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Alaska State Legislature
House of Representatives

Special Committee on Fisheries

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MEMORANDUM

TO: House Special Committee on Fisheries
FROM: Mel Monsen, Professional Assistant
DATE: January 30, 1984
SUBJECT: International Pacific Halibut Commission
Annual Meeting Trip Report

Last Tuesday through Thursday I attended the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) annual meeting at the request of the Fisheries Committee.

The meeting began with a presentation by the IPHC staff covering the 1983 halibut fishery, the halibut stock assessment for 1984, and the staff recommendations for 1984 season regulations. After this Tuesday morning presentation, the meeting broke down into two separate groups; the IPHC, with its staff, in a closed meeting and the conference board, a group of fishermen/advisors, in an open meeting.

The IPHC met with the conference board on Wednesday afternoon and received their recommendations for the 1984 season. Then with all the staff and conference board recommendations in hand the IPHC Commissioners met in closed session to make their final decisions on the 1984 halibut season.

1. The 1983 Season:

The 1983 Pacific halibut catch was 38.5 million pounds, almost 8 million pounds above the catch limit and 9.5 million pounds more than in 1982. All nine regulatory areas attained their catch limits and four of these areas substantially exceeded their catch limits. Off of Alaska the quota was exceeded by 3.0 million pounds in area 2C, 2.8 million pounds in area 3B, and 1.83 million pounds in area 4 (1983 season catches are included in Table 1).

In almost every area fishing days declined, effort increased, and fishing weather was better than normal. The widespread use of circle hooks increased the efficiency of the fleet and high availability of halibut led to a very high catch per unit effort (C.P.U.E.).

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In area 2C, off of Southeast Alaska, the harvest was 6.4 million pounds. This total was taken in one 5-day fishing period and was 2.9 million pounds larger than the 1982 catch taken in the same time period.

The catch in area 3A, Cape Spencer to South Kodiak, totalled 14.2 million pounds, only .2 over the limit. The 1983 catch was taken in 7 days, whereas the 1982 catch of 13.5 million pounds took 11 days.

Area 3B, South Kodiak to Cape Lutke, catches in 1983 came to 7.8 million pounds or 2.8 million pounds more than the harvest limit. This harvest took only 10 days. In 1982, 5.8 million pounds was taken in 18 days.

The Aleutains Area (4) had a catch of 4.43 million pounds in 1983. This exceeded the harvest limit by 1.83 million pounds. In 1982, this area had a catch of only 1.4 million pounds.

2. Stock Assessment for 1984:

Overall, the North Pacific halibut stock is healthy and on the increase. The stock is near optimum in central areas and both C.P.U.E. and catch-at-age data indicate that the Pacific halibut stock has almost doubled since 1977 and is now estimated at 240 million pounds.

The only anomaly in the halibut stocks is the current distribution in Area 2. Halibut are at higher densities in area 2C, Southeast Alaska, than in area 2B, Canada. Historically, area 2B has had 60% of the Area 2 catch and with this new distribution, some problems have risen. U.S. fishermen would like the Commission to increase area 2C catch limit using the current biological information as justification. Canada fishermen want their historical 60% and say the current distribution is either short term or is not actually present.

3. Staff Recommendations for the 1984 Season:

The staff recommendations covered area boundaries, area fishing periods and area harvest limits. No area boundary changes were recommended for the 1984 season (see Figure 1).

The schedule of fishing periods recommended by the staff is presented in Figure 3. Some of the objections to this proposal was the conflict with herring fishing in early May, the lack of inshore halibut stocks in early May and the shortness of the openings.

Harvest limits, as recommended by the staff, are included in Table 1. The primary point of controversy was the harvest limit distribution within area 2. The biological information provided by IPHC staff indicated some 16 million pounds of halibut would be available for harvest in 1984. Based

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strictly on biological data, the 16 million pounds would be allocated as follows; .3 million pounds to area 2A, 6.0 million pounds to area 2B, and 9.7 million pounds to area 2C. But when the 60:40 allocation was entered into this decision staff recommended that the area 2B harvest be changed to 7.5 million pounds and that the area 2C harvest be changed to 4.7 million pounds.

4. Conference Board Recommendation for the 1984 Season:

The conference board recommended only one change to the area boundaries. This was to form a new area within the area previously designated as a 4C. This area would be called 4E and would include all the area in area 4C east of 168°W (Figure 2). This new area was designated to benefit the residents of Nelson Island who are in the early stages of developing a halibut fishery.

The conference board made several changes to the IPHC staff recommendations for fishing periods (see Figure 4). Of primary importance to the fishermen of Alaska were; moving the initial openings in all Alaskan areas to May 21st or 22nd and the deletion of the area 3B July opening. The conference board also set up an opening schedule for their newly recommended area, 4E.

Table 1 includes the recommended harvest limits presented to the Commission by the conference board. Major differences from staff recommendations include; 2 million pounds more in area 3A, 1.3 million pounds more in area 4A, and 50,000 pounds for area 4E. The conference board was unable to come up with recommendations for area 2 because of the U.S./Canada conflicts.

5. 1984 IPHC Regulatory Decisions:

After taking all the staff and conference board recommendations into account, the IPHC Commissioners met and made final decisions for the 1984 halibut season.

The Commissioners adopted the conference board's recommendations for regulatory areas for the 1984 season. This sets up the new 4E area and retains all the other 1983 area boundaries (see Figure 2).

Figure 5 displays the scheduling for fishing periods during the 1984 season. This schedule follows, fairly closely, the conference board's recommendations on area time openings.

Harvest limits for the 1984 season (Table 2) are generally less than the conference board recommended. The major controversy in these final limits is the area 2 allocation. Although a total of 15 million pounds was set, the 2B (Canadian) portion is 9 million pounds. This leaves area 2C (Southeast Alaska) with only 5.7 million pounds.

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The Commission decided to stick with the 60:40 allocation and this has upset a lot of U.S. fishermen. In an attempt to reduce opposition, the Commissioners promised to send letters to both governments recommending that future management be based on biological rather than political considerations. Because of the Commission's decision on area 2, we should expect Alaskan fishermen to be asking for a resolution to the IPHC and our federal government expressing opposition to the 60:40 allocation system.

Other than this one problem, everything went fairly smoothly for Alaskan fishermen at the meeting. I have more extensive information on nearly everything I have summarized in this memo. If you have more specific questions, please contact me.

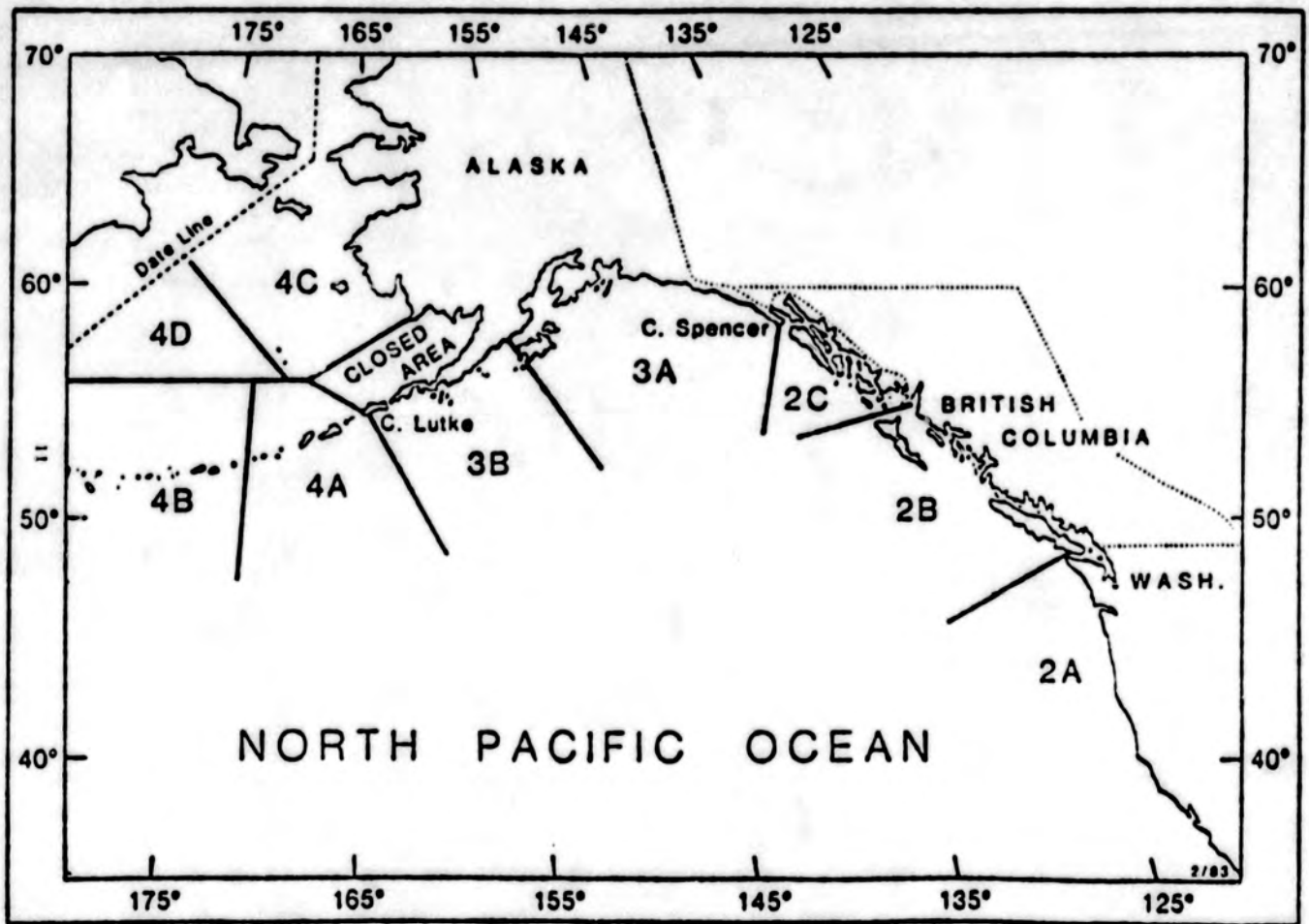


Figure 1. IPHC staff regulatory area recommendations for the 1984 season.

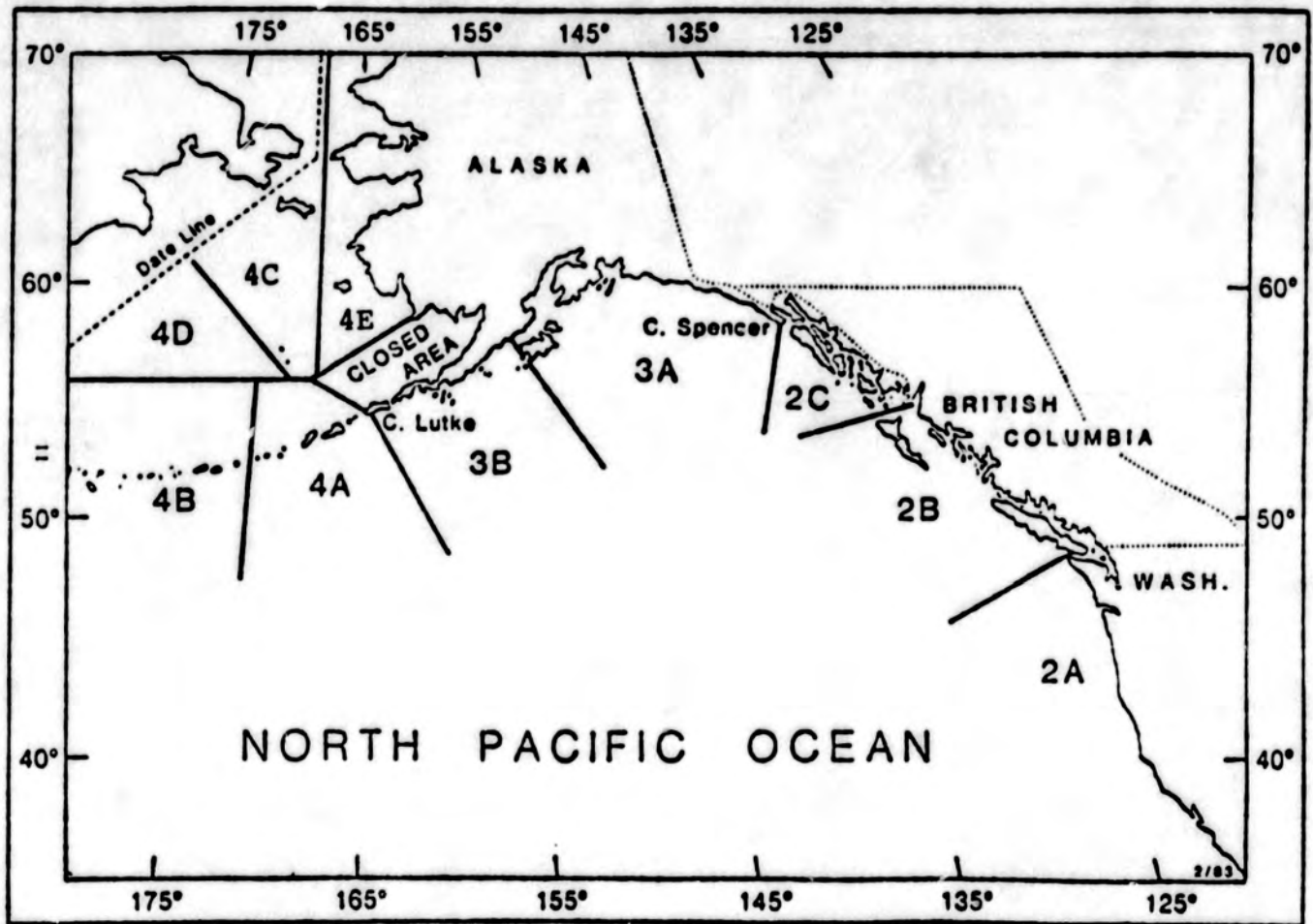


Figure 2. Conference Board regulatory area recommendations for the 1984 season.

AREAS	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
2A	<u>19-27</u>	<u>16-24</u>	<u>16-24</u>	<u>15-23</u>	<u>15-23</u>
2B	<u>19-27</u>	<u>16-24</u>	<u>16-24</u>	<u>15-23</u>	<u>15-23</u>
2C	<u>7-9</u>			<u>18-24</u>	<u>17-20</u>
3A	<u>7-10</u>			<u>17-24</u>	<u>17-20</u>
3B	<u>7-10</u>		<u>7-9</u>	<u>6-11</u>	
4A	<u>7-10</u>	<u>5-8</u>		<u>6-11</u>	
4B	<u>7-10</u>		<u>20-24</u>		<u>3-8</u>
4C		<u>June 5-SEPTEMBER 15</u>			
4D					<u>5-12</u>

Figure 3. Schedule of fishing periods recommended by the IPHC staff for the Pacific halibut fishery in 1984.

AREAS	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER
2A		<u>21---2</u>	<u>21---3</u>	<u>22---2</u>	<u>21---1</u>	<u>19-30</u>	
2B	<u>24---6</u>	<u>22---3</u>		<u>10-22</u>	<u>7-19</u>		
2C		<u>22-25</u>			<u>20-25</u>	<u>18-----</u>	
3A		<u>21-25</u>			<u>20-25</u>	<u>18-----</u>	
3B		<u>21-25</u>			<u>20-25</u>	<u>18-----</u>	
4A		<u>21-25</u>	<u>18-25</u>		<u>2-10</u>	<u>18-----</u>	
4B		<u>21-25</u>	<u>18-28</u>		<u>2-10</u>	<u>18-----</u>	
4C*		<u>21-----2-10</u>				<u>18-----</u>	
4D		<u>21-25</u>	<u>18-28</u>		<u>2-10</u>	<u>18-----</u>	
4E**		<u>21-----2-10</u>				<u>18-----</u>	

* The Area 4C May 21 thru August 1 opening is recommended to be scheduled for two days open followed by two days closed if an 800,000 pound quota is set, two days open followed by one day closed if a 600,000 pound quota is set, and one day open followed by one day closed if a 400,000 pound quota is set.

** The Area 4E May 21 thru August 1 opening is recommended to be scheduled for two days open followed by one day closed.

Figure 4. Schedule of fishing periods recommended by the Conference Board for the Pacific halibut fishery in 1984.

AREAS	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER
2A		<u>21---2</u>	<u>21---3</u>	<u>22---2</u>	<u>21---1</u>	<u>19-30</u>	
2B	<u>24---6</u>	<u>23---3</u>		<u>11-22</u>	<u>7-19</u>		
2C		<u>22-25</u>			<u>20-25</u>	<u>18-----</u>	
3A		<u>21-25</u>			<u>20-25</u>	<u>18-----</u>	
3B		<u>21-25</u>			<u>20-25</u>	<u>18-----</u>	
4A		<u>21-25</u>	<u>18-21</u>		<u>2-10</u>	<u>18-----</u>	
4B		<u>21-25</u>	<u>18-21</u>		<u>2-10</u>	<u>18-----</u>	
4C [*]		<u>21-----</u>			<u>2-10-----</u>		
4D		<u>21-25</u>	<u>18-28</u>		<u>2-10</u>	<u>18-----</u>	
4E ^{**}		<u>21-----</u>			<u>2-10-----</u>		

* The Area 4C May 21 thru August 1 and August 11 thru catch limit openings will be scheduled for one day open followed by one day off.

** The Area 4E May 21 thru August 1 and August 11 thru catch limit openings will be scheduled for two days open followed by one day off.

Figure 5. IPHC 1984 halibut openings by regulatory area.

Table 1. IPHC staff and IPHC conference board recommendations for 1984 catch limits by regulatory area with 1983 season comparisons (in millions of pounds).

AREA	1984 Staff	1984 C.B.	Actual Catch 1983	IPHC Catch Limit 1983
2A	.3	*	.265	.2
2B	7.5	*	5.4	5.4
2C	4.7	*	6.4	3.4
2 total	12.5	*	12.065	9.0
3A	18.0	20.0	14.2	14.0
3B	7.0	8.0	7.8	5.0
3 total	25.0	28.0	22.0	19.0
4A	1.2	2.5	2.5	1.2
4B	.8	1.0	1.3	.8
4C	.4	.8	.43	.4
4D	.2	.4	.2	.2
4E	**	.05	***	***
4 total	2.6	4.75	4.43	2.6

* The conference board was unable to form any recommendations because of the disagreement on the 40:60 U.S./Canada allocation system which has been applied in area 2.

** The staff was not aware of the conference board's proposal for forming area 4E when they set their catch limits.

*** During the 1983 season the proposed area 4E was a part of area 4C.

Table 2. IPHC 1984 catch limits by regulatory area (in millions of pounds).

AREA	CATCH LIMIT
2A	.3
2B	9.0
2C	5.7
2 total	15.0
3A	18.0
3B	7.0
3 total	25.0
4A	1.2
4B	1.0
4C	.4
4D	.4
4E	.05
4 total	3.05
Total	43.05