

## SUMMARY OF THE SOUTH OF HUMBUG PACIFIC HALIBUT POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

The South of Humbug Pacific Halibut Policy Committee (Committee) convened on Tuesday, July 30, 2013 in Portland, Oregon. The meeting was broadcast via webinar and, in addition to the meeting location in Portland, opportunity for public comment was provided in Brookings, Oregon and Eureka, California. The following report contains a brief overview of the meeting with a primary focus on the discussion surrounding the management measures presented in the South of Humbug Pacific Halibut Workgroup (Workgroup) Report designed to reduce recreational catch of Pacific halibut in that area.

The meeting began with an overview of the Committee tasks, as established by the Council (see [June](#) and [September](#) 2012 Council meeting minutes). Ms. Kelly Ames presented the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) trawl survey and West Coast Groundfish Observer Program Pacific halibut data requested by the Committee and Council (Agenda Item D.2.b, NMFS Report, September 2013). Ms. Lynn Mattes and Ms. Melanie Parker provided an overview of the management measures analysis contained in the Workgroup Report (Agenda Item D.2.b, Workgroup Report, September 2013).

Opportunity for public testimony in Portland, Brookings, and Eureka was provided prior to the Committee deliberations, though public comment was only received from Eureka. Many individuals testified in favor of creating a separate California subarea with its own Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) allocation. Several acknowledged the need for management measures to reduce catch and recommended monthly closures (e.g., August), limiting the existing season by days of the week (e.g., Wednesday through Saturday), or prohibiting Pacific halibut retention when salmon and/or groundfish are retained. Almost all commented on the anticipated socio-economic impacts that are anticipated if the season is limited. Several ports rely upon launch services (e.g., Trinidad and Shelter Cove), and there was concern that such services would be removed if there are not sufficient fishing opportunities. Some believe the historical California data are contaminated with California halibut data. Some recommended revisiting the overall CSP allocations.

The Committee acknowledged the Council's responsibility to support sustainable management of Pacific halibut and comply with the CSP. The Committee discussed the need to reduce 2014 recreational catch of Pacific halibut in the South of Humbug Mountain Subarea. The Committee also recognized the negative socio-economic impacts that may occur if some of the more restrictive management measures outlined in the Workgroup Report are implemented. For 2014, the Committee recommends the Council reduce the recreational harvest of Pacific halibut in California by 40 to 60 percent of the average harvest over the last five years (see Table 1, Workgroup Report). If the Council adopts this recommendation, management measures in California would be designed to reduce harvest to between 8,900 and 13,300 pounds. The Committee also acknowledged discussion in the Workgroup Report that the projected levels of harvest under the alternatives are uncertain because the current management measures in this

area have never been modified. Further, the Workgroup did not attempt to predict changes in angler behavior due to changes in management measures (e.g., shifts in catch and/or effort). As such, the Committee recommends an adaptive management approach, similar to those used in other recreational management areas, whereby the ability of management measures to reduce catch are evaluated annually and adjusted, as necessary, for the following year. All of the proposed changes to management measures described below would require modifications to the CSP, which should be proposed in the range of alternatives adopted by the Council at the September meeting.

The Committee recommends Alternative 6, which would add a subarea management line in the CSP at the Oregon/California border (42° N. latitude) and create a separate California subarea with its own CSP allocation. Alternative 6 is preferred because it allows each state to address regional fishery dynamics and independently manage their respective allocations. The Oregon portion, between Humbug Mountain and the Oregon/California border, could be subsumed into the Central Oregon Coast Subarea (Alternative 6a) or become a separate Southern Oregon Subarea (Alternative 6b). The Committee deferred to the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to recommend the preferred approach for the Oregon portion. The Committee acknowledged that Alternatives 6a and 6b result in new areas which will require new allocations in the CSP; however, the Committee did not discuss new allocations, based on Council instructions.

Creating a California Subarea (Alternative 6) is also preferred by the Committee due to the state-specific resources available for monitoring and implementing inseason adjustments to constrain or expand fishing opportunities. ODFW is able to monitor landings on a weekly basis and make inseason adjustments in a timely manner. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) monitors the landings monthly with a six-week time lag before monthly catch estimates become available. Additionally, action to close the 2014 recreational fishery by the Fish and Game Commission would take a minimum of a month. Therefore, the Committee recommends establishing a fixed season structure for the California Subarea for 2014, with no expectation for inseason management. As with other subareas, fishery performance would be evaluated annually and management measures adjusted for the following year, as necessary.

The Committee also discussed the available processes for determining a season structure for the California Subarea. In the Puget Sound Subarea, the season length is calculated after the Pacific halibut catch limit and allocations are established in January. After a series of public meetings, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) submits the proposed season dates to the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) and NMFS for approval and adoption into Federal regulations in the spring. In contrast, season structures for other subareas are established in the fall and are specified in the CSP and regulations in the spring. Given inseason data availability and regulatory time constraints, the Committee recommends the latter approach be applied for the California subarea.

The Committee discussed alternatives that would restrict the days per week available for Pacific halibut retention (Alternatives 2 and 7). Under Alternative 2, the Council recommended that the analysis include at least one weekend day. Catch data by day of the week were unavailable to support the Alternative 2 analysis, and therefore no results were presented in the Workgroup

Report. Under Alternative 7, catch across all days of the week and months were aggregated for the analysis. Additional analysis would be needed under Alternative 7 to account for the variability in monthly catch rates once a particular month is chosen for the fishery. The Committee also acknowledged the uncertainty in predicting angler effort under the days per week model. For example, in the Oregon Central Coast Subarea's nearshore fishery it was assumed that restricting the days per week from seven to three in 2013 would lengthen the number of fishing days and extend the season. However, greater effort in a shorter time period occurred, and there were approximately 30 fishing days in 2013 compared to approximately 80 under the seven days per week fishery under a similar quota. The Committee recommended that the days of the week model be included as an available management measure; however, they cautioned the Council to acknowledge the uncertainty surrounding changes in angler effort and the resulting catch projections.

The Committee recommends the Council consider alternatives that would restrict the months available for Pacific halibut retention in California (Alternatives 3 and 5), based on historical landings (see Figure 2 in the Workgroup Report). Referencing public comment, the Committee noted that closing the peak months (e.g., July and August) and keeping the "shoulder months" open (e.g., May/June and September/October) may provide stability in the communities that do not have other fishing opportunities during those months. However, some Committee members acknowledged that closing the "heart of the fishery" (e.g., July and August) could be very disruptive and contemplated whether limiting the days per week during the peak months would be preferred. Depending on the months chosen, additional management measures, like restricting Pacific halibut retention based on salmon and/or groundfish retention (see Alternative 1 discussion below), may be needed to reduce catch.

Prohibiting Pacific halibut retention when salmon and/or groundfish are retained was also discussed by the Committee (Alternative 1). As stated in the Workgroup Report, the analysis assumes that if such prohibitions are implemented, the catch of halibut that previously occurred on mixed target trips will not otherwise occur. Therefore, the Committee noted that the expected catch reductions under Alternative 1 are uncertain and may not appreciably reduce Pacific halibut catch because of the uncertainty surrounding potential changes in angler behavior (e.g., anglers may respond by taking additional trips to target halibut). The Committee recommended the retention prohibitions be included as an available management measure; however, they cautioned the Council to recognize the uncertainty surrounding the catch projections.

Finally, the Committee noted that Alternative 4, which estimates the expected decrease in Pacific halibut catch as a result of the Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), is not an action alternative. That is, the MPAs have already been implemented by California; therefore, the expected reductions in catch should be applied to any future analysis.

In light of the discussion, recommendations, and conclusions reached by the Committee at this meeting, the Committee also noted that additional public comment on the alternatives would be helpful before or in conjunction with the September Council meeting.

## Conclusion

In summary (not prioritized):

1. For the 2014 fishery, the Committee recommends the Council reduce recreational catch of Pacific halibut in California by 40 to 60 percent of the average harvest over the last five years.
2. The Committee recommends the Council take into consideration the uncertainty in the catch projections presented under the alternatives presented in the Workgroup Report when developing the 2014 season structure.
3. The Committee recommends an adaptive management approach whereby the ability of management measures to reduce catch are evaluated annually and adjusted, as necessary, for the following year.
4. The Committee recommends Alternative 6, which would add a management line in the CSP at the Oregon/California border (42° N. latitude) and create a separate California subarea with its own CSP allocation.
5. The Committee deferred to ODFW to recommend the preferred approach for the Oregon portion of the South of Humbug subarea.
6. The Committee recommends a fixed season for the California Subarea be established with no expectation for inseason decisions to manage the fishery.
7. The Committee recommends the Council consider alternatives that would restrict the months available for Pacific halibut retention in California (Alternatives 3 and 5), based on historical landings.
8. The Committee recommends the retention prohibitions also be included as an available management measure.

Committee Members, Portland, Oregon

Ms. Michele Culver, WDFW  
Mr. Kevin Duffy, NMFS, Northwest Region  
Mr. Stephen Williams, ODFW  
Mr. Gregg Williams, IPHC  
Ms. Marci Yaremko, CDFW

Attendee List, Portland, Oregon

Ms. Kelly Ames, Council Staff  
Ms. Gway Kirchner, ODFW  
Mr. Kris Kleinschmidt, Council staff  
Ms. Mercedes Krause, Council staff  
Ms. Sandra, Krause, Council staff  
Ms. Lynn Mattes, ODFW  
Mr. Dale Meyer, Arctic Storm Management Group  
Ms. Heather Reed, WDFW

Attendee List, Brookings, Oregon

Ms. Jamie Fuller, ODFW  
Mr. Craig Good, ODFW  
Ms. Laura Green, ODFW

Attendee List, Eureka, California

Mr. Dan Berman, Humboldt Bay Harbor District  
Mr. Jack Crider, Humboldt Bay Harbor District  
Mr. Ben Doane, Humboldt Area Saltwater Anglers  
Mr. Patrick Higgins, Humboldt Bay Harbor District  
Mr. Tom Marking, Groundfish Advisory Subpanel Representative  
Ms. Mary Marking, Recreational Angler  
Mr. John Powell, Humboldt Bay Harbor District  
Mr. Tom Weseloh, Assemblymen Chesbro  
Mr. Jim Yarnall, Humboldt Area Saltwater Anglers

Attendee List, Monterey, California

Ms. Melanie Parker, CDFW

Web Attendees

Mr. Edward Hibsich, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission  
Mr. Roger, Lindquist, Public  
Mr. Daniel Mintz, Public  
Mr. Shannon Davis, Public  
Ms. Sarah Williams, NMFS  
Ms. Linda ZumBrunnen, ODFW

PFMC  
08/14/13