

## OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE PACIFIC HALIBUT CATCH SHARING PLAN FOR THE 2012 FISHERY

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) solicited public comment on the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) approved proposals for changes to the Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) for sport fisheries off Oregon in 2012. ODFW published two news releases on September 19 and 26, 2011 announcing public meetings and asking the public to provide comments by October 4, 2011.

ODFW hosted public meetings in Astoria (Sept. 26), Newport (Sept. 27), Brookings (Sept. 28), and Coos Bay (Sept. 29). Public meetings had typically only been held in Newport and Astoria; however, since there were proposed changes to all three halibut subareas off Oregon, additional meeting locations were added. Additionally, ODFW used an online survey for the first time to garner input from people who could not attend public meetings in person, but still wanted to provide input. A total of 89 people responded to the online survey during the comment period. To reduce the possibility of survey manipulation, responses were limited to one per I.P. address (unique number assigned to computers connected to the internet). Input was focused on the specific items put forward by the PFMC in September, with some additional input on things to look at for the future.

### **Proposed Changes to the CSP:**

#### Columbia River Subarea

##### ***Change the spring vs. summer allocation split from 70%:30% to 80%:20%***

The summer fishery has left approximately 2,000-3,000 lbs. of halibut un-harvested during each of the previous three years, while the spring fishery has closed early due to attainment of quota two of the last three years; therefore, increasing the spring quota percentage from 70% to 80% of the total subarea quota, to allow the spring fishery to proceed longer into the allowable season was proposed in a report by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

Participants at public meetings felt this decision should be made by anglers from the Columbia River Subarea, as it does not have much effect on the other subareas. Unfortunately, halibut anglers who participate primarily from the Columbia River Subarea did not attend any of the public meetings, including the one in Astoria. Of the online survey participants, 87% recommended leaving the allocation between seasons status quo.

##### ***Change the Oregon contribution to the Columbia River Subarea quota from 5% of the OR/CA total to an amount that is equal to what Washington contributes on an annual basis.***

During the past three years, approximately 40% of the landings from this subarea have been into Oregon ports, while Oregon has contributed approximately 60% of the subarea quota. Therefore, nearly all participants from the public meetings want Oregon to reduce its contribution to match Washington's contribution to the subarea, and return that quota to be distributed among the other Oregon subareas/fisheries. Online survey participants slightly favored no change (53.7%).

The overall Columbia River Subarea quota will decrease if both states give equal quota. Had this occurred the past three years, then the Columbia River Subarea quota would have decreased by greater than 3,000 lbs. per year (Table 1).

Table 1. Reduction in Columbia River Subarea quota that would have occurred if state contributions had been equal (OR 50%) instead of status quo (OR SQ).

Year	By State (OR SQ)		Total OR (SQ)	Total OR 50%	Difference
	WA	OR			
<b>2011</b>	6,043	9,375	15,418	12,086	-3,332
<b>2010</b>	5,091	8,345	13,436	10,182	-3,254
<b>2009</b>	5,948	9,787	15,735	11,896	-3,839

Projected season lengths for both the spring and summer fishery were modeled for the four proposed quota alternatives (Table 2), (1) 70% spring; equal state contributions (70% (OR 50%)), (2) 70% spring; status quo state contributions (70% (OR SQ)), (3) 80% spring; equal state contributions (80% (OR 50%)), and (4) 80% spring; status quo state contributions (80%; OR SQ)). Season length was projected for each quota alternative by determining when the cumulative harvest catch curve would have reached the quota (Figure 1 and Figure 2).

Table 2. Projected season lengths (in weeks) for the spring and summer Columbia River Subarea halibut seasons for the four quota alternatives (see above text), 2009-2011. The percentage before the parentheses is the subarea quota allocation to the season and the percentage within the parentheses is the amount of quota contributed by states (OR 50% = proposed equal contributions; OR SQ = status quo state contributions).

Projected <u>Spring</u> weeks (max 11)				
Year	70% (OR 50%)	80% (OR 50%)	70% (OR SQ)	80% (OR SQ)
<b>2011</b>	4.5	6	8	11
<b>2010</b>	5	8	11	11
<b>2009</b>	4	4.5	5	5.5

Projected <u>Summer</u> weeks (max 9)				
Year	70% (OR 50%)	80% (OR 50%)	70% (OR SQ)	80% (OR SQ)
<b>2011</b>	9	4	9	9
<b>2010</b>	9	4	9	9
<b>2009</b>	9	9	9	9

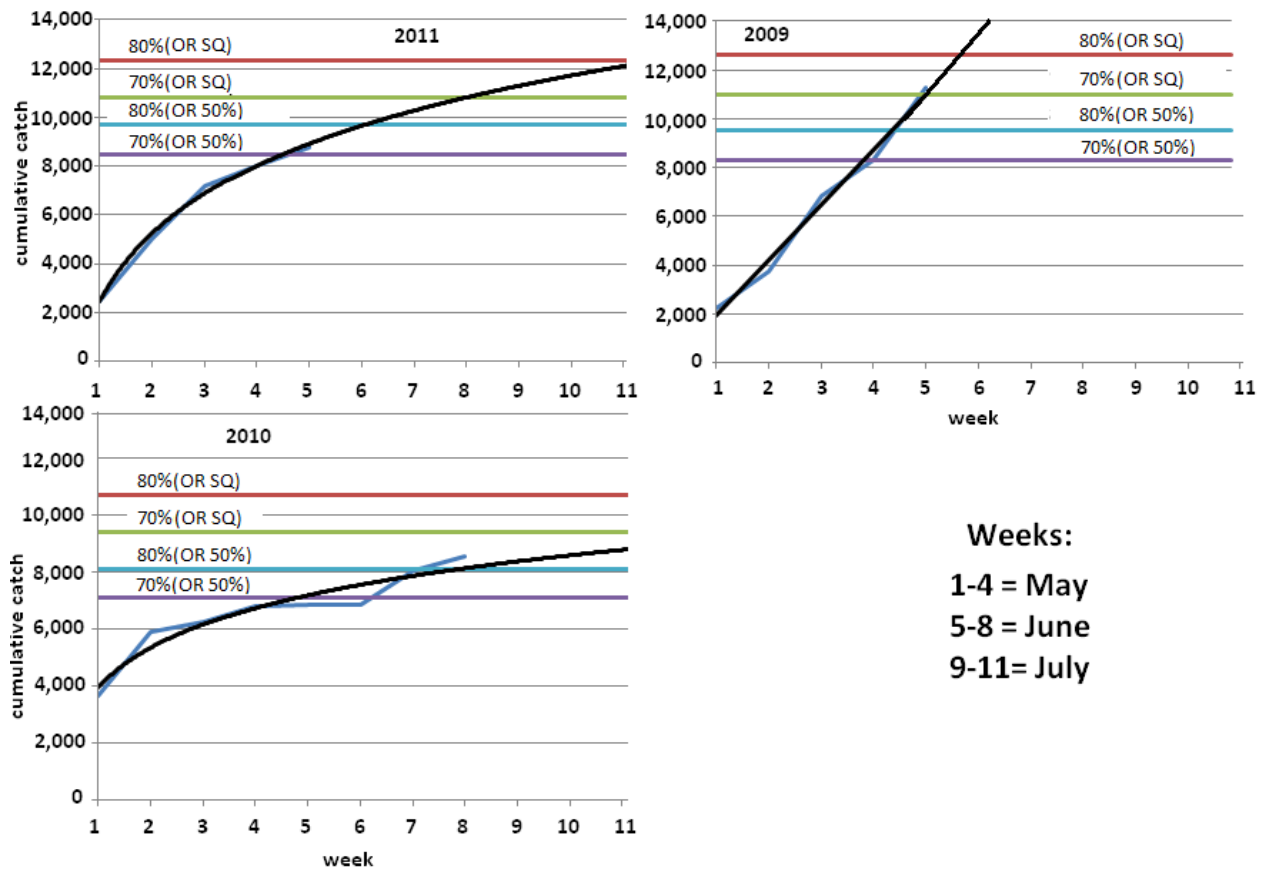


Figure 1. Projected season lengths in weeks for the spring Columbia River Subarea halibut seasons for the four quota alternatives (see above text), 2009-2011. The percentage before the parentheses is the subarea quota allocation to the season and the percentage within the parentheses is the amount of quota contributed by states (OR 50% = proposed equal contributions; OR SQ = status quo state contributions). Season length is determined at the intersection of the projected cumulative harvest line (black projection line overlaid on blue actual line) and the quota for each alternative.

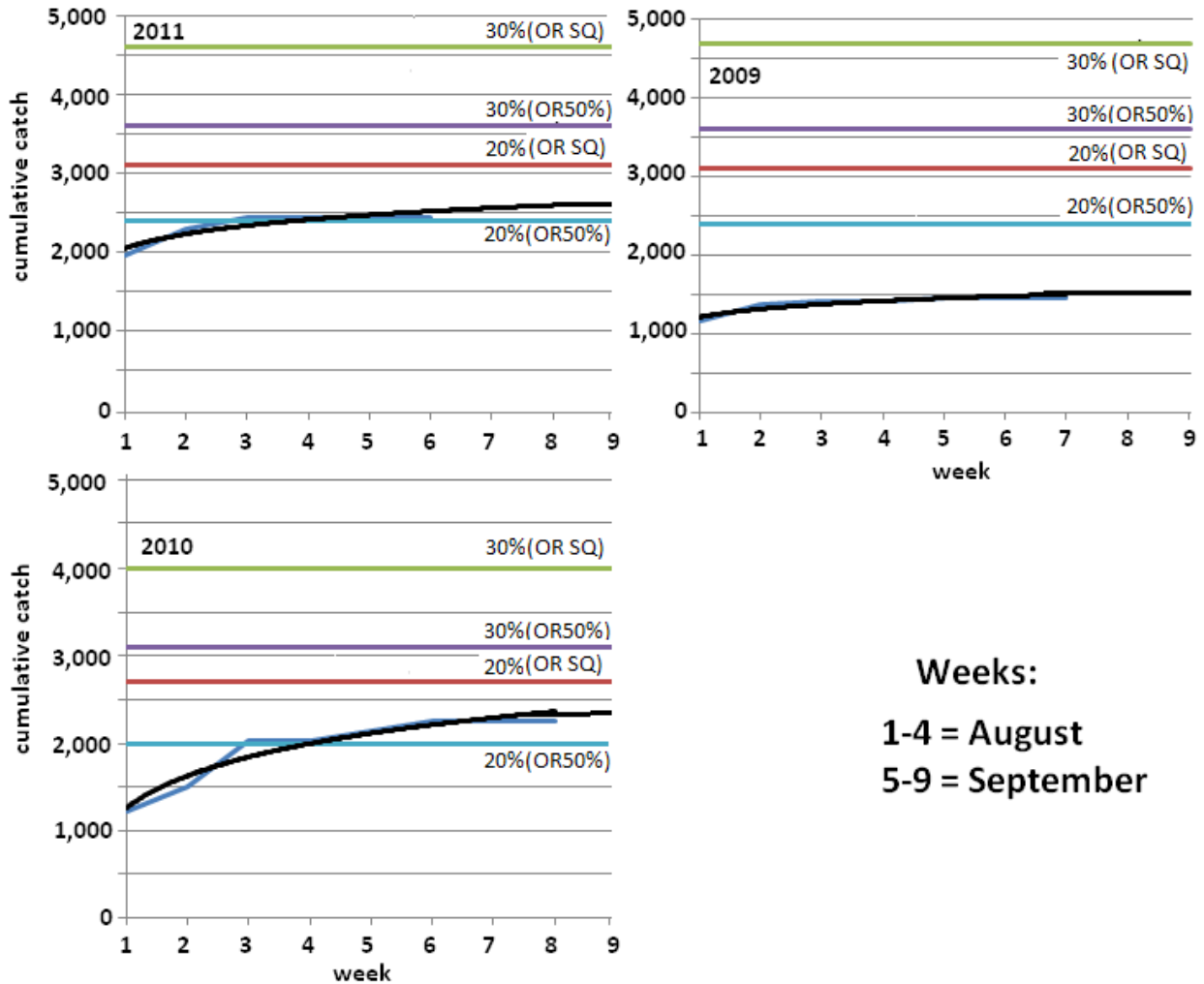


Figure 2. Projected season lengths in weeks for the summer Columbia River Subarea halibut seasons for the four quota alternatives (see above text), 2009-2011. The percentage before the parentheses is the subarea quota allocation to the season and the percentage within the parentheses is the amount of quota contributed by states (OR 50% = proposed equal contributions; OR SQ = status quo state contributions). Season length is determined at the intersection of the projected cumulative harvest line (black projection line overlaid on blue actual line) and the quota for each alternative.

The summer fishery would have lasted the entire season (nine weeks) during 2009-2011 for all quota alternatives except for 20% (OR 50%), when the season would have been reduced from nine to four weeks during 2010 and 2011.

The length of the spring fishery would have been much more affected by the quota alternatives than the summer fishery. If state contributions were equal (OR 50%), then the season length would have been reduced from the status quo (70% (OR SQ) season length if the spring fishery received either 70% or 80% of the subarea quota. If state contributions were status quo (OR SQ), then the season length would have been extended with 80% of the subarea quota instead of 70% (status quo).

## Central Coast Subarea

### ***Increase the nearshore halibut fishery season length by transferring spring all-depth quota to the nearshore fishery increasing the nearshore quota from 8% to 12% or 15% (transfer from the spring all-depth fishery)***

Substantial increases in nearshore halibut (inside 40 fm) fishery effort have caused the fishery to close in July the past two years (scheduled May 1-Oct. 31 season). The majority of anglers who provided input to ODFW want to extend the length of the nearshore halibut season by transferring quota to the nearshore fishery from the all-depth halibut seasons and/or by reducing the open days per week. The nearshore halibut fishery was originally designed to be a “guaranteed” fishery open throughout the season.

Any transfer of quota should come from the spring all-depth fishery because the summer all-depth fishery has only lasted two days (one open period) the last two years, with its current quota percentage and recent trends in angler effort. The vast majority of private anglers (non-charter) at public meetings and survey participants (69%) supported transferring spring all-depth quota to the nearshore fishery. Of private anglers desiring quota transfer to the nearshore fishery, the majority preferred increasing the nearshore quota from 8% to 15% (72% of survey participants) instead of to 12%.

If the nearshore halibut fishery continues to grow at the same annual rate (slope of cumulative catch curves) that has occurred since 2009 and the 2012 Total Allowable Catch (TAC) is similar to the 2011 TAC, the 2012 season would be expected to close in early June with status quo quota (8%; Figure 3). The season would be expected to last until early July with 12% quota and until late July with 15%. Although increasing the nearshore quota may extend the season length during 2012, as desired by anglers, continuation of the growth in effort and harvest rates in this fishery would result in additional reductions in season lengths in future years.

Charter captains that attended the public meetings, or otherwise contacted ODFW, acknowledge the value of the nearshore fishery to private anglers; because of this they are generally supportive of transferring quota to the nearshore fishery as long as impacts to the number of fixed open days in the spring all-depth fishery are minimized. Most charter captains stated that they do not sell trips for, or target, the nearshore halibut fishery because catch rates are too low, and that their operations are much more dependent on the spring all-depth fishery because there is little else to fish for in May and June when the spring all-depth fishery occurs. The spring all-depth season was open for 15 days in 2011 (7,650 lbs. per day average harvest). An increase in the nearshore fishery quota from 8% to 15% would have reduced the spring all-depth quota by approximately 13,500 lbs., potentially decreasing the spring all-depth season by two days (given the 2011 catch rate).

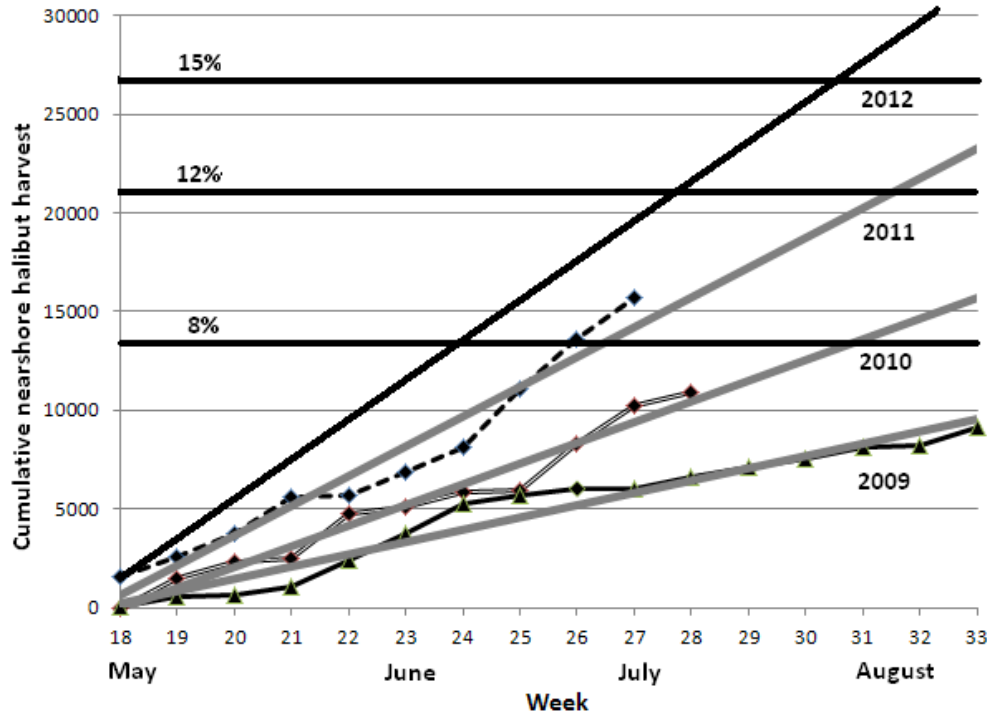


Figure 3. Projected season lengths for the 2012 nearshore halibut fishery for each quota alternative (8% status quo; 12% proposed; 15% proposed) if annual growth in the fishery since 2009 continues (increase in slopes of cumulative catches) and the 2A TAC is the same as 2011 (910,000 lbs). Season lengths are below the intersections of the projected 2012 cumulative catch curve (black diagonal line) and the horizontal lines of the quota alternatives.

***Reduce the open days per week in the nearshore fishery from seven days per week***

The popularity of the nearshore fishery is that there are fishing opportunities seven days per week, and anglers do not have to go 15-30 miles offshore to catch halibut. It tends to be a more family friendly fishery, as it is targeted closer to shore and ports. It also allows anglers flexibility in dealing with weather, work and school schedules, mechanical issues and other opportunities.

Reducing the number of open days per week would be expected to increase the length of the nearshore season, but the increase would be difficult to project because weekly angler effort could become more concentrated during open days, leading to less than expected reductions in weekly effort.

The feedback ODFW received on the number of days per week to be open was pretty evenly split between the alternatives (seven, five, or several three day alternatives); no clear recommendation emerged from the public input.

***Allow flexibility inseason in shifting quota between the spring all-depth, summer all-depth and nearshore fisheries.***

The vast majority of input from public meetings and surveys (95.3%) favored allowing additional flexibility in inseason shifts of quota between the all-depth and nearshore fisheries. This flexibility could reduce the chance of having an inseason closure of the nearshore fishery,

followed by a re-opening of the nearshore fishery after completion of the summer all-depth fishery (as occurred in 2011). Closing and re-opening a fishery in the same year, when it can be avoided, causes unnecessary strain and confusion on anglers, enforcement, and others.

### South of Humbug Subarea

#### ***Adjust the season structure of the South of Humbug Subarea***

The South of Humbug subarea was estimated to have exceeded its quota prior to October 31 for the first time in 2011; however, language in the CSP precludes closing the fishery inseason, regardless of harvest, due to difficulty in tracking this fishery inseason. In response to a letter of concern by the International Pacific Halibut Commission at the September PFMC meeting, the National Marine Fisheries Service and the PFMC considered changing CSP language to either allow inseason closure if data becomes available that indicates that the quota has been attained or have fixed season length based on weekly or monthly harvest projections and the TAC for that year.

Halibut anglers that fish the South of Humbug subarea halibut fishery favored the status quo alternative because the proposed alternatives have the potential to reduce their season length. Halibut anglers in this area were concerned that fisheries managers are being reactionary to one year worth of data. They were concerned that effort, catch rates and harvest in 2011 might be an anomaly, due to a variety of reasons. They prefer to leave this fishery status quo for 2012, to see if the fishery goes back to “normal”.

ODFW will provide proposed changes to the Catch Sharing Plan (SCP) language in a supplemental report at the November PFMC meeting.