



## PACIFIC STATES MARINE FISHERIES COMMISSION

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### North Pacific Research Board: Semiannual Progress Reports

Project #: F2712-00

Title: Bycatch characterization in the Pacific halibut fishery: A field test of electronic monitoring

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Contract Period and Amount of Funding: 1 June 2007 to 31 December 2008; \$242,895

Report Period: 1 June 2007 to 31 December 2007

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Lead Author of Report: Jennifer Cahalan

Project Summary: This research will improve our understanding of the ecosystem impacts of halibut fishing through improved monitoring of longline fishery bycatch, using electronic video monitoring (EM). We will be evaluating the ability of EM and currently utilized North Pacific Groundfish Observer Program (NPGOP) monitoring methods to operate effectively in a commercial longline (hook-and-line) setting. Bycatch rates in the Pacific halibut fishery are not well estimated and the majority of vessels operating in this fishery are not required to have NPGOP monitoring; hence, estimates of bycatch are not based on direct observation of the fishery. Previous research by one of the partners in this proposal documented successful electronic monitoring of Pacific halibut longline fishing conducted from chartered research vessels (Ames, 2005; Ames et al., 2007). While this work supported the use of EM to monitor bycatch in numbers of fish, the research was not conducted under commercial fishing conditions where a much broader range of environmental and physical factors affect the vessel operations.

Progress Summary:

The first part of our research in the Bering Sea was planned to be conducted in July through September 2007, and we were to continue our field activities in the Gulf of Alaska in April 2008. These times and locations were chosen to reflect the major patterns of fishing exhibited in the past by the Pacific halibut longline fleet. Since many vessels reached their Pacific halibut quotas earlier than usual in 2007 and had completed their fishing in the Bering Sea, we were unable to successfully solicit a sufficient number of vessels to participate in the Bering Sea portion of the study in August 2007.

Tuesday, January 15, 2008

We have altered our sampling schedule to reflect these changes in fishing patterns. We will be starting our field activities in the Gulf of Alaska in April 2008 as originally planned. Field activities in the Bering Sea have been rescheduled to July and August of 2008.

We have started to solicit vessels to participate in the study, and have had favorable feedback from several vessels. We have prepared a poster for presentation at the IPHC and NPRB annual meetings. We anticipate having firm commitments from four vessels to fish in the Gulf of Alaska by March 1<sup>st</sup>.

We have started the contract process to provide both observer coverage and electronic monitoring for the research. We will be meeting with the EM contractor in February to discuss details of installation, maintenance, and operation of the monitoring equipment. The EM contractor will participate in training observers for the research project. While observers will have their own sampling duties, they may be required to help to maintain the video equipment on board the vessel during the research period. We expect the contractor to install equipment on participating vessels in late March and early April immediately prior to fishing.

We expect to have an observer provider selected by the end of February. We have begun to prepare training materials and expect to provide a 2-day observer training in Alaska in late March or early April immediately prior to starting the field activities.

#### Citations

Ames, R. T. 2005. The efficacy if electronic monitoring systems: a case study on the applicability of video technology for longline fisheries management. International Pacific Halibut Commission Scientific Report number 80. Available: <http://www.iphc.washington.edu/halcom/pubs/scirep/SciReport0080.pdf>. (January 2006).

Ames, R. T., B. M. Leaman, K. L. Ames. 2007. Evaluation of video technology for monitoring of multispecies longline catches. North Am. J. Fish. Mgmt. 27: 955-964.