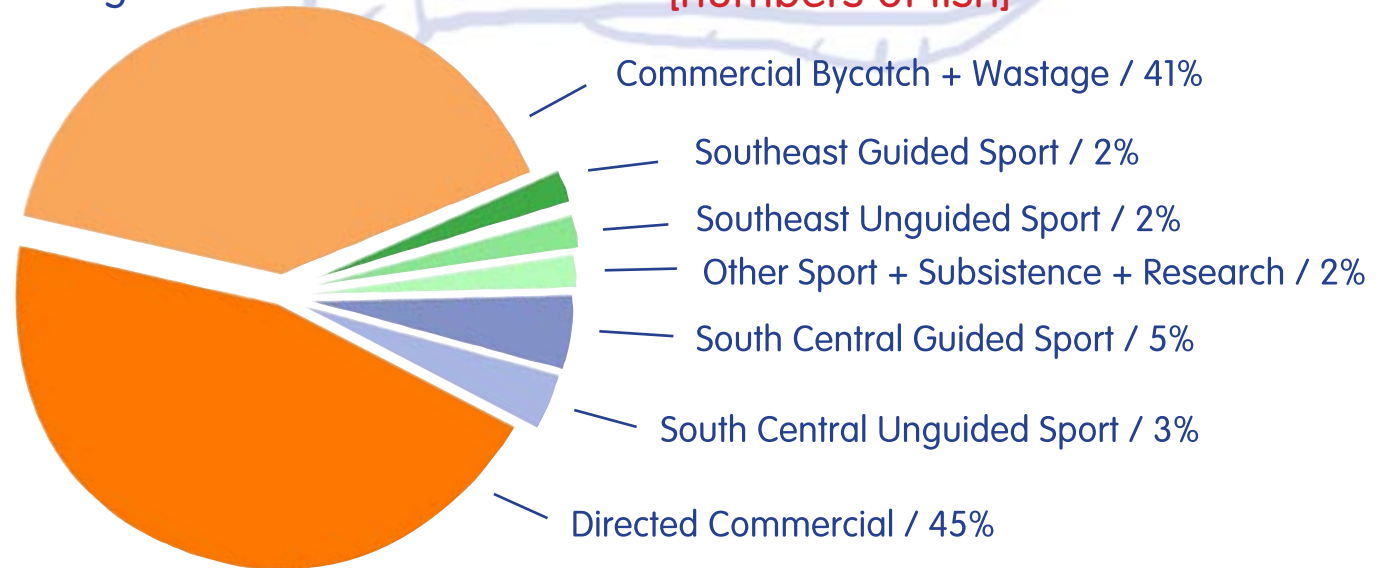


# Ketchikan Guided Sportfish Association

## focus: HALIBUT

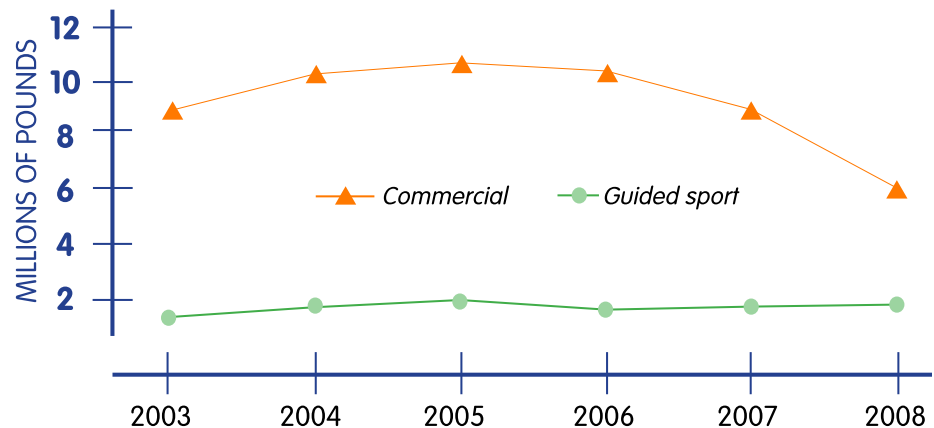
Halibut stocks in Alaska are like many other resource species: their wide range and susceptibility to incidental taking distort the picture used in management. Commercial harvest is easily the largest pressure on halibut stocks, but bycatch and wastage in Western Gulf of Alaska ground-fish fisheries (largely trawl fisheries) dwarf all harvests by guided and unguided sport fishers.



## GUIDED CATCH IS CONSISTENT

Guided sportfishing for halibut in Southeast Alaska has taken a modest, steady share of the resource. Commercial catches have varied according to resource abundance and management directives.

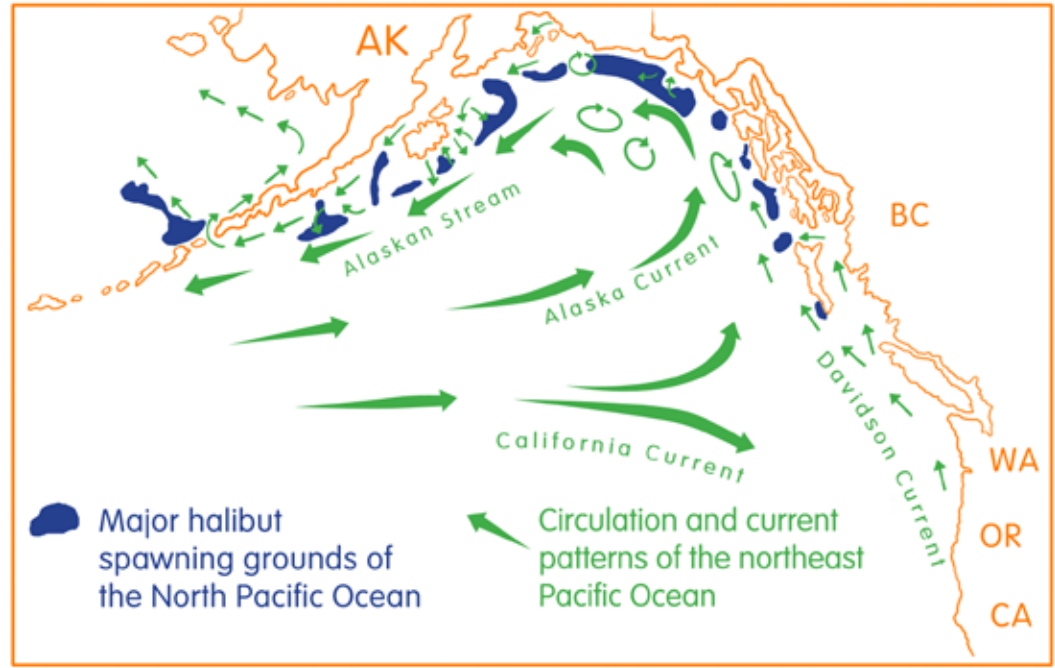
## SOUTHEAST HALIBUT CATCH [net pounds]



## WHERE HALIBUT START

The major nursery grounds for young halibut are in the western Gulf and Bering Sea, and few very young fish are found east of Kodiak Island. Stocks in the eastern Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea, where they start out their lives as tiny swimming fish. Migration from the nursery grounds in western Alaska to the home areas is unidirectional, taking place between ages 2 and 8. Juvenile fish marked in the northern Gulf of Alaska have been recovered there, and to the south, but hardly ever in the western Gulf or Bering Sea. Similarly, juveniles marked in British Columbia are almost always recovered in British Columbia (or farther south), and almost never in Alaska.

Ocean currents carry fertilized halibut eggs and larvae to the Western Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea, where they start out their lives as tiny swimming fish.

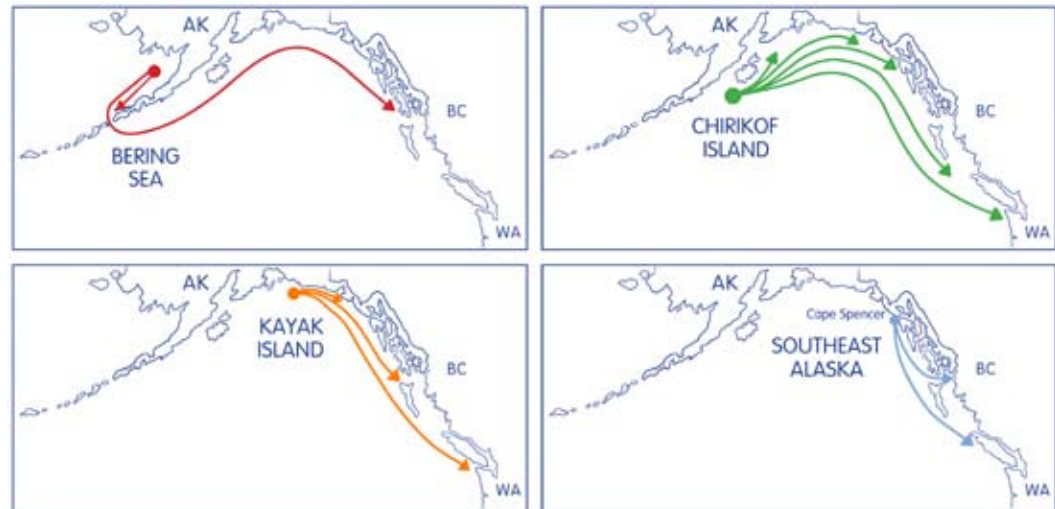


## WHERE HALIBUT GO

To counter egg drift with counter-clockwise ocean currents, young halibut migrate clockwise. One- and two-year-old Pacific halibut are commonly found in inshore areas of central and western Alaska, but are virtually missing from Southeast Alaska and British Columbia. Nearly all halibut ages 2-4 are in the western Gulf and Bering Sea. Juvenile halibut tend to move farther offshore at age 2 or 3 years and can be found off Southeast Alaska and British Columbia by age 4 and older. Still, by age 6, only 70% of Area 2C and 2B fish are "home." (Source: IPHC)

There's strong interest at the International Pacific Halibut Commission in coastwide assessment of stocks—recognizing that fish move between catch areas. The concept of halibut populations that stay in fisheries zones—the "closed-area" assessment model—is in question. As ocean water moves, so do halibut.

### MIGRATION ROUTES OF JUVENILE AND ADULT HALIBUT



**BOTTOM LINE** Halibut live for 20-40 years. Large increases in bycatches and commercial harvests in the Western Gulf, which began in the mid-1990s, have reduced recruitment into both South Central and Southeast Alaska. This is the result of harvest policy decisions made by the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council and International Pacific Halibut Commission.