

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON PROPOSED
CHANGES TO THE AREA 2A PACIFIC HALIBUT CATCH SHARING PLAN
AND 2012 ANNUAL REGULATIONS

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) held a recreational halibut meeting to discuss proposed changes to the Pacific Fishery Management Council's Catch Sharing Plan for 2012, in Montesano, on September 30, 2012.

Based on input we received, we recommend the following changes to the Pacific halibut Catch Sharing Plan for 2012, section (f) SPORT FISHERIES (see below). These changes are consistent with those adopted by the Council for public review.

South Coast Sub-Area

For this sub-area implement the following changes:

- 1) Open the fishery on the first Sunday in May (status quo) and remain open for three consecutive Sundays and Tuesdays. The primary fishery would be closed the following week to tally the catch and provide sufficient notice of additional openings. This assumes the overall quota remains relatively the same and that effort does not change from recent levels. The proposed management closure may occur earlier if the sub area primary quota is projected to be obtained sooner than expected. The fishery would re-open the following Sunday or Tuesday (or both) depending on the quota available. The other season structure and fishing regulations including the set aside amount for the nearshore fishery for this sub area will remain the same.

Rationale:

This change maintains the status quo opening date and attempts to preserve the status quo number of open days prior to a management closure that would allow for catch accounting. If sufficient quota is available following the management closure the fishery would re-open and continue the Sunday, Tuesday structure until the quota was achieved.

The timing of the management closure assumes the overall quota remains relatively the same and that effort does not change from recent levels. If necessary, the proposed management closure may occur earlier if the sub area primary quota is projected to be obtained sooner than expected.

The nearshore set aside allows anglers to retain halibut caught incidentally when fishing for bottomfish in the nearshore area. Maintaining the status quo set aside for the nearshore area would continue to allow retention of incidental halibut catch without compromising fishing opportunity during the primary season.

Columbia River Sub-Area

For this sub-area implement the following changes:

- 1) Revise the amount of late season set aside such that the Columbia River sub-area will be allocated as follows: 20 percent of the sub-area allocation will be set aside for a late

season fishery with 80 percent allocated to the early fishery. No changes to the days of the week that would be open during the early season which, under status quo regulations, would be three days per week, Thursday through Saturday. The late season will continue to be open three days per week, Friday through Saturday. WDFW supports allocating 80% of the sub-area quota to the early season and 20% to the late season under both the status quo contribution structure and the option that would reduce the Oregon contribution such that it is equal to the Washington contribution.

Rationale:

Since 2008, less than 20 percent of the late season quota has been harvested compared to the 30 percent that was set aside pre season. Revising the set aside amount to 20 percent of the sub area quota maintains a late season fishery for Oregon fishermen in a manner that is reflective of the change in fishing effort and maximizes access to the overall sub area quota. An 80/20, early/late quota split under the status quo contribution from each state results in full achievement of the sub area quota and provides fishing opportunity in the spring when the effort by both Washington and Oregon anglers is higher.

If the Council decides to reduce the Oregon contribution to the sub area quota to an amount equal to Washington (i.e. 50/50), then WDFW would still support the 80/20 early/late quota split because it would result in fishing seasons as close to status quo as possible.

To illustrate the potential effects of the various quota contribution and early/late split options we used the average catch from the three most recent seasons (2009-2011) and the 2011 quota to estimate the season length under the different scenarios (Table 1). The early season would be most impacted under Option 3. Under this scenario the early season would be reduced from 5.5 weeks to 4.3 weeks, the late season would not be impacted. Option 4 would potentially reduce the early season by less than one week but could reduce the late season from nine to six weeks. Additional fishing opportunity could potentially be added to the early season under Option 2 with only a slight reduction in fishing opportunity during the late season.

Table 1. The expected number of days that would be open under the different options using the 2011 quota and the average daily catch from 2009-2011.

Early Season				Late Season			
Option	Contribution-Split	Quota	Weeks	Option	Contribution-Split	Quota	Weeks
1 (SQ)	status quo- 70%	10,793	5.5	1 (SQ)	status quo- 30%	4,625	9
2	status quo- 80%	12,334	6.3	2	status quo- 20%	3,084	8
3	50/50- 70%	8,460	4.3	3	50/50- 30%	3,626	9
4	50/50- 80%	9,669	4.9	4	50/50- 20%	2,417	6

Proposed Modifications to the Area 2A Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan Language

(f) SPORT FISHERIES

The non-Indian sport fisheries are allocated 68.3 percent of the non-Indian share, which is approximately 44.4 percent of the Area 2A TAC. The allocation is further divided as subquotas among six geographic subareas.

(1) Subarea management. The sport fishery is divided into six sport fishery subareas, each having separate allocations and management measures as follows.

(iii) Washington south coast subarea.

This sport fishery is allocated 12.3 percent of the first 130,845 lb (59.4 mt) allocated to the Washington sport fishery, and 32 percent of the Washington sport allocation between 130,845 lb (59.4 mt) and 224,110 lb (101.7 mt) (except as provided in section (e)(3) of this Plan. This subarea is defined as waters south of the Queets River (47°31.70' N. lat.) and north of Leadbetter Point (46°38.17' N. lat.). The structuring objective for this subarea is to maximize the season length, while maintaining a quality fishing experience. The south coast subarea quota will be allocated as follows: 10% or 2,000 pounds, whichever is less, will be set aside for the nearshore fishery with the remaining amount allocated to the primary fishery. During days open to the primary fishery and seaward of the 30-fm line lingcod may be taken, retained and possessed, when allowed by groundfish regulations. The fishery will open on the first Sunday in May. The primary fishery will be open two days per week, Sunday and Tuesday in all areas, except where prohibited, and will remain open for three consecutive Sundays and -Tuesdays before a management closure the following week to tally the catch. If the primary quota is projected to be obtained sooner than expected the management closure may occur earlier. During the fourth week in May, the primary fishery will be open on Sundays only. Beginning the following week, If there is sufficient quota remaining following the management closure the fishery would continue two days per week, Sunday and/or Tuesday, until the quota for the primary fishery season is reached or September 30, whichever is earlier. If there is insufficient quota remaining to reopen the primary fishery for another fishing day, the remaining primary fishery quota will be added to the nearshore quota. The nearshore fishery takes place, in the area from 47°31.70' N. lat. south to 46°58.00' N. lat. and east of a boundary line approximating the 30 fathom depth contour as defined by the following coordinates:

47°31.70' N.lat, 124°37.03' W. long;
47°25.67' N. lat, 124°34.79' W. long;
47°12.82' N. lat, 124°29.12' W. long;
46°58.00' N. lat, 124°24.24' W. long.

During the primary season the nearshore fishery will be open seven days per week. Subsequent to the closure of the primary fishery, the nearshore fishery will

continue seven days per week until the remaining quota is projected to be taken. If the fishery is closed prior to September 30, and there is insufficient quota remaining to reopen the nearshore areas for another fishing day, then any remaining quota may be transferred inseason to another Washington coastal subarea by NMFS via an update to the recreational halibut hotline. The daily bag limit is one halibut per person, with no size limit.

Recreational fishing for groundfish and halibut is prohibited within two YRCA's off Washington's southern coast. The South Coast Recreational YRCA and the Westport Offshore YRCA are defined by straight lines connecting latitude and longitude coordinates. Coordinates for these Recreational YRCAs are specified in groundfish regulations at 50 CFR 660.70 (d) and (e) and will be described annually in federal halibut regulations published in the *Federal Register*.

(iv) Columbia River subarea.

This sport fishery subarea is allocated 2.0 percent of the first 130,845 lb (59.4 mt) allocated to the Washington sport fishery, and 4.0 percent of the Washington sport allocation between 130,845 lb (59.4 mt) and 224,110 lb (101.7 mt) (except as provided in section (e)(3) of this Plan). This subarea is also allocated 5.0 percent of the Oregon/California sport allocation or an amount equal to the contribution from the Washington sport allocation, whichever is greater. This subarea is defined as waters south of Leadbetter Point, WA (46°38.17' N. lat.) and north of Cape Falcon, OR (45°46.00' N. lat.). The fishery will open on the first Thursday in May or May 1 if it is a Friday or Saturday, 3 days per week, Thursday through Saturday until ~~7080~~ percent of the subarea allocation is taken or until the third Sunday in July, whichever is earlier. The fishery will reopen on the first Friday in August and continue 3 days per week, Friday-Sunday until the remainder of the subarea quota has been taken, or until September 30, whichever is earlier. Subsequent to this closure, if there is insufficient quota remaining in the Columbia River subarea for another fishing day, then any remaining quota may be transferred inseason to another Washington and/or Oregon subarea by NMFS via an update to the recreational halibut hotline. Any remaining quota would be transferred to each state in proportion to its contribution. The daily bag limit is one halibut per person, with no size limit. No groundfish may be taken and retained, possessed or landed, except sablefish and Pacific cod when allowed by groundfish regulations, if halibut are onboard the vessel.