

24, 1996, through July 31, 1996. The Harpoon category closure is effective 11:30 p.m. local time on July 24, 1996, through December 31, 1996. The longline inseason transfer is effective July 23, 1996.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Chris Rogers, 301-713-2347, or Mark Murray-Brown, 508-281-9260.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Regulations implemented under the authority of the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.*) governing the harvest of ABT by persons and vessels subject to U.S. jurisdiction are found at 50 CFR part 285. Section 285.22 subdivides the U.S. quota recommended by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) among the various domestic fishing categories.

#### General and Harpoon Category Closures

NMFS is required, under 285.20(b)(1), to monitor the catch and landing statistics and, on the basis of these statistics, to project a date when the catch of ABT will equal the quota and publish a Federal Register announcement to close the applicable fishery.

Implementing regulations for the Atlantic tuna fisheries at 50 CFR 285.22 provide for a quota of 133 mt of large medium and giant ABT to be harvested from the regulatory area by vessels permitted in the General category during the period beginning June 1 and ending July 31. Based on reported catch and effort, NMFS projects that this quota will be reached by July 24, 1996. Therefore, fishing for, retaining, possessing, or landing large medium or giant ABT by vessels in the General category must cease at 11:30 p.m. local time July 24, 1996. The General category will reopen August 1, 1996 with a quota of 186 mt for the August period.

Implementing regulations for the Atlantic tuna fisheries at 50 CFR 285.22 provide for a quota of 53 mt of large medium and giant ABT to be harvested from the regulatory area by vessels permitted in the Harpoon category. Based on reported catch and effort, NMFS projects that this quota will be reached by July 24, 1996. Therefore, fishing for, retaining, possessing, or landing large medium or giant ABT by vessels in the Harpoon category must cease at 11:30 p.m. local time July 24, 1996.

The intent of these closures is to prevent overharvest of the quotas established for these categories.

#### Inseason Transfer

Under the implementing regulations at 50 CFR 285.22(f), NMFS has the authority to make adjustments to quotas involving transfers between vessel categories or, as appropriate, subcategories if, during a single year quota period or the second year of a biannual quota period as defined by ICCAT, it is determined, based on landing statistics, present year catch rates, effort, and other available information, that any category, or as appropriate, subcategory, is not likely to take its entire quota as previously allocated for that year. Given that determination, NMFS may transfer inseason any portion of the quota of any fishing category to any other fishing category or to the reserve after considering the following factors: (1) The usefulness of information obtained from catches of the particular category of the fishery for biological sampling and monitoring the status of the stock; (2) the catches of the particular gear segment to date and the likelihood of closure of that segment of the fishery if no allocation is made; (3) the projected ability of the particular gear segment to harvest the additional amount of ABT before the anticipated end of the fishing season; (4) the estimated amounts by which quotas established for other gear segments of the fishery might be exceeded.

At the current time, ABT have migrated to summer feeding grounds in New England waters and incidental catch by longline vessels operating south of 34° N. lat. is no longer expected to occur. A total of 45 mt currently remain of the amount allocated to this southern subcategory. The longline-north Incidental subcategory is expected to reach its allocation of 23 mt for vessels fishing north of 34° N. lat. Once the quota is reached for this northern subcategory, any ABT incidentally taken by longline vessels must be discarded at sea. In order to prevent waste of ABT that might otherwise be discarded dead, it is reasonable to transfer quota from the southern to the northern subcategory.

Reallocating 10 mt from the Incidental longline-south category responds to the criteria listed above as follows: Incidental category landings are a major contributor to the collection of biological data on this fishery; incidental catches by longline vessels in 1996 have been high, and it would be necessary to close this subcategory of the fishery unless additional quota allocation is made.

#### Classification

This action is taken under 50 CFR 285.20(b) and 50 CFR 285.22 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 971 *et seq.*

Dated: July 23, 1996.

Richard W. Surdi,

*Acting Director, Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service.*

[FR Doc. 96-19129 Filed 7-23-96; 5:08 pm]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-F

#### 50 CFR Part 300

[Docket No. 960111003-6068-03; I.D. 072496A]

#### International Fisheries Regulations; 1996 Halibut Report No. 5

**AGENCY:** National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

**ACTION:** Inseason action.

**SUMMARY:** The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, on behalf of the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC), publishes these inseason actions pursuant to IPHC regulations approved by the U.S. Government to govern the Pacific halibut fishery. This action is intended to enhance the conservation of the Pacific halibut stock.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Area 2A Non-treaty Commercial Fishery Reopening: 8:00 a.m., Pacific Daylight Time (PDT), July 24, 1996, until 6:00 p.m. PDT, July 24, 1996.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Steven Pennoyer, 907-586-7221; William W. Stelle, Jr., 206-526-6140; or Donald McCaughan, 206-634-1838.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The IPHC, under the Convention between the United States of America and Canada for the Preservation of the Halibut Fishery of the Northern Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea (signed at Ottawa, Ontario, on March 2, 1953), as amended by a Protocol Amending the Convention (signed at Washington, DC, on March 29, 1979), has issued this inseason action pursuant to IPHC regulations governing the Pacific halibut fishery. The regulations have been approved by NMFS (60 FR 14651, March 20, 1995, and amended at 61 FR 11337, March 20, 1996). On behalf of the IPHC, this inseason action is published in the Federal Register to provide additional notice of its effectiveness, and to inform persons subject to the inseason action of the restrictions and requirements established therein.

## Inseason Action

## 1996 Halibut Report No. 5

## Incidental Commercial Halibut Catch in the Area 2A Salmon Troll Fishery

The total allowable incidental commercial catch of halibut allocated to the salmon troll fishery was 16,068 lb (7.28 metric tons (mt)). The salmon troll fishery closed June 30 with an estimated halibut catch of 8,002 lb (3.62 mt). The remaining catch of 8,066 lb (3.65 mt) is added to the directed commercial catch limit.

## Area 2A Non-treaty Commercial Fishery to Reopen on July 24

The July 10 fishing period in Area 2A resulted in a catch of about 70,000 lb (31.75 mt), leaving 21,052 lb (9.54 mt) in the commercial catch limit. The total catch limit remaining, including the additional amount from the salmon troll fishery, is 29,118 (13.20 mt).

Area 2A will reopen on July 24 for 10 hours from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. local time. The fishery is restricted to waters that are south of Point Chehalis, Washington (46°53'18" N. lat.) under regulations promulgated by NMFS. Fishing period limits as indicated in the following table will be in effect for this opening.

Vessel class		Fishing period limit (pounds)	
Length	Letter	Dressed, head-on	Dressed, head-off*
0-25 .....	A	225	200
26-30 .....	B	225	200

Vessel class		Fishing period limit (pounds)	
Length	Letter	Dressed, head-on	Dressed, head-off*
31-35 .....	C	285	250
36-40 .....	D	790	695
41-45 .....	E	850	750
46-50 .....	F	1,020	895
51-55 .....	G	1,135	1,000
56+ .....	H	1,705	1,500

\* Weights are after 2% has been deducted for ice and slime if fish are not washed prior to weighing.

The appropriate vessel length class and letter is printed on each halibut license.

The fishing period limit is shown in terms of dressed, head-off weight as well as dressed, head-on weight, although fishermen are reminded that regulations require that all halibut from Area 2A be landed with the head on.

The fishing period limit applies to the vessel, not the individual fisherman, and any landings over the vessel limit will be subject to forfeiture and fine.

## Area 2B Commercial Fishery Update

Halibut landings from Area 2B total 5.57 million lb (2,526.53 mt) through July 11, leaving 3.95 million lb (1,791.70 mt) of the catch limit to be caught. The fishery will continue until all quotas have been filled, or November 15, whichever is earlier.

## Annette Island Reserve Fishery in Area 2C

The Metlakatla Indian community has been authorized by the U.S. Government

to conduct a commercial halibut fishery within the Annette Island Reserve. Six 48-hour fishing periods occurred between April 27 and July 7, producing a total catch of 43,837 lb (19.88 mt).

## Alaskan Commercial Fishery Update

It is estimated that the following catches and number of landings were made in the Alaskan Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) and Community Development Quota (CDQ) fisheries through July 10, 1996.

Area	Catch limit (000's pounds)	Catch (000's pounds)	Number of landings
2C .....	9,000	5,529	1,640
3A .....	20,000	10,071	1,465
3B .....	3,700	1,278	182
4A .....	1,950	616	72
4B .....	2,310	677	120
4C .....	770	428	280
4D .....	770	346	37
4E .....	120	118	507
Total	38,620	19,063	4,303

During the same time period in 1995, March 15 through July 14, 13.56 million lb (6,150.77 mt) were landed in the Alaskan IFQ and CDQ fisheries.

Dated: July 24, 1996.  
Richard W. Surdi,  
Acting Director, Office of Fisheries  
Conservation and Management, National  
Marine Fisheries Service.  
[FR Doc. 96-19207 Filed 7-26-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-22-P