

## OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE PACIFIC HALIBUT CATCH SHARING PLAN FOR THE 2014 FISHERY

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) solicited public input via e-mail, phone, and public meetings to discuss proposed changes to the Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) for fisheries off of Oregon in 2014. The public meetings occurred on August 6 in Tillamook, August 7 in Newport, August 12 in Brookings, and August 13 in North Bend. Based on public input, ODFW recommends the Pacific Fisheries Management Council (Council) approve the following alternatives for public review:

### **Allocations**

#### **South of Humbug Mountain Subarea**

Oregon anglers who fish in the South of Humbug Mountain Subarea and provided input to ODFW were in favor of alternative 6b from the South of Humbug Workgroup report (Agenda Item D.2.a.), creating a new Southern Oregon Subarea.

#### **Alternatives**

- 6a. Separate the South of Humbug Mountain Subarea at the Oregon/California Border, incorporating the Oregon portion into the Central Oregon Coast Subarea
- 6b. Separate the South of Humbug Mountain Subarea at the Oregon/California Border, creating a new Southern Oregon Subarea from Humbug Mountain to the Oregon/California Border. Allocate 2% of the Central Coast Subarea quota from:
  - (1) Elimination of the Central Coast Summer All-Depth Fishery. The remaining 23% would be allocated to the Central Coast Nearshore Fishery.
  - (2) The Central Coast Spring All-Depth Fishery. That fishery would then receive 61% of the area allocation, with the Nearshore and Summer All-Depth Fishery allocations remaining at 12% and 25% respectively.

#### **Rationale**

The data availability and inseason action process for Oregon and California operate on different timelines. Separating the South of Humbug Mountain Subarea at the Oregon/California Border would allow each state to manage its area within the constraints of its processes and develop fisheries to meet their state's anglers' requests independently.

Anglers who fish the South of Humbug Mountain Subarea were generally in favor of creating a new Southern Oregon Subarea (Alternative 6b). There is concern that being part of the Central Oregon Coast Subarea will mean greatly reduced seasons (184 days vs. < 40 days) and possible inequality in harvests (annual fish per angler) due to greater halibut abundances to the north and poorer weather conditions to the south.

The Central Coast Summer All-Depth Fishery has high catch per day of Pacific halibut. The fishery is operationally two days in length. Shifting the quota into the Nearshore Fishery would allow more opportunity in terms of available days to fish. Input received at the public meetings suggest that there may be a preference to have opportunity in the Nearshore Fishery. This would also provide allocation to the area between Humbug Mountain and the Oregon/California border without impacting the Central Coast Spring All-Depth and Nearshore Fisheries.

Corrections to CSP language reflecting the current allocation to the Central Coast Subarea is needed. The CSP was not updated properly when changes were made to the Oregon contribution to the Columbia River Subarea in 2012.

## **Management Measures**

### **Columbia River Subarea**

ODFW staff did not receive any recommendations from Oregon anglers for changes to the subarea.

### **Central Coast Subarea- Nearshore Fishery**

#### **Days of the Week Open and Opening Date**

Many anglers recommended returning the Nearshore Fishery to seven days per week, rather than the current three days per week and delaying the start of the seven day per week fishery.

#### ***Alternatives***

1. Status quo (no action): open May 1, three days per week, Thursday-Saturday until the earlier of quota attainment or October 31.
2. Open June 1, seven days per week until the earlier of quota attainment or October 31
3. Open after the spring all-depth season concludes, seven days per week until the earlier of quota attainment or October 31

#### ***Rationale***

Many anglers who contacted ODFW during the year and during the public input process requested that the Nearshore Fishery be returned to seven days per week. This would allow anglers with varying work and/or leave schedules the opportunity to participate in the fishery. Additionally, anglers expressed their belief that limiting the days of the week resulted in a targeted Nearshore Fishery. During the public meetings, anglers were asked if they still preferred seven days per week being open, even if it meant only an approximately three-week season. Most anglers in attendance still preferred seven days per week. With a short seven days per week fishery, there was discussion on when the fishery should begin. Many preferred delaying the start, so that the fishery occurred after Memorial Day, when more people have time off and more families take vacations and go fishing.

#### **Depth Restriction**

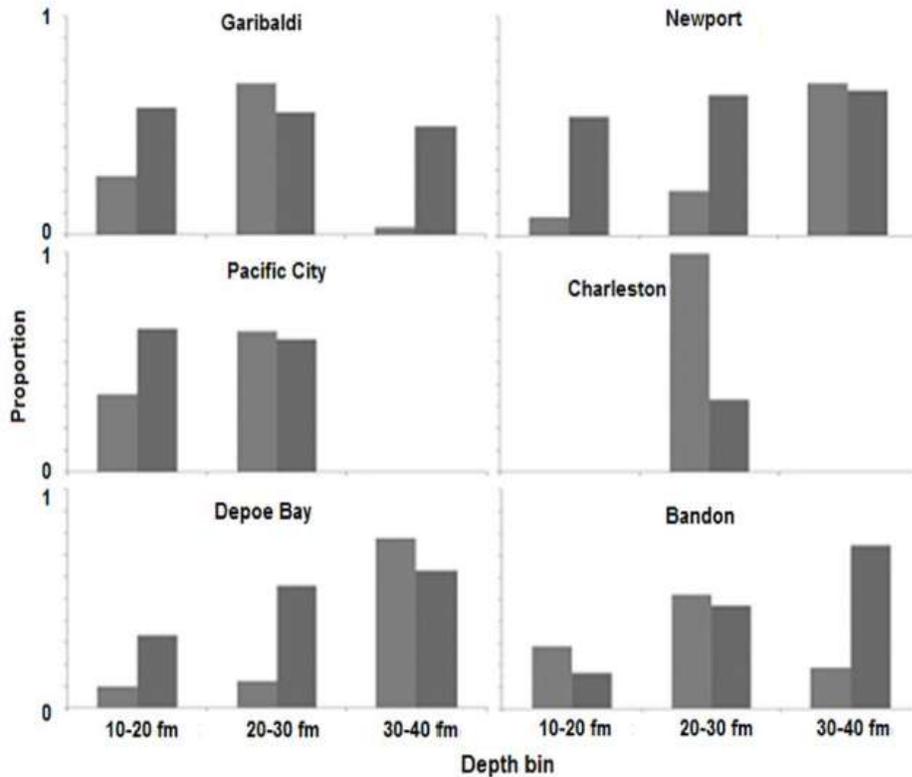
To increase the number of Nearshore Fishery days, some anglers proposed limiting the Nearshore Fishery to shoreward of 30 fathoms instead of 40 fathoms (current).

**Alternatives**

- 1. Status quo (no action): restrict the Nearshore Fishery to inside of the 40-fathom regulatory line
- 2. Restrict the Nearshore Fishery to inside of the 30-fathom regulatory line

**Rationale**

Anglers from the ports south of Newport desire more nearshore days because it would provide them greater opportunity to harvest incidentally caught halibut. Shifting the nearshore depth restrictions from 40 fathoms to 30 fathoms would likely only temporarily increase the length of the season. Catch rates (fish per angler) in the 30-40 fathom depth ranges are similar to those in shallower depth ranges (i.e., 10-20 fathoms and 20-30 fathoms) for ports where anglers fish deeper than 30 fathoms (Figure 1). Therefore, it may only be a matter of time before anglers that customarily fish 30-40 fathom depths would find equally productive shallower water areas. Additionally some ports (Garibaldi, Pacific City, and Charleston) may not be affected at all by a 30-fathom depth restriction because all or nearly all of their nearshore angler trips already occur shallower than 30 fathoms. However, having the same depth restriction for both bottomfish and nearshore halibut was identified as a possible benefit, in addition to perceived additional opportunity.



**Figure 1. Proportion of nearshore angler trips (light grey) and catch rates (halibut per angler; dark grey) by depth bin for Central Coast Subarea ports.**

## **Central Coast Subarea- Spring and Summer All-Depth Seasons**

### **Season Start Date**

#### ***Alternatives***

1. Status quo (no action): if the Area 2A TAC is < 700,000 pounds the spring (only) all-depth season begins on the second Thursday in May
2. If the Area 2A TAC is < 700,000 pounds the spring (only) all-depth season begins on the first Thursday in June

#### ***Rationale***

Moving the start date of the combined all-depth season would allow more fishing opportunities during the summer months (June and July). Many anglers have expressed interest in having the fishery open after Memorial Day, so that open days are available when more families take vacations.

### **Public Input Methods**

Minor adjustments to the CSP are needed to provide flexibility in using various methods for collecting public input on alternatives for changes to the CSP to incorporate new survey methods and new technologies. Currently the CSP specifies that ODFW will hold a workshop to set the Central Coast All-Depth dates. As attendance at public meetings has waned in recent years, and advancements in interactive technology develop, this wording has become outdated. The language will be updated to reflect gathering public input on the dates, but will not specify the method by which to do so.

### **Additional Proposals**

Additional proposals received from the public but not forwarded for consideration are included in the Appendix.

### **Catch Sharing Plan Language**

Due to the range of alternatives presented above, ODFW does not have proposed changes to the language in the Catch Sharing Plan for 2014 for the above items. As the range of alternatives is finalized, ODFW will provide draft language revisions to the Catch Sharing Plan, in consultation with staff at the NMFS Northwest Region.

## Appendix: Additional Proposals Received

### Retention of Other Species

Throughout the season and during the public input process, ODFW regularly hears requests from anglers to allow retention of lingcod, other flatfish, and/or all groundfish during all-depth halibut days. It is ODFW's understanding that changes to retention of groundfish in the halibut fishery are part of the groundfish process including projected impacts to overfished species, and therefore have to be included in the groundfish harvest specifications and management measures analysis and documentation (i.e., the Groundfish Environmental Impact Statement). As such, ODFW is planning on including this in the upcoming groundfish management measures analysis for 2015-2016 and beyond.

### Split the Central Oregon Coast Subarea Into Smaller Management Units

Comments were received requesting subdivision of the Central Oregon Coast Subarea allocation (all-depth and/or nearshore) into two or more smaller areas.

ODFW is not supporting a split of the Central Coast Subarea because there is "equality" in the number of halibut harvested per angler among ports. Simply comparing harvests among ports, without factoring in effort, is not a suitable means for determining "fairness."

A split of the Central Coast Subarea has already been tried (1995 through 2003) but was overturned because it failed to increase season lengths in the subarea without Newport. The subarea was split at Florence in 1995 with the objective of increasing season lengths for the southern subarea; Newport is located north of Florence. During the first year of the split, the southern subarea had longer spring all-depth and nearshore seasons than to the north (the summer all-depth fishery was not split). However, seasons thereafter were generally either the same length or shorter to the south due to faster growth in the halibut fisheries in southern ports (Table 1). As a result, anglers from the southern area requested to eliminate the split and recombine the Central Coast Subarea (approved for 2004).

**Table 1. Comparison of open days per week and year for spring all-depth and nearshore fisheries for the subareas (North of Florence and South of Florence) when the Central Coast Subarea was split.**

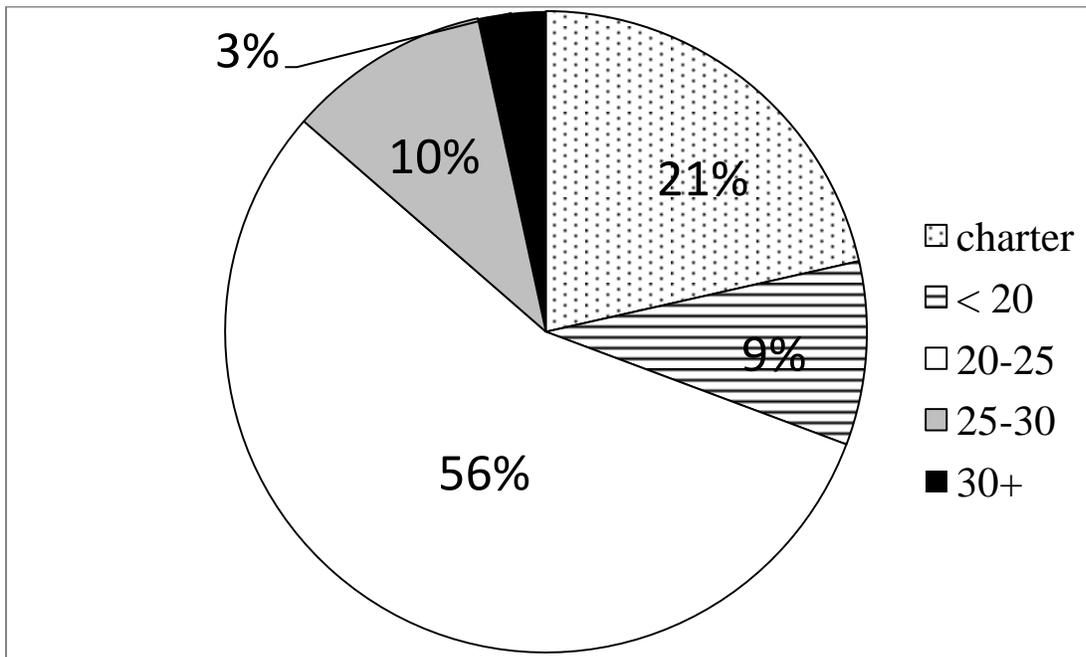
Subarea	Spring all-depth days open								
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
North of Florence	12	6	8	6	6	5	4	8	9
South of Florence	15	9	6	6	6	5	5	8	8
Subarea	Nearshore days open								
	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999				
North of Florence	37	104	67	91	153				
South of Florence	61	97	60	91	107				

### Two-day Spring All-depth Openings Instead of Three-day

The spring all-depth fishery is open three days per week (Thursdays through Saturdays) starting the second week of May, and typically closes around the last week in June.

Some anglers have suggested reducing the open days per week from three to two in order to extend the season into July. They state that the weather in May is often too rough for smaller vessels to go out onto the ocean to fish for halibut and that conditions are better in July. Additionally, families with children in school are less likely to be able to participate in the fishery until school adjourns, which is in mid-June.

However, the majority of anglers prefer having more halibut opportunities during May and June (than July) because they can participate in other fisheries during July (i.e., coho salmon and tuna; see allocation section). Additionally, the vast majority of harvest is by “small boats” (Figure 2), which has not been defined but less than 25 feet is generally considered a “small boat” for ocean fishing.



**Figure 2. Percentage of halibut harvests by charter vessels, and recreational vessels by hull length (feet).**