

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON
PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE 2014 PACIFIC HALIBUT CATCH SHARING PLAN

At the March 2013 meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) recommended the South of Humbug Pacific Halibut Workgroup (Workgroup) analyze a range of management measures to reduce catches in the recreational Pacific halibut fishery in the South of Humbug management area for the 2014 season (see Agenda Item D.2.b. for the Workgroup report). At that same Council meeting, the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) informed the Council of its intent to extend the annual stock survey into waters off of Northern California for the first time.

On July 18, 2013, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) conducted a public meeting in Eureka, California, to solicit input on the Council's range of management measures being considered for 2014, provide an update on IPHC's most recent stock assessment, and to provide details on the stock survey plans off Northern California. More than thirty constituents attended the meeting representing recreational private skiff anglers, recreational charter vessel owners/operators, commercial anglers, researchers, local officials, a state legislative officer and other interested members of the public. The greatest areas of public interest and support were the IPHC survey expansion into California and the newly formed IPHC Management Strategy Advisory Board, which includes a representative from Northern California. These two developments were viewed as positive opportunities for collaboration between the local community and the Pacific halibut science and management processes. Many individuals in the Northern California communities are interested in collaborating with CDFW, IPHC and educational institutions to support further research on Pacific halibut in California. A number of meeting attendees also spoke in favor of moving the subarea border from Humbug Mountain to the Oregon/California border.

The greatest area of concern identified by the public was the apparent need on the part of government agencies to reduce fishing opportunities for Pacific halibut in 2014, before the IPHC survey results are available for incorporation into the stock assessment. Since survey information collected this year will not be considered for management until 2015, several individuals commented that there should be no additional constraints off California until that time. The public felt strongly that choosing any alternative that reduces opportunities from status quo would further impact the economy on the North coast and, to do so without any information demonstrating a conservation need was not preferable. Stakeholders felt strongly that the California portion of the Pacific halibut stock is thriving, given the recent increases in catch, including catch of large fish, off the California coast. There was no consensus regarding which management alternative, or combination of alternatives, would be preferable for the 2014 season, but some expressed concern with limiting the number of days per week open to Pacific halibut fishing, primarily due to weather constraints. Others expressed a general concern with

maintaining time on the water for halibut fishing, especially if other species like salmon, groundfish or albacore are not available to target or are closed to fishing.

The CDFW would like to extend our appreciation to the IPHC for expanding its stock survey into California, and for coordinating with CDFW staff on the permitting processes required to conduct scientific research in California waters. Since data collected during this survey could aid in future Council decision making, CDFW supports efforts to continue the survey in California and looks forward to further collaborations with IPHC.