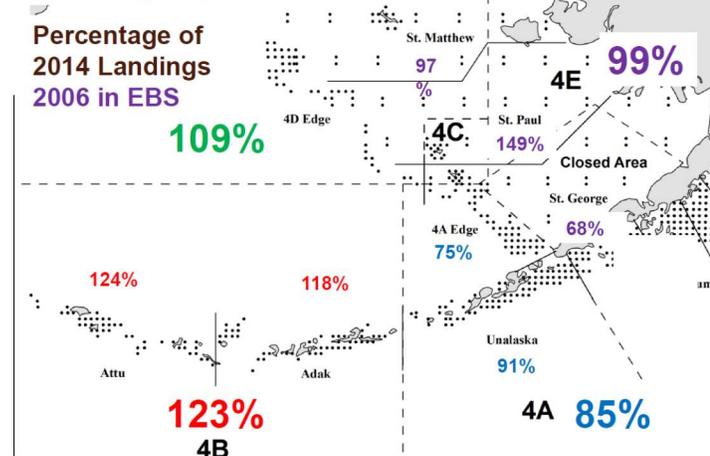
Survey update: Area 2



Survey update: Area 3



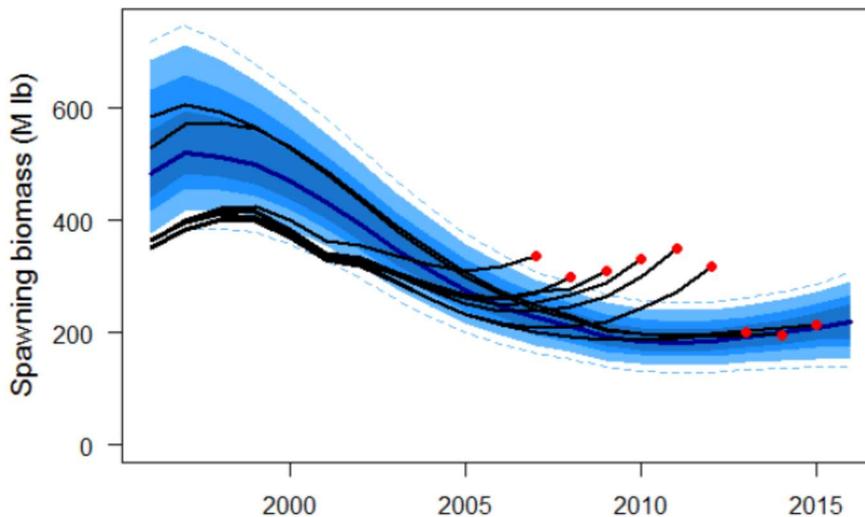
Survey update: Area 4



Survey update: overall

2014 Landings = 752,676
 2015 Equivalent = 698,124
 2015 Actual Landings = 739,607

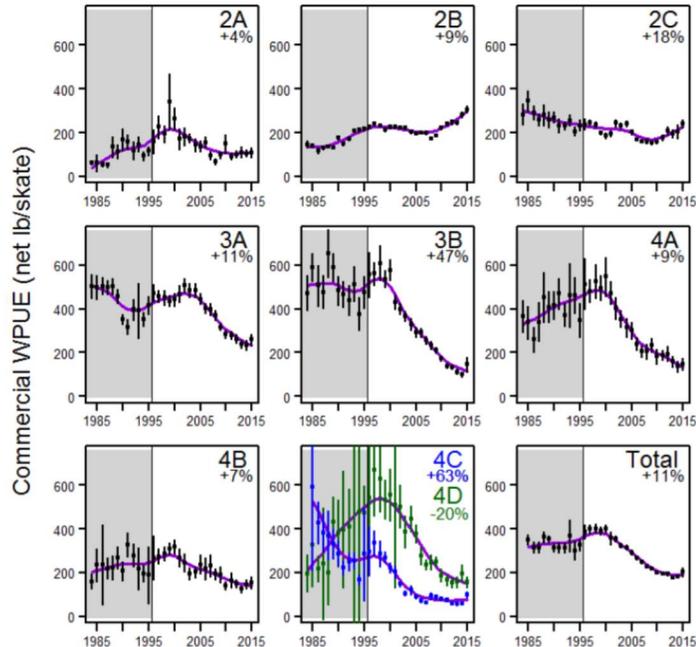
Regulatory Area	Compared to 2014 landings equivalent
2A	150%
2B	100%
2C	139%
3A	88%
3B	123%
4A	85%
4B	109%
4D	109%
4CDE (EBS)	99%
Total	106%



Many of you probably remember that between 2005 and 2011 the Commission was forecasting increases in spawning biomass, but those increases never materialized. Dr. Ian Stewart, the new lead scientist at IPHC discovered an error in the assessment modeling three years ago and you can see the last three years, the model is performing correctly (see the red dots above). This should give you confidence that the resource is beginning to rebuild and the model is tacking with reality.

The commercial logbook information is very positive. Every area showed increases in commercial CPUE except Area 4D, which was down 20%. Areas 3A, 3B and 4A showed the first commercial increases in 15 years. This is good news.

Commercial fishery logbooks



2015 logs are still incomplete and unverified.

****North Pacific Council****

The Council increased the Pollock harvest by 30,000 Mt and reduced some of the Bering Sea flat fish harvest limits by 28,000 tons with halibut bycatch in mind for the 2016 season. The Amendment 80 fleet had 7 to 8 vessels participating in their deck sorting experiment to get halibut overboard quicker in 2015. They may have up to 15 vessels in this project in 2016. The Bering Sea halibut bycatch numbers were down about 400,000 lbs., due largely to the deck sorting efforts for last year which helped increase 4CDE halibut harvest for 2016. The Amendment 80 trawl fleet has also reduced their encounter rates of halibut from 6.5 Kg of halibut per Mt to 5.3 Kg per Mt. These reductions are the result of the June NPFMC meeting where they reduced the halibut trawl CAP and political pressure from Alaska.

Charter Halibut. With the reduced harvest limit in 3A, the Council has proposed additional restrictions on the charter fleet. They could lose a day per week of fishing activity in Area 3A, depending how low the IPHC sets their 3A harvest limit.

Charter RQE (Recreational Quota Entity). The Council is looking at allowing the charter fleet to establish a 3A and a 2C charter pool of halibut. They would be allowed to buy commercial halibut, A, B, and C class fish and put it in a common pool. One common pool for each area. The charter fleet could then use this fish to offset restrictions currently imposed on the charter fleet. The big issue at this meeting was the range of alternatives. The Council will look at options for 3A and 2C that allow the charter fleet to purchase 5% to 20% of the commercial quota in 2016 units. It is estimated the Council will take final action this year with a recommended allowance of 10% to 15% to be purchase. It was

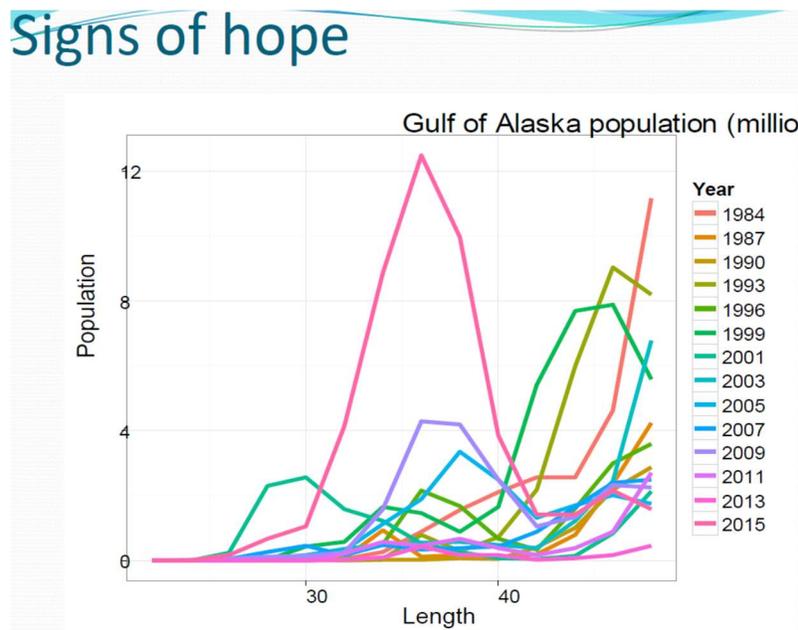
rumored that the State of Alaska may provide a special halibut stamp and a special chinook stamp in the future and the money from the stamps would go to buy halibut quota for the pools. The Chinook money may go to buy out the Cook Inlet Set Net fishery.

Sablefish. Here are the 2016 approved harvest amounts for Alaska Sablefish.

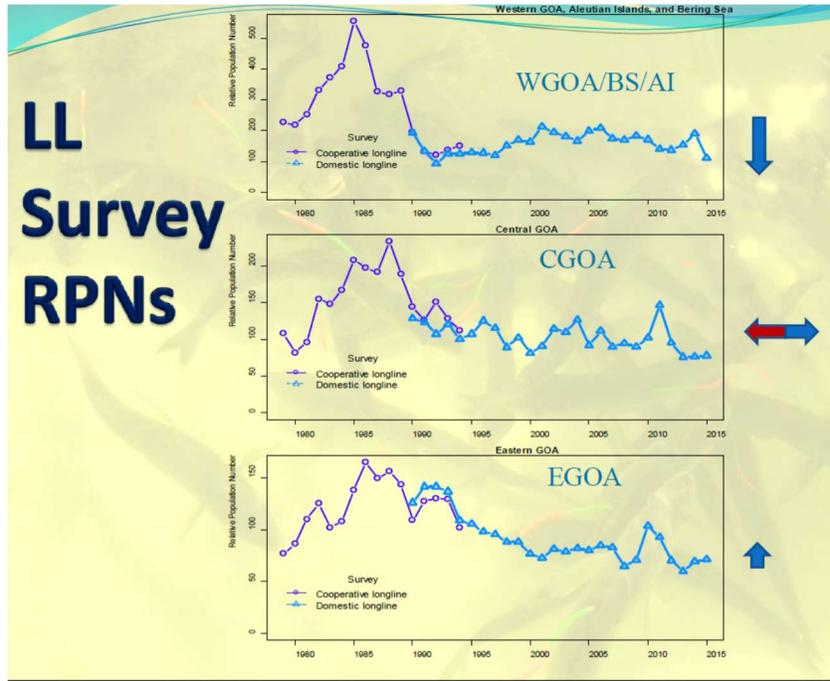
Area	2015 ABC	Standard apportionment for 2016 ABC	Recommended fixed apportionment for 2016 ABC*	Difference from 2015
Total	13,657	11,795	11,795	-13.6%
Bering Sea	1,333	1,816	1,151	-13.6%
Aleutians	1,802	1,627	1,557	-13.6%
Gulf of Alaska (subtotal)	10,522	8,352	9,087	-13.6%
Western	1,473	1,136	1,272	-13.6%
Central	4,658	3,451	4,023	-13.6%
W. Yakutat**	1,567	1,374	1,353	-13.6%
E. Yak. / Southeast**	2,823	2,391	2,438	-13.6%

Due to evidence from sablefish tagging, the sablefish stock assessment authors have recommended a 13.6% reduction across all regulatory areas. The tagging shows sablefish move considerably year to year and the apportionment rules no longer apply.

The graphic on the next page is from the 2015 Gulf of Alaska Trawl survey. The pink line, which is very high, is the index of 1 year old sablefish. It is the highest index of juveniles ever recorded since 1984 when they began the survey. **This is good news!**

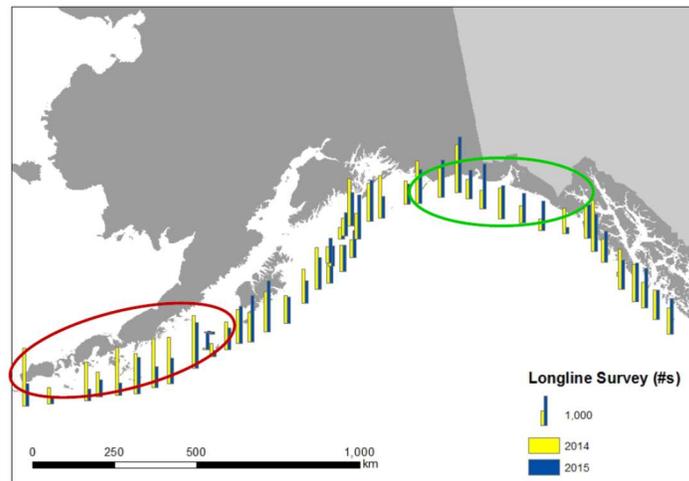


Below are the relative population numbers. They are actually flat for the central Gulf and perhaps slightly up the last two years in the eastern GOA. The western Gulf and the BS and AI are significantly down, which has dragged the overall numbers down this year.



LL Survey RPNs

Here is the Alaska sablefish survey for 2015 (blue) versus 2014 (yellow). Please note S.E. looks about the same for both years; Yakutat area is up as many of you have been reporting; Central to the Trinity Islands look similar for 2015 and 2014 while the western GOA is much below 2014 survey numbers.



Gulf of Alaska LL Survey

Pots for Sablefish. This regulation will likely become operational in June-July of 2016.

****Pacific Council****

Ownership and Control Rule Change. Previously, we were told this change would be effective in 2017, which is a year delay. Now, we are being told implementation will be scheduled mid-season 2016, maybe June or July.

Harvest Limits. The sablefish resource is doing much better off the lower coast with two good year classes. The 2011 year class is entering the fishery and was seen by the fleet this year. There is also an expected 2013 year class on the way.

	2015 ACL*	2016 ACL*	2017 ACL*	2018 ACL*
Sablefish N. of 36°	4793	5241	6290	6456
Sablefish S. of 36°	1719	1880	1110	1146

***ACL (Allowable Catch Limits)**

The 2016 harvestable sablefish N. of 36° will be up 9%; the 2017 harvest N. of 36° will be up 17%. This is up in 2017 due largely to a reapportionment of fish from South of 36° based on the recent trawl surveys. The 2018 harvest will be up 3%, but this could change upwards should the 2013 year class show up in the next survey. Things are looking up.

There is disgruntlement by the traditional trawl fleet off the coast and by certain processors. They do not think trawl IFQs are working for them as they cannot achieve harvest limits of many species such as Dover and shallow water flats. This is due to bycatches of numerous species in these fisheries. I think it is working but stay tuned for possible changes. Some trawlers want more Blackcod for the Dover sole fishery.

****Second Watch****

Sablefish Completes Alaska RFM Annual Audit. The Alaska sablefish fishery has completed its fourth annual audit for Alaska Responsible Fisheries Management certification, a program sponsored by the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute to confirm sustainability of various fisheries.

Eat on the Wild Side (Fishing Vessel Owners Association) was identified by ASMI in its Oct. 18 announcement as the client for the RFM certificate for sablefish.

The Alaska sablefish fishery was originally certified in October 2011. The object of the audit is to monitor any changes since the previous assessment. A copy of the fourth annual audit report is available from ASMI, at www.certification.alaskaseafood.org. ...www.fishermensnews.com

Your 3% IFQ fee. The NMFS increased their management cost by 23.5% due to additional staff at NOAA as well as law enforcement and additional costs for interagency internet-based landings. Do you remember the first "Ghost Busters?" I think the fleet just got "slimed."

Boat of the Month. The December issue of National Fisherman featured Jim Boddling's boat, the 'Aleutian Isle' as "Boat of the Month." Congratulations to Jim. Jim fishes halibut, sablefish and Dungeness crab.

Lafferty's Pharmacy in Ballard. Lafferty's sold its retail pharmacy this year but has kept its' pharmacy that serves the PNW commercial maritime fleet. This 88 year old company is still alive and working with the fleet. Contact Martin Hamilton (360) 528-2885.

Laura Deach. Long time Blackcod fisher woman from Anacortes and Lopez, Washington, passed away recently. She will always be remembered for her heart-felt testimony before

the Pacific Council where she let all her feelings out. During the 1980's, the Council was significantly not supportive of fixed-gear operations and Laura testified along with FVOA members.

****Calendar of Events****

December 24-25, 2015	Christmas Holiday	Office closed
January 14, 2016	Cargo Pool Annual Meeting	Rogo's Restaurant Downtown Magnolia
January 25-29, 2016	IPHC Annual Meeting	Juneau, AK Location TBA
February 1-9, 2016	NPFMC Meeting	Portland, OR
February 18, 2016	Marine Safety Reserve Annual Meeting	Palisade Restaurant Seattle, WA
March 8-14, 2016	PFMC Meeting	Doubletree Hotel Sacramento, CA
April 4-12, 2016	NPFMC Meeting	Anchorage Hilton Anchorage, AK
April 8-12, 2016	PFMC Meeting	Hilton Hotel Vancouver, WA
June 6-14, 2016	NPFMC Meeting	Kodiak, AK
June 22-28, 2016	PFMC Meeting	Murano Hotel Tacoma, WA



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