

STATUS OF 2003 PACIFIC HALIBUT FISHERIES

Situation: The 2003 Pacific halibut season in the Council management area is winding down. After August 15, 2003, only a few fisheries remain, including incidental halibut catch in the directed longline sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, Washington, recreational fisheries in the Washington south coast, Columbia River, Oregon central coast, and southern Oregon/California areas, and the tribal Ceremonial and Subsistence fishery.

The NMFS Report (Exhibit G.1.a) provides a preliminary report summarizing the harvest in the 2003 Pacific halibut fisheries in Area 2A to date.

Council Task:

1. Receive and discuss information.

Reference Materials:

1. Preliminary Report on the 2003 Pacific Halibut Fisheries in Area 2A (Exhibit G.1.a, NMFS Report).

Agenda Order:

- a. NMFS Report
- b. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- c. Public Comment
- d. Council Discussion

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REPORT ON THE 2003 PACIFIC HALIBUT FISHERIES IN AREA 2A

The 2003 Area 2A total allowable catch (TAC) of 1,310,000 lb set by the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) was allocated as sub-TACs as follows:

Treaty Indian	483,500 lb (35.0% + 25,000 lb)
Non-Treaty Total	826,500 lb (65.0% - 25,000 lb)
Non-Treaty Commercial	332,001 lb (includes incidental sablefish)
Washington Sport	232,499 lb
Oregon/California Sport	262,001 lb

The structure of each fishery and the resulting harvests are described below.

NON-TREATY COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

A sub-TAC of 262,001 lb (31.7% of the non-treaty share) was allocated to two fishery components: 1) a directed longline fishery targeting on halibut south of Point Chehalis, WA; and 2) an incidental catch fishery during the salmon troll fisheries off Washington, Oregon, and California. An additional 70,000 lb was allocated to an incidental catch fishery for limited entry, sablefish-endorsed vessels operating with longline gear north of Pt. Chehalis, WA. This allowance for the tiered sablefish fishery is only available in years when the overall Area 2A TAC exceeds 900,000 lb.

Incidental halibut catch in the salmon troll fishery A quota of 39,300 lb (15% of the non-Indian commercial fishery allocation) was allocated to the salmon troll fishery in Area 2A as an incidental catch during chinook fisheries. According to the Catch Sharing Plan, the primary management objective for this fishery is to harvest the troll quota as an incidental catch during the May/June salmon troll fishery. If any of the allocation for this fishery remains after June 30, the fishery may continue to retain incidentally caught halibut in the July through September salmon troll fisheries until the quota is taken, or until the overall non-treaty commercial catch limit is taken. The final catch ratio established preseason by the Council at the April meeting was one halibut (minimum 32") per three chinook landed by a salmon troller, except that one halibut could be landed without meeting the ratio requirement, and no more than 35 halibut could be landed per trip.

- Halibut retention was permitted in the salmon troll fishery from May 1 through August 6, 2003. Of the halibut taken in the salmon troll fisheries 3,325 lb were landed in Oregon (3,100 in May/June and 225 in July/August) and 38,592 lb were landed in Washington (20,196 in May/June and 18,392 in July/August,) for a total of 41,917 lb (6.7% under quota.)

Directed fishery targeting on halibut A quota of 222,700 lb (85% of the non-treaty commercial fishery allocation) was allocated to the directed longline fishery targeting on halibut in southern Washington, Oregon, and California. The fishery was confined to the area south of Subarea 2A-1 (south of Point Chehalis, WA; 46° 53'18" N. lat.). One-day fishing periods of 10 hours in duration were scheduled by the IPHC for June 25, July 9, July 23, August 6, August 20, and September 3. A 32" minimum size limit was in effect for all openings. Vessel landing limits per fishing period based on vessel length were imposed by IPHC during all openings as shown in the following table. Vessels choosing to operate in this fishery could not land halibut in the incidental catch salmon troll fishery, nor operate in the recreational fishery.

Fishing period limits (dressed weight, head-off in pounds) by vessel size.

Vessel Class/Size	6/25/03 Opening	7/9/03 Opening	7/23/03 Opening	8/6/03 Opening
A 0 - 25 ft.	405 lb	445 lb	295 lb	210 lb
B 26 - 30 ft.	505 lb	555 lb	370 lb	265 lb
C 31 - 35 ft.	805 lb	890 lb	590 lb	420 lb
D 36 - 40 ft.	2,220 lb	2,455 lb	1,620 lb	1,160 lb
E 41 - 45 ft.	2,390 lb	2,640 lb	1,745 lb	1,245 lb
F 46 - 50 ft.	2,860 lb	3,160 lb	2,085 lb	1,490 lb
G 51 - 55 ft.	3,190 lb	3,525 lb	2,330 lb	1,665 lb
H 56+ ft.	4,800 lb	5,300 lb	3,500 lb	2,500 lb

- The June 25 directed commercial fishery resulted in a catch of about 80,000 lb, leaving 142,700 lb for later openings.
- The July 9 directed commercial fishery resulted in a catch of about 85,000 lb, leaving 57,700 lb for later openings.
- The July 23 directed commercial fishery resulted in a catch of about 35,000 lb, leaving 22,700 lb for later openings.
- The August 6 directed commercial fishery resulted in a catch of about 31,000 lb, exceeding the fishery's quota by 3.7%. The directed fishery is closed for the remainder of 2003.

Incidental halibut catch in the primary sablefish longline fishery north of Point Chehalis

A quota of 70,000 lb was allocated to the limited entry primary sablefish fishery in Area 2A as an incidental catch during longline sablefish operations north of Point Chehalis, WA. The primary sablefish season began on April 1, 2003, and closes October 31, 2003, although incidental halibut retention was not available until May 1. Properly licensed vessels could retain up to 150 lb of dressed weight (headed-and gutted) halibut per 1,000 lb of dressed weight sablefish, plus up to two additional halibut per fishing trip. Each vessel was allowed to retain up to a total cumulative limit of halibut that was based on the amount of primary season sablefish available to that vessel when the vessel applied for a 2002 IPHC license. Incidental halibut landings in the primary sablefish fishery through August 8, 2003 were 40,949 lb.

SPORT FISHERIES (Non-treaty).

A sub-TAC of 476,111 lb (68.3% of non-treaty share) was allocated between sport fisheries in the Washington area (48.5%) and Oregon/California (51.5%). The allocations were further subdivided as quotas among seven geographic subareas as described below.

Washington Inside Waters Subarea (Puget Sound and Straits of Juan de Fuca). This area was allocated 63,278 lb (27.2% of the Washington sport allocation). Due to inability to monitor the catch in this area inseason, a fixed season was established preseason based on projected catch per day and number of days to achieve the sub-quota. The Eastern Region (East of Low Point) opened on May 8 and continued through July 18, 5 days per week (closed Tuesday and Wednesday). The Western Region opened on May 22 and continued through August 1, 5 days per week. The daily bag limit was one halibut of any size per person. Catch totals from this sub-area are not yet available.

Northern Washington Coastal Waters Subarea (landings in Neah Bay and La Push). The coastal area off Cape Flattery to Queets River was allocated 113,915 lb (49.0% of the Washington sport allocation). The fishery was divided into two seasons with 31,896 lb set aside for the second season. The fishery was to open May 1 and continue 5 days per week (closed Sunday and Monday) until 82,019 lb were estimated to have been taken. The second season was to open on June 18 and continue 5 days per week (closed Sunday and Monday) until the entire quota for this subarea was estimated to be taken. The Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Area is located within this subarea, southwest of Cape Flattery, and was closed to halibut fishing. The daily bag limit was one halibut of any size per person.

- The fishery opened May 1 and continued 5 days a week, until May 17, when 67,704 lb was estimated to have been taken. The remaining quota for the May season, 14,315 lb, was not enough to continue the 5 day per week fishery, but did allow another May opening on May 23 and 24 (Friday-Saturday). The total halibut taken from these two openings was 82,061 lb.
- The season re-opened June 18-21, during which 20,200 lb were taken, for a total of 102,261 lb, leaving approximately 11,654 lb in the subarea quota.

- The halibut remaining in the quota was estimated to be enough for another day of North Coast fishing. The season re-opened on August 9, when an additional 7,477 lb was taken. The fishery was closed with 4,177 lb remaining in the quota (3.7% under quota.)

Washington South Coast Subarea (landings in Westport). The area from the Queets River to Leadbetter Point was allocated 48,623 lb (21% of the Washington sport allocation). The fishery was to open on May 1 and continue 5 days per week (closed Friday and Saturday) offshore, until the quota was taken. An inshore fishery was also to open May 1 and continue 7 days per week in waters between the Queets River and 47° 00'00" N. lat., and east of 124°40'00" W. long. through the closure of the offshore fishery until either the subarea quota were estimated to have been taken, or until September 30, whichever occurred first. The daily bag limit was one halibut of any size per person.

- The 5 day per week offshore fishery and the 7 day per week inshore fishery opened on May 1. This fishery was modified inseason to provide a 7 day per week fishery in all areas, beginning June 27, responding to greater angler interest in salmon fishing and low halibut catch rates. The subarea remains open as of August 20th.

Columbia River Subarea (Leadbetter Point to Cape Falcon). This sport fishery subarea was allocated 11,923 lb, consisting of 2.7% of the Washington sport allocation plus 2.0% of the Oregon/California sport allocation. The fishery was to open May 1 and continue 7 days per week until September 30 or until the quota has been taken. The daily bag limit is the first halibut taken of 32 inches or greater in length.

- This 7 day per week fishery began on May 1 and remains open as of August 20th.

Oregon North Central and South Central Coast Subareas (Cape Falcon to the Siuslaw River and the Siuslaw River to Humbug Mountain). These two sport fishery subareas have traditionally been managed as a single unit with separate allocations for the May all-depth fishery. The North Central Coast subarea was allocated 230,639 (88.03% of the Oregon/California sport allocation) and the South Central Subarea was allocated 18,261 lb (6.97% of the Oregon/California sport allocation).

Three seasons were set for these combined subareas: 1) a restricted depth (inside 30 fathoms) fishery to commence on May 1 and continue every day until the combined North Central and South Central nearshore sub-quota of 19,797 lb was estimated to have been taken; 2) a fixed May season in all depths that was to open on May 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, and 17, with catch allocations of 156,835 lb in the North Central Subarea and 14,609 lb in the South Central Subarea, and; 3) a fixed August season in all depths from Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain on August 2 and/or 3, or until the combined all-depth subquotas for Oregon south of Cape Falcon totaling 229,103 lb were estimated to have been taken. The daily bag limit was the first halibut taken of 32 inches or greater in length.

- The inside 30-fathom fishery opened on May 1 and is scheduled to close September 30. As of August 10, 805 lb of halibut had been taken in the inside 30-fathom fishery.
- The first fixed all-depth season in May, held May 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, and 17, had a total catch of 51,377 lb in the North and 14,904 in the South, which left enough halibut in the North Central Coast quota to allow openings on additional days during the May-June period. The all-depth season re-opened on the following pre-scheduled days: June 19, 20, and 21. During these three all-depth days in June, the North Central fisheries took an additional 37,008 lb, leaving 68,450 lb in the May-June all-depth quota. This remaining poundage was made available to the August-September all-depth fishery .
- The August all-depth season draws on the combined quotas of the Oregon north central and south central fisheries. The initial 57,660 lb available to this fishery was supplemented by the 68,155 lb underage from the May-June all-depth fisheries. As a result of this revision, 125,815 lb was available to the August 1, 2, 8 and 9 all-depth fishery. The combined central coast fisheries took 38,928 lb during those open days, which was far enough below the available quota amount to allow additional opening days in August and September. The all-depth season re-opened on August 22 and 23.

South of Humbug Mountain, Oregon and off the California Coast Subarea This sport fishery was allocated 6,809 lb (3.0% of the Oregon/California quota). This area had a pre-set season of 7 days per week from May 1 to September 30 and a bag limit of the first halibut taken of 32 inches or greater in length.

- This season is scheduled to remain open through September 30. No catch estimates are available for this fishery, but it is very unlikely that this subarea quota will be taken.

TRIBAL FISHERIES

A sub-TAC of 483,500 lb (35% + 25,000 lb of the Area 2A TAC) was allocated to Tribal fisheries. The tribes estimated that 27,000 lb would be used for ceremonial and subsistence (C&S) fisheries and the remaining 456,500 lb was allocated to the commercial fishery. The tribal commercial fishery was scheduled to open on March 1, 2003 pursuant to regulations adopted by the IPHC and continue until the tribal commercial subquota was reached. The tribal C&S fishery was scheduled to run throughout the year.

The tribal commercial halibut allocation is divided so that approximately 80-85% of the allocation is taken in brief, open competition derbies, in which vessels from all halibut tribes compete against each other for landings. In addition to these unrestricted openings, 15-20% of the commercial allocation is reserved for “restricted” fisheries, in which participating vessels from all halibut tribes are restricted to a per vessel and per day poundage limit for halibut (500 lb per vessel/day for 2003 restricted fisheries.)

Fishery	Dates Held	Pounds Landed	# of Landings
Unrestricted, 48-hour	March 1-3	150,199 lb	47 landings
Restricted, 500 lb/vessel/day	March 1- March 31, April 2-6	88,160 lb	252 landings
Unrestricted, 36-hour	April 15-16	166,442 lb	39 landings
Restricted, 500 lb/vessel/day	April 23-April 30	59,975 lb	157 landings
Total		464,776 lb	495 landings

The C&S fishery will continue through December 31 and tribal estimates of catch will be reported by the tribes in January 2004.

2003 Area 2A TAC and Catch (in pounds)				
	Quota	Inseason Revised Quota	Catch	Over/Under
TREATY INDIAN	483,500			
Commercial	456,500		464,776	1.8%
Ceremonial & Subsistence	27,000			
NON-TREATY	826,500			
COMMERCIAL	332,000			
Troll	39,300		41,917	6.7%
Directed	222,700		231,000	3.7%
Sablefish Incidental	70,000			
SPORT	494,500			
WA Sport	232,499			
OR/CA Sport	262,001			
WA Inside Waters	63,278			
WA North Coast	113,915		109,738	-3.7%
WA South Coast	48,623			
Col River Area	11,923			
OR Central Coast	248,901			
Inside 30 fathoms (all areas)	19,797			
Spring (North Central Coast)	156,835	156,835	88,385	-43.6%
Spring (South Central Coast)	14,609	14,609	14,904	2.0%
Summer (all areas)	57,660	125,815 ★		
OR S. of Humbug/CA	7,860		7,860 (est.)	
TOTAL	1,310,000			

★ Although the initial allocation to the August all-depth fisheries was 57,660, the quota was augmented by the underage from the May all-depth fisheries, resulting in 68,155 lb being added to the August all-depth.