

**Pacific Halibut Bycatch in IPHC Area 2A
in the 2005 Groundfish Trawl Fishery**

John Wallace
Jim Hastie

NOAA Fisheries
Northwest Fisheries Science Center
Seattle, WA

October 2006

ABSTRACT

This report updates the estimates of Pacific halibut bycatch and mortality in the bottom trawl fishery through the calendar year 2005. The estimates of halibut bycatch and mortality in the bottom trawl fishery are based upon the method developed in the report for 1999 (Wallace, 2000). The current report uses halibut bycatch rates observed for the 2005 calendar year by the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program. These rates are stratified by season, depth, latitude, and amount of arrowtooth flounder catch, and then multiplied by the amount of trawl effort in each stratum determined from Oregon and Washington trawl logbooks in 2005. Estimated halibut bycatch and mortality in other gear types has not been updated for 2005. The estimate for the 2005 bottom trawl fishery is 358,000 lb net weight of total halibut bycatch mortality, of which 228,000 lb is legal-sized. The net weight is 46.0 percent higher than in 2004. As in past reports, forecast of bycatch for the current year (2006) or future years is not attempted.

GROUNDFISH FISHERY BACKGROUND

Changes in the groundfish fishery and its management affect not only the amount of groundfish fishing effort, but also its geographic and temporal distribution. Since halibut bycatch rates vary among time and area strata, changes in the amount and distribution of effort will alter the amount of halibut bycatch that is estimated for the trawl fleet. Here we briefly describe the management changes that occurred in 2005.

A new gear regulation in 2005 facilitated two other important changes in the management of the trawl fishery north of 40°10' N. Lat. between 2004 and 2005. For the first time, trawlers fishing shoreward of the Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) were required to use selective flatfish gear. This gear utilizes a cutback head-rope design that is intended to reduce the bycatch of rockfish. Because bycatch of rebuilding rockfish species had constrained fishing opportunities for shelf flatfish in preceding years, near-shore trip limits for Dover sole and other flatfish were higher in 2005 than in 2004, between January and September. From October through December, no trawling was permitted shoreward of 250 fm in either year. Lower expected rockfish bycatch also allowed the fleet access to more near-shore fishing grounds in 2005. In 2004, the shoreward boundary of the RCA was set at 60 fm between March and June, and at 75 fm for the remaining five months through September. During the first two months of 2005, the shoreward RCA boundary was also set at 75 fm, but for the following five months, it was set at 100 fm. As a result, the near-shore area open to groundfish trawling encompassed a larger portion of the Pacific halibut depth distribution.

2005 BYCATCH ESTIMATES

Analysis of 2005 data from the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program

The WCGOP provided data for the complete calendar year of 2005 for this assessment. There were 2,749 bottom trawl tows between 48.667 and 40.667 degrees N. latitude included in this study (Figure 1). An estimated total weight of 221,609 lb of halibut was caught in those tows. Seventy one percent of these weights are 'actual weights' from the entire catch, i.e. not estimated or extrapolated. In the observer program, lengths are taken when halibut are selected as 'biological samples'. For the data used in this report, on a tow basis, halibut were selected to be a biological sample 55 percent of the time when Pacific halibut were caught in the tow. Halibut have a lower priority for biological sampling than groundfish species that have been declared overfished. Additionally, crews attempt to return halibut to the ocean as quickly as possible, in order to promote survival of the discards. As a consequence, it can be difficult for observers to obtain length measurements for all discarded halibut.

For all of the Limited-Entry groundfish trawl activity, methods similar to those in Pikitch (1998) were used to analyze the observer data and identify appropriate strata for bycatch estimation. These strata are season (Jan-Aug and Sept-Dec), depth (0-75, 75-150, 150-250, 250-700 fm), area (four latitude ranges) and catch of arrowtooth flounder (0-20 lb/hour and >20 lb/hour). Numbers

of tows, halibut catches, halibut catch rates, and the proportions of legal-sized halibut (>81 cm) are listed for each of these strata in Table 2.

Bottom Trawl Effort from Logbooks

Logbook data for Oregon and Washington in 2005 were obtained from PacFIN. Since ODFW collects logbook data for only 70-80 percent of the trawl deliveries during a typical year, Oregon logbook effort (hours towed) was expanded using fish tickets on a port and month basis. This approach was used in order to avoid any potential bias created by unequal collection of logbooks in the three major ports (Astoria, Newport, and Coos Bay). WDFW's "extrapolated and expanded" trawl effort was used for Washington trips.

Total trawl effort (hours) for the entire Oregon fleet was based on expanding the groundfish catch in logbook data by the total groundfish catch reported on fish tickets, as follows. Dividing aggregate catch on fish tickets by aggregate catch in the logbook data creates expansion ratios, by port and month. These expansion ratios were applied to the tow effort (hours) to arrive at the expanded effort for Oregon's trawl fleet. The expanded effort was then stratified, based on the observer data analysis. A similar effort expansion was not conducted for the Washington fleet because WDFW expands their effort, so total fleet effort is equal to reported logbook effort. The total fleet effort for each stratum in 2005 is reported in Table 2.

Halibut bycatch in each stratum was estimated by multiplying total (expanded) stratum effort by the stratum halibut bycatch rate. Bycatch by the bottom trawl fleet is estimated by summing across strata. If there was effort within a stratum, but no observer tows, the coast-wide average bycatch rate (10.947 kg per hour) was used. This value is calculated as the unweighted average of the stratum means.

Results

As in earlier years, half of the released halibut are assumed to survive capture (Gregg Williams, IPHC, personal communication). Therefore, discard mortality of halibut is assumed to be 50 percent of total discard. The proportion of legal-sized halibut (> 81cm) is estimated from the length frequencies of halibut measured in the observer data (Table 1). All measurements of fish lengths were converted to fish weight based on a length-weight relationship for Pacific halibut (IPHC, personal communication), and the proportion of legal-sized fish (by weight) was computed for each stratum (Table 2). The average proportion legal (61.59% by weight, calculated as the unweighted average of the stratum means) was used when no other estimate was available.

For comparison purposes, 2005 totals are shown together with annual totals since 1998 in Table 3. All estimates from 2002 forward incorporate observation data collected by the WCGOP. Total estimated discard mortality of halibut rose by 46% between 2004 and 2005, despite an increase in overall trawl effort of only 5 percent. However, with higher near-shore trip limits and a larger near-shore area open to fishing, trawl effort in depths less than 150 fm,

where halibut bycatch rates are generally higher, increased by 46% (Table 4). And although the estimated mortality of halibut increased from 6.5 to 9.1 lb/hour, the 2005 rate remains less than any annual average from 1998 to 2002. Estimated mortalities of 'all' and of 'legal-sized' halibut since 1977 are listed in Tables 5 and 6, respectively. The percentage of discard comprised by legal-sized fish is the second lowest, eclipsed only by the low seen in 2002. Nearly 58 percent of the estimated discard of legal-sized fish occurred in eight of the 64 strata used in the analysis, i.e. both arrowtooth and all depth strata for the January-August time period in the area between 47.67° and 48.67° N. latitude. In 2004, the same eight strata had 75% of the estimated discard of legal-sized fish.

It is not possible to make a forecast for the 2006 fishery given lack of a methodology to project the distribution of effort among model strata prior to the complete availability of a year's logbook data.

REFERENCES

- Pikitch, E.K., Wallace, J.R., Babcock, E.A., Erickson, D.L., Saelens, M., and Oddsson, G. (1998) Pacific halibut bycatch in the Washington, Oregon, and California groundfish and shrimp trawl fisheries. *North American Journal of Fisheries Management*. Volume 18, pp. 569-586.
- Wallace, J.R. (2000) Unpublished report. Pacific halibut discard in the EDCP Observer Program. June 2000. 18 pg.
- Williams, G. H., G. Stauffer, H. Weeks, M. Saelens, J. Scordino, D. Bodenmiller, and T. Northup (1998). Pacific halibut bycatch in Area 2A: Bycatch rates and current estimates of bycatch mortality. *Int. Pac. Halibut Comm. Rep. of Assess. and Res. Activ.* 1998: 269-282.

Table 1. Length frequencies for Pacific halibut from the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program data. (The upper limits on the length intervals are inclusive, the lower limits are not.)

Length Interval (cm)	Length Freq.	Percent Length Freq.
25-30	0	0.00
30-35	0	0.00
35-40	1	0.03
40-45	3	0.09
45-50	1	0.03
50-55	29	0.91
55-60	140	4.39
60-65	334	10.48
65-70	488	15.31
70-75	598	18.76
75-80	519	16.28
80-85	326	10.23
85-90	222	6.97
90-95	182	5.71
95-100	95	2.98
100-105	95	2.98
105-110	58	1.82
110-115	27	0.85
115-120	22	0.69
120-125	19	0.60
125-130	7	0.22
130-135	8	0.25
135-140	3	0.09
140-145	3	0.09
145-150	4	0.13
150-155	2	0.06
155-160	0	0.00
160-165	1	0.03
165-170	0	0.00
170-175	0	0.00
175-180	0	0.00
180-185	0	0.00
Total	3187	100.00

Table 2. Numbers of tows, halibut catches, halibut catch rates and effort, by strata, observed in the bottom trawl fishery by the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program. The last two columns, from 2004, are for comparison purposes. (The upper limits are inclusive for all intervals; the lower limits are not.)

SEASON: JANUARY - AUGUST

Arrowtooth Catch (lb/h)	Latitude	Depth (Fathoms)	Number of Observed Tows	Number of Tows with ≥ 1 Halibut	Wgt. (kg., rnd) Halibut per Hour	Trawl Effort (hours) from OR & WA	Proportion Legal by Weight	Number of Observed Tows 2004	Wgt. (kg., rnd) Halibut per Hour 2004
≤ 20	40.667 - 42.667	0 - 75	0	0		129		1	17.86
		75 - 150	0	0		27		0	
		150 - 250	2	0	0.00	232		16	0.00
		250 - 700	17	1	0.07	738	0.250	43	0.00
42.667 - 46.667		0 - 75	316	143	5.83	4084	0.876	523	1.78
		75 - 150	95	35	5.59	1186	0.877	19	1.51
		150 - 250	65	24	2.70	1471	0.702	84	2.11
		250 - 700	152	12	0.27	3087	0.778	191	0.07
46.667 - 47.667		0 - 75	294	162	5.35	1914	0.628	245	4.47
		75 - 150	21	18	37.24	98	0.593	3	2.69
		150 - 250	26	17	6.04	403	0.852	11	0.38
		250 - 700	31	7	1.95	621	0.521	18	0.00
47.667 - 48.667		0 - 75	157	124	71.00	1702	0.539	266	30.66
		75 - 150	197	107	48.45	1203	0.588	23	46.25
		150 - 250	36	14	40.18	590	0.415	18	6.78
		250 - 700	22	1	0.07	694	0.687	19	1.07
> 20	40.667 - 42.667	0 - 75	0	0		0		0	
		75 - 150	0	0		1		0	
		150 - 250	9	5	5.56	202		4	1.43
		250 - 700	6	0	0.00	189	0.476	2	0.00
42.667 - 46.667		0 - 75	152	95	6.71	1925	0.842	71	2.04
		75 - 150	119	78	24.04	927	0.703	4	0.40
		150 - 250	211	118	4.90	3142	0.759	245	4.24
		250 - 700	126	29	2.40	1867	0.634	115	1.67
46.667 - 47.667		0 - 75	52	40	8.61	602	0.365	48	6.97
		75 - 150	11	5	16.67	106		12	18.16
		150 - 250	30	18	4.14	308	0.803	57	7.68
		250 - 700	16	8	6.74	223	0.439	8	1.57
47.667 - 48.667		0 - 75	79	64	46.04	710	1.000	123	53.55
		75 - 150	97	68	23.49	798	0.819	25	106.81
		150 - 250	23	11	7.99	503	0.000	123	40.50
		250 - 700	23	11	15.61	308	0.495	19	94.85

Table 2. Continued.

SEASON: SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER

Arrowtooth Catch (lb/h)	Latitude	Depth (Fathoms)	Number of Observed Tows	Number of Tows with ≥ 1 Halibut	Wgt. (kg., rnd) Halibut per Hour	Trawl Effort (hours) from OR & WA	Proportion Legal by Weight	Number of Observed Tows 2004	Wgt. (kg., rnd) Halibut per Hour 2004
≤ 20	40.667 - 42.667	0 - 75	0	0		14		0	
		75 - 150	0	0		1		0	
		150 - 250	0	0		36		2	5.62
		250 - 700	30	1	0.02	734	1.000	7	0.00
42.667 - 46.667		0 - 75	16	7	5.06	945	0.255	72	0.55
		75 - 150	8	1	0.50	509	0.195	0	
		150 - 250	12	5	23.79	248	0.594	22	5.14
		250 - 700	57	2	0.10	1823	0.731	170	0.25
46.667 - 47.667		0 - 75	27	6	2.06	197	0.000	2	0.00
		75 - 150	1	1	2.91	11		0	
		150 - 250	1	0	0.00	14		1	0.00
		250 - 700	9	0	0.00	280	0.409	34	0.24
47.667 - 48.667		0 - 75	14	14	64.18	243		12	5.73
		75 - 150	7	4	3.42	176		1	2.32
		150 - 250	1	1	14.70	14		1	4.31
		250 - 700	23	6	2.40	305	0.587	20	0.52
> 20	40.667 - 42.667	0 - 75	0	0		0		0	
		75 - 150	0	0		0		0	
		150 - 250	1	1	2.66	36		3	0.00
		250 - 700	5	0	0.00	111	1.000	1	0.00
42.667 - 46.667		0 - 75	24	12	2.41	825		37	0.42
		75 - 150	52	31	8.83	626	0.246	0	
		150 - 250	22	14	8.50	557		78	6.96
		250 - 700	22	6	1.92	1003	0.879	44	0.90
46.667 - 47.667		0 - 75	0	0		58		0	
		75 - 150	0	0		11		0	
		150 - 250	3	1	0.53	84	0.641	12	4.87
		250 - 700	2	0	0.00	18	0.840	3	0.00
47.667 - 48.667		0 - 75	11	9	12.75	137	1.000	1	12.85
		75 - 150	13	7	9.43	260		2	0.00
		150 - 250	0	0		8		15	18.87
		250 - 700	3	3	5.44	100		7	3.29

Table 3. Halibut bycatch and mortality in the Oregon and Washington bottom trawl fisheries for groundfish off the west coast. Estimates from 2002 forward are based on observations by the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program. All estimates in this table (except the last column) are derived from a sum over strata cells; see the text for details.

Year	Trawl Effort (hours)	Estimated Halibut Bycatch (numbers)	Estimated Halibut Bycatch (kg, round)	Estimated Halibut Bycatch (lb, net)	Estimated Total Halibut Mortality (lb, net)	Est. Mortality (lb) per Trawl Hour	Estimated Legal-Sized Halibut Mortality (lb, net)	Estimated Legal-Sized divided by Total Halibut Mortality
1998	92,294	164,961	1,259,374	2,082,690	1,041,345	11.3	691,755	0.6643
1999	81,420	147,995	1,144,236	1,892,280	946,140	11.6	638,091	0.6744
2000	70,363	122,234	944,120	1,561,338	780,669	11.1	523,097	0.6701
2001	67,199	124,969	962,348	1,591,482	795,741	11.8	532,912	0.6697
2002	52,168	NA	618,913	1,023,527	511,764	9.8	286,221	0.5593
2003	58,339	NA	558,544	923,693	461,847	7.9	366,745	0.7941
2004	37,495	NA	296,225	489,882	244,941	6.5	171,754	0.7012
2005	39,377	NA	432,806	715,752	357,876	9.1	228,049	0.6372

Note: Halibut bycatch by California bottom trawl fishery is not included. Mortality estimated at 50% of bycatch. Proportion of legal-sized mortality (>81 cm) estimated from length frequencies of fish measured by the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program. 1 kg, round = 1.65375 pounds, net weight.

Table 4. Trawl effort (hours) in the 2004 and 2005 bottom trawl fisheries off Oregon and Washington

Arrowtooth Catch (lb/h)	Latitude	Depth (fathoms)	Trawl effort (hours)		% change from 2004 to 2005
			2004	2005	
≤ 20	40.667 - 42.667	0 - 150	282	171	-39%
		150 - 700	1,969	1,740	-12%
	42.667 - 46.667	0 - 150	4,370	6,724	54%
		150 - 700	9,281	6,629	-29%
	46.667 - 47.667	0 - 150	2,856	2,220	-22%
		150 - 700	1,494	1,318	-12%
	47.667 - 48.667	0 - 150	2,856	3,324	16%
		150 - 700	1,473	1,603	9%
Total		0 - 150	10,364	12,439	20%
		150 - 700	14,216	11,292	-21%
		All depths	24,579	23,733	-3%
> 20	40.667 - 42.667	0 - 150	18	1	-93%
		150 - 700	175	538	206%
	42.667 - 46.667	0 - 150	1,081	4,303	298%
		150 - 700	6,842	6,569	-4%
	46.667 - 47.667	0 - 150	620	777	25%
		150 - 700	928	633	-32%
	47.667 - 48.667	0 - 150	1,261	1,905	51%
		150 - 700	1,992	919	-54%
Total		0 - 150	2,980	6,986	134%
		150 - 700	9,937	8,659	-13%
		All depths	12,917	15,644	21%
Total	Total	0 - 150	13,343	19,425	46%
		150 - 700	24,152	19,950	-17%
		All depths	37,495	39,377	5%

Table 5. Summary of total estimated bycatch mortality of Pacific halibut, in thousands of pounds, net weight, by fishery in 2A. Bycatch mortality estimates for 1977-1997 are reported from Table 3 in Williams, et al. 1998.

Year	Foreign, JV & Catcher-Proc.	Groundfish Trawls	Shrimp Trawls	Hook & Line	TOTAL
1977	3	308	82	16	409
1978	2	308	82	16	408
1979	1	308	82	16	407
1980	1	308	82	16	407
1981	Trace	308	82	16	406
1982	Trace	308	82	16	406
1983	1	308	82	16	407
1984	Trace	308	82	16	406
1985	Trace	308	82	16	406
1986	1	308	82	16	407
1987	1	308	82	16	407
1988	1	308	82	16	407
1989	2	308	82	16	408
1990	2	308	82	16	408
1991	2	308	82	16	408
1992	0	385	43	16	444
1993	0	385	43	16	444
1994	0	385	43	16	444
1995	0	548	50	16	614
1996	0	548	50	16	614
1997	0	548	50	16	614
1998	0	1,041	25	---	---
1999	---	946	---	---	---
2000	---	781	---	---	---
2001	---	796	---	---	---
2002	---	512	---	---	---
2003	---	462	---	---	---
2004	---	245	---	---	---
2005	---	358	---	---	---

Note: Bycatch mortality by groundfish trawls in 1998-2004 does not include fisheries off California. Bycatch mortality by shrimp trawls in 1998 does not include fisheries off California and Washington.

Table 6. Summary of estimated mortality of legal-sized Pacific halibut, in thousands of pounds, net weight, by fishery in Area 2A. The bycatch mortality estimate for legal-sized halibut for 2005 is from this report. (Sums across fisheries may not equal the TOTAL due to rounding.)

Year	Foreign, JV & Catcher-Proc.	Groundfish Trawls	Shrimp Trawls	Hook & Line	TOTAL
1977	2	191	51	10	254
1978	1	191	51	10	253
1979	0.6	191	51	10	252
1980	0.6	191	51	10	252
1981	Trace	191	51	10	252
1982	Trace	191	51	10	252
1983	0.6	191	51	10	252
1984	Trace	191	51	10	252
1985	Trace	191	51	10	252
1986	0.6	191	51	10	252
1987	0.6	191	51	10	252
1988	0.6	191	51	10	252
1989	1	191	51	10	253
1990	1	191	51	10	253
1991	1	191	51	10	253
1992	0	239	27	10	275
1993	0	239	27	10	275
1994	0	239	27	10	275
1995	0	340	31	10	381
1996	0	340	31	10	381
1997	0	340	31	10	381
1998	0	692	16	---	---
1999	---	638	---	---	---
2000	---	523	---	---	---
2001	---	533	---	---	---
2002	---	286	---	---	---
2003	---	367	---	---	---
2004	---	172	---	---	---
2005	---	228	---	---	---

Note: Bycatch mortality by groundfish trawls in 1998-2004 does not include fisheries off California. Bycatch mortality by shrimp trawls in 1998 does not include fisheries off California and Washington.

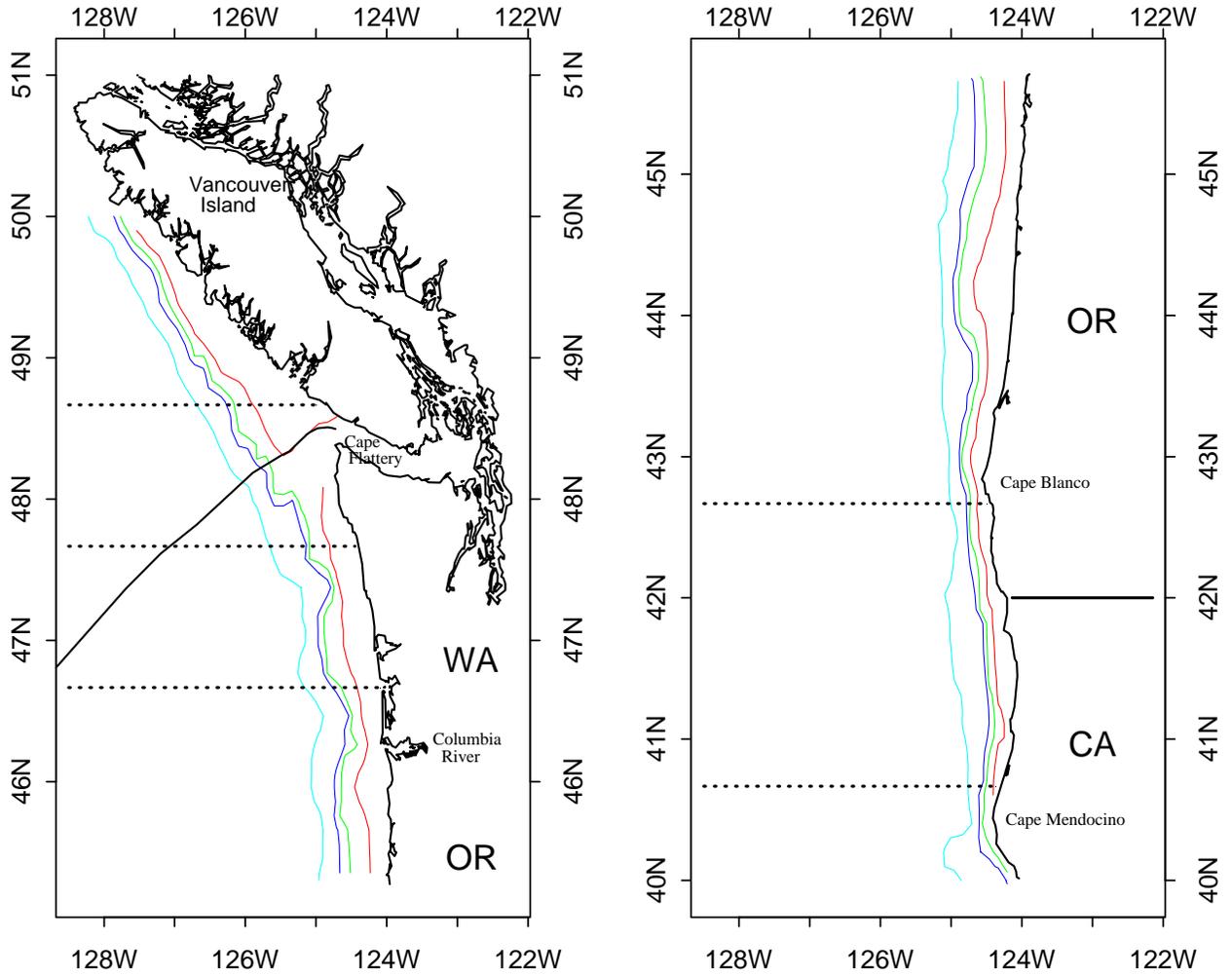


Figure 1. A map of IPHC area 2A with the latitudinal strata demarcated by dotted lines. In the most northerly strata only the area east of the EEZ line is covered by this report. Depth contours are plotted for 75, 150, 250, and 700 fathoms.