

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE PACIFIC HALIBUT CATCH SHARING PLAN FOR THE 2011 FISHERY

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) solicited public input via e-mail, phone, and a public meeting to discuss proposed changes to the Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) for fisheries off Oregon in 2011. The public meeting occurred on August 17, 2010 in Newport. Based on the meeting comments, and other public input, ODFW recommends the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) approve the following proposals for additional public review.

Central Coast Subarea

1. Adjust the number of open days per week in the spring all-depth fishery from three to two days, if the number of fixed days will be nine days or less, otherwise remain at three days per week.

Rationale: Reducing the spring all-depth fishery from three to two day openers, if there will be nine or fewer fixed days (three, 3-day openings) is intended to extend the duration of the all-depth fishery and provide more opportunities later into the season.

2. Adjust the number of open days per week in the nearshore (inside 40 fm) fishery from seven days per week to less than seven days per week. If, after some point mid-season, effort and harvest are tracking slowly, the nearshore fishery could then be expanded to seven days per week to more fully utilize the allocation.

Rationale: In 2010 the nearshore (inside 40 fm) fishery attained its entire allocation for the first time, causing the fishery to close on July 17. Angler effort, catch rates and average weights were all greater than in previous years. Reducing the number of days open per week in the nearshore fishery is intended to extend the duration of the nearshore fishery and help prevent the same situation from occurring in 2011.

3. Adjust the allocation to the three central coast subarea seasons (spring all-depth, summer all-depth, and nearshore).
 - a. Alternatives that have been suggested:
 - Maintain status quo with 69% to the spring all-depth, 23% to the summer all-depth, and 8% to the nearshore.
 - Maintain 8% to the nearshore, then divide the remainder equally between the spring and summer all-depth seasons.
 - Maintain 8% to the nearshore, then divide the remainder 60% to the spring and 40% to the summer all-depth seasons.
 - Change the allocations to 45% to the spring all-depth, 45% to the summer all-depth, and 10% to the nearshore.

Rationale: Due to the decrease in the overall 2A total allowable catch over the last several years, the allocation to all recreational Pacific halibut fisheries has been decreasing, including those in the Central Oregon subarea. In 2009, the summer all-depth fishery was open for one period of three days; harvest exceeded the allocation enough that both the all-depth and the nearshore fishery were closed. In 2010, the summer all-depth fishery was open for one period of two days, with the quota again being exceeded; however in 2010 it was a much smaller overage. If the summer all-depth quota is at a level much lower than what was available in 2010, the summer season may be restricted to a one day opening, increasing the “derby” mentality of anglers and causing further congestion, safety and/or over harvest issues.

South of Humbug Mountain Subarea

1. Open the fishery on April 1 through October 31, seven days per week rather than opening on May 1.

Rationale: Opening on April 1 rather than May 1 would allow an extra month in which to have potentially favorable weather days allowing anglers to reach the fishing grounds, and attain more of the allocation. In recent years there has been minimal harvest in Oregon from this subarea. However, the entire quota is assumed to be taken due to the absence of a sampling and tracking program in Northern California, where there may be some effort and harvest.

Other Suggestions Received

There were several other suggestions received by ODFW that are not proposed for further public comment at this time. Below is a summary of these recommendations:

1. Reinstate the Florence north jetty boundary so as to split the central coast into north-central and south-central sub-areas as occurred prior to 2004
 - a) for the all-depth seasons
 - b) for nearshore fisheries.
2. Adopt a lottery based tag system.
3. Institute a 1-fish nearshore halibut annual sub-tag limit.
4. Re-institute a 32-inch minimum size limit.
5. Institute a maximum size limit.