Commercial Fisheries – Halibut

description

The Pacific halibut, Hippoglossus stenolepis, is one of the largest species of fish in the world. Individuals may grow to over 2 metres in length and weigh more than 200 kilograms. The Pacific halibut commercial fishery began along the coasts of Washington and Vancouver Island during the late 1880s and expanded to southeastern Alaskan waters by 1910. Following industry permitting to reduce the amount of fishing and length of the season, in 1923 the Convention for the Preservation of the Halibut Fishery of the Northern Pacific Ocean (also known as the Pacific Halibut Treaty) was signed by Canada and the United States. The Convention addressed conservation for the deep-sea halibut fishery and created an International Fisheries Commission (known today as the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC)) to study halibut and recommend regulations for the preservation of the resource and development of the fishery (Kong et al. 2004). In addition, the IPHC annually conducts numerous projects to support both its major mandates: stock assessment and baseline halibut biology.

In 1991 the Canadian government adopted individual vessel quotas (IVQs) to manage the fishery, while the US, followed in 1995 with their individual fishing quota (IFQ) system. The commercial halibut fishery is managed with an annual total allowable catch (TAC) for an approximate nine-month opening. Since 2003, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) has focused on working with the commercial groundfish harvesters and others to address management and sustainability issues in the commercial groundfish fisheries. In 2003, a three year pilot was introduced to integrate the management of all seven commercial groundfish sector groups, consistent with the objectives of improving stock management through improved bycatch monitoring, reducing discarded catch, and requiring harvesters to be accountable and responsible for all species harvested.

Up until 2006, a halibut category “L” licence (limited entry and vessel based) or a communal commercial category “FL” licence (party based - issued to a person or company) was required to commercially harvest halibut. Vessels authorized to fish under the authority of a halibut licence were also permitted to retain species as bycatch described in Schedule I, Part 2 of the Pacific Fishery Regulations, transport fish caught by other vessels and to be designated to fish under the authority of a “L” licence. Species retained in this fishery included halibut (Hippoglossus stenolepis), rockfish (Sebastes spp. and Sebastes ophiocephalus) and lingcod (Ophiodon elongatus). Since 2006 halibut vessel licences are now authorized to catch all species of groundfish, subject to management rules.

Under the “L” licence, halibut harvest is permitted by hook and line gear only, which includes longlines, handlines, rod, reel and troll. The majority of halibut is caught by longline fishing, which is accomplished by setting a long ground line containing hundreds of baited hooks along the ocean floor. Longline gear is fished directly on the bottom and is held in position by anchors attached to one or both ends of the mainline. Following a suitable “soak” time, the line is then hauled back onto the vessel, the fish are removed from the hooks and gear rebaited and reset. Small vessels typically use handline gear (rods and reels). Trollers are easily recognized, and move slowly through the water while deploying six to eight stainless steel fishing lines with numerous lures attached. Each line is attached to a pole by way of a pulley and may have up to 80 lures attached to it. The type and arrangement of lines and lures vary according to each fishery.

This map displays estimated catch (pounds) by hook and line for halibut provided by the IFPC from 1991-2010, tallied and mapped according to IPHC statistical areas, which are the highest level of resolution at which information is released to the public. Catch data are assigned to statistical areas (in order of priority): commercial logbook data (collected by the IPHC), validation logs/fish tickets; or the landing port data. Landings with less than three vessels are not released due to confidentiality requirements.

The data are displayed using equal interval categories, meaning that the data are divided into 5 equally spaced classes where each class may contain a different number of halibut statistical areas. The percent of statistical areas that fall in a given category is shown on the legend.

Permanent, year-round closures for the halibut (by hook and line) fishery were compiled based on the Amended Integrated Fisheries Management Plan (IFMP) for Groundfish dated March 6, 2008 – February 20, 2009 and 2008 Fisheries Notices (up to Oct. 2, 2008). Areas identified as closures may also include areas not licensed for this fishery. (Please read caveats of use for more information on closures.)
Inset Map

Note: The inset has been provided to illustrate the level of detail available in the data. The inset is for illustrative purposes only and does not imply any significance to this region.

Legend

Pounds of Halibut Caught
- 598,608 - 5,000,000 (41%)
- 5,000,001 - 10,000,000 (27%)
- 10,000,001 - 15,000,000 (14%)
- 15,000,001 - 20,000,000 (5%)
- 20,000,001 - 25,000,000 (0%)
- 25,000,001 - 30,000,000 (14%)

Year-round Halibut Closures

Notes:
- The number in brackets in the legend above is the percent of polygons that fall into the given category.

Data Sources:
International Pacific Halibut Commission
Living Oceans Society

Base Data:
ESRI Base Data, GeoBase, GeoBC, NOAA, Natural Resources Canada, USGS, Washington State Government

Thematic Data:
For more information on data sources and methods please refer to the facing page to this map

Projection: BC Albers NAD83

Notes:
- The number in brackets in the legend above is the percent of polygons that fall into the given category.
- Year-round Halibut Closures

Prepared for:
Commerical Fisheries Halibut 1991 - 2010

Map template by Caslys Consulting Ltd.

December 10, 2012

BC Marine Conservation Analysis

Written scales are approximate and are based on a 11 x 17 inch paper size.