

## Local Fishermen React to IPHC Halibut Announcement

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{audio}/images/stories/mp3/111206.halibut\_reax.mp3{/audio}

Jennifer Canfield/KMXT

The International Pacific Halibut Commission's 2011 interim meeting was last week in Seattle. Left unsettled is what to do about 2012 quotas.

At the heart of the issue is whether the harvest model the commission has been using to set past catches is reliable. The numbers of dead fish just aren't adding up.

The current model asks for a 20 percent cut in the total allowable catch, from 41 million pounds this year to 33 million pounds next year. The newly suggested model- which would factor in mis-estimations from previous years- calls for a 63 percent cut to the fishery, bringing it down to just over 15 million pounds.

Fisherman Dave Kubiak says he saw the potential cuts coming.

-- (Halibut Reax 1 :26 "It really doesn't come ... is gonna be a lot skinnier.

Fisherman Oliver Holm says he'll be less affected by any potential cuts.

-- (Halibut Reax 2 :25 "Fortunately  
for me ... won't keep up with the lower quotas.

The council  
has a number of options to consider. Among them is adjusting the allowable  
bycatch for trawlers, which in the Gulf of Alaska  
is currently at 2,300 metric tons. That limit hasn't changed since 1986. If a  
cut to the total allowable catch is the answer, fisherman Pete Thompson says all user  
groups need to be considered, even trawlers and their bycatch.

-- (Halibut Reax 3 :33 "I  
think that needs to be addressed ... al the user groups can be happy.

Another concern is that much of the  
bycatch is smaller, sexually immature halibut. A million pounds of smaller  
halibut caught as bycatch is more damaging to the fishery than a million pounds  
of larger halibut.

The U.S.  
North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program is looking at a possible overhaul to  
its operations. The restructuring could happen as soon as 2013 if funded this  
year.

Kubiak says  
observation needs to be implemented consistently across the board.

-- (Halibut Reax 4 :53 "If  
you're riding down ...really don't know what it is.")

The IPHC will  
further address halibut quotas at its next meeting January 24th  
through the 27th in Anchorage.

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