

## WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CATCH SHARING PLAN AND 2014 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 (CSP) for 2013, in Montesano, on July 24, 2013. Stakeholders representing Washington's three coastal halibut management areas attended the meeting and provided their input on potential changes to the CSP.

Stakeholders from the North Coast which includes La Push and Neah Bay, (Marine Catch Areas (MCA) 3 and 4) were interested in an option that would reduce the days of the week that the fishery is open from two days per week, Thursday and Saturday, to one day per week, Saturday. The proposal would retain the two day per week structure for the first week, (Thu, Sat) and would shift to one day per week, (Sat) after that. There was no consensus on this proposal but WDFW is recommending the proposal be adopted for public review in order to solicit additional input.

In addition to the proposals recommended by stakeholders, WDFW is proposing changes to the North Coast CSP language to clarify the quota management closure and remove the provision allowing a nearshore fishery.

Stakeholders from the Washington portion of the Columbia River subarea which includes Ilwaco and Chinook, (MCA 1) offered proposals designed to; better achieve the quota by increasing the days of the week the fishery is open, allow incidental halibut retention in the area shoreward of 30 fathoms, and allow lingcod retention when halibut is on board. The proposal to increase the number of days per week that the fishery is open would revise the current three days per week, Friday through Sunday, to four days per week, Thursday through Sunday. Stakeholders also proposed that a set aside of 1,500 pounds or 10% of the subarea quota, whichever is less, be reserved to allow for incidental halibut retention while bottomfishing in the area shoreward of 30 fathoms. Another proposal for this area would allow lingcod retention when halibut are on board. Two options are being proposed relative to lingcod retention; 1) allow lingcod retention during the entire halibut season and, 2) allow lingcod retention only during the early season.

Stakeholders from the South Coast management subarea which includes Westport, (MCA2) had no proposed changes to the CSP.

WDFW supports the following options for changes to the 2014 Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan CSP for Area 2A, section (f) SPORT FISHERIES, be approved for public review, in addition to the status quo alternative.

### **WDFW Proposed CSP Changes for the North Coast Subarea**

1. Revise the CSP language to more clearly describe the management closure and remove the provision for a nearshore fishery when there is not enough quota for another off-shore fishing day.

Rationale: A management closure during the third week following the season opening has been used for several years. The closure provides WDFW time to tally the early season catch against the quota and provide sufficient notice to stakeholders regarding additional fishing days. The closure also has the potential to increase the chances that the fishery will extend into June provided there is sufficient quota. The provision to allow a nearshore fishery has not been used for several years due to increased impacts to yelloweye rockfish that occur when the halibut fishery is directed to the nearshore area. Clarifying the language regarding the closure and removing the nearshore fishery language from the CSP plan would better match the intent of the management approach for this subarea. These changes have also been incorporated into the proposed North Coast Subarea Season Changes.

### **North Coast Subarea Season Changes**

1. Revise the days of the week that the fishery is open so that the fishery is open on Saturdays only after the first week of fishing which maintains the status quo days per week of Thursday and Saturday are open.

Rationale: Changing the season structure to one day per week (Sat) after an opening week with status quo days per week (Sat and Thu) is intended to spread the fishery out over a longer time period.

### **Columbia River Subarea Season Changes**

1. Revise the days of the week that the season is open from Friday through Sunday to Thursday through Sunday. Changing the days of the week that the fishery is open would also require changing the early season opening date from the first Friday in May to the first Thursday in May and the late season opening date from the first Friday in August to the first Thursday in August.

Rationale: This change would allow for more fishing opportunity in an area where the total season catch has been below the set aside.

2. Revise the subarea allocation such that 1,500 pounds or 10% of the subarea allocation, whichever is less, is set aside for a nearshore fishery in the area shoreward of 30 fathoms with the remaining allocation divided such that 80 percent is reserved for the early season and 20 percent is reserved for the late season.

Rationale: This change would allow for halibut that are currently being caught incidentally while anglers are targeting bottomfish in the nearshore area shallower than 30 fathoms to be retained. Halibut fishing effort in this area has been low in recent years and reserving some of the subarea allocation for incidental catch should not reduce the number of fishing days available to the early and late seasons. Allowing incidental

halibut retention in the nearshore area will convert discarded fish into retained fish and improve the recreational fishing experience in this area.

3. Revise the bottomfish restrictions in this subarea such that lingcod retention would be allowed when halibut are onboard.
  - a. Allow lingcod retention throughout the entire halibut season
  - b. Allow lingcod retention only during the early season

Rationale: This change would allow lingcod to be retained when halibut are onboard. Currently lingcod that are caught when halibut are onboard are discarded. This option would improve the halibut fishing experience in an area where recreational halibut effort has been low. Option 3a would allow lingcod retention when halibut are on board during the entire halibut season. Option 3b would allow lingcod retention only during the early season.

### **Considered but Rejected**

A proposal for the North Coast subarea was to reserve a portion of the subarea quota for incidental halibut retention seven days per week in the area shoreward of 20 fathoms. Enforcement of an incidental fishery restricted to the area shoreward of 20 fathoms would require significant on the water enforcement presence and monitoring the halibut quota on a seven day a week basis for an extended period of time would be difficult for WDFW's sampling program, particularly if the halibut season overlaps with the salmon season. The CSP currently allows the season to reopen in the area shallower than 30 fathoms when there is not enough quota remaining for another off shore day, however, this provision has not been used in recent years due to high encounters with yelloweye rockfish during this fishery. Due to concerns with increased yelloweye rockfish encounters this proposal is not being recommended for public review and WDFW proposes to remove the 30 fathom neashore option from the North Coast CSP language.

## 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.

- (ii) Washington north coast subarea.

***WDFW Proposed CSP Changes for the North Coast Subarea:***

This sport fishery subarea is allocated 62.2 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 all U.S. waters west of the mouth of the Sekiu River, as defined above in paragraph (f)(1)(i), and north of the Queets River (47°31.70' N. lat.). The management objective for this subarea is to provide a quality recreational fishing opportunity during May and June. The fishery will open on the first Thursday between May 9 and 15, and continue 2 days per week (Thursday and Saturday) in May ~~for two weeks, with as scheduled pre-season, unless there is~~ a quota management closure ~~scheduled for the third week.~~ ~~If there is no quota management closure in May, If sufficient quota remains,~~ the fishery will reopen on the ~~first following~~ Thursday ~~or Saturday in June as an all-depth fishery on Thursdays and Saturdays as long as sufficient quota remains.~~ This schedule allows adequate public notice of any inseason action before each Thursday opening. ~~If there is not sufficient quota for an all-depth day, the fishery would reopen in the nearshore areas described below:~~

~~WDFW Marine Catch Area 4B, which is all waters west of the Sekiu River mouth, as defined by a line extending from 48°17.30' N. lat., 124°23.70' W. long. north to 48°24.10' N. lat., 124°23.70' W. long., to the Bonilla-Tatoosh line, as defined by a line connecting the light on Tatoosh Island, WA, with the light on Bonilla Point on Vancouver Island, British Columbia (at 48°35.73' N. lat., 124°43.00' W. long.) south of the International Boundary between the U.S. and Canada (at 48°29.62' N. lat., 124°43.55' W. long.), and north of the point where that line intersects with the boundary of the U.S. territorial sea.~~

~~Shoreward of the recreational halibut 30-fm boundary line, a modified line approximating the 30 fm depth contour from the Bonilla-Tatoosh line south to the Queets River. Coordinates for the closed area will be specifically defined annually in federal halibut regulations published in the *Federal Register*.~~

No sport fishing for halibut is allowed after September 30. 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 in all fisheries is one halibut per person with no size limit.

Recreational fishing for groundfish and halibut is prohibited within the North Coast Recreational Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Area (YRCA). The North Coast Recreational YRCA is a C-shaped area off the northern Washington coast and is defined by straight lines connecting latitude and longitude coordinates. Coordinates for the North Coast Recreational YRCA are specified in groundfish regulations at 50 CFR 660.70(a) and will be described annually in federal halibut regulations published in the *Federal Register*.

***North Coast Subarea Proposed Season Changes:***

This sport fishery subarea is allocated 62.2 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 all U.S. waters west of the mouth of the Sekiu River, as defined above in paragraph (f)(1)(i), and north of the Queets River (47°31.70' N. lat.). The management objective for this subarea is to provide a quality recreational fishing opportunity during May and June. The fishery will open on the first Thursday between May 9 and 15, and continue 2 days per week (Thursday and Saturday) during the first week, the fishery would be open Saturday only during the second week with a quota management closure scheduled for the third week. ~~in May as scheduled pre-season, unless there is a quota management closure. If there is no quota management closure in May,~~ the fishery will reopen the Saturday following the management closure and continue on Saturdays only on the first Thursday in June as an all depth fishery on Thursdays and Saturdays as long as sufficient quota remains. This schedule allows adequate public notice of any inseason action before each Saturday ~~Thursday~~ opening. ~~If there is not sufficient quota for an all depth day, the fishery would reopen in the nearshore areas described below:~~

~~A. WDFW Marine Catch Area 4B, which is all waters west of the Sekiu River mouth, as defined by a line extending from 48°17.30' N. lat., 124°23.70' W. long. north to 48°24.10' N. lat., 124°23.70' W. long., to the Bonilla Tatoosh line, as defined by a line connecting the light on Tatoosh Island, WA, with the light on Bonilla Point on Vancouver Island, British Columbia (at 48°35.73' N. lat., 124°43.00' W. long.) south of the International Boundary between the U.S. and Canada (at 48°29.62' N. lat., 124°43.55' W. long.), and north of the point where that line intersects with the boundary of the U.S. territorial sea.~~

~~B. Shoreward of the recreational halibut 30 fm boundary line, a modified line approximating the 30 fm depth contour from the Bonilla Tatoosh line south to the Queets River. Coordinates for the closed area will be specifically defined annually in federal halibut regulations published in the *Federal Register*.~~

No sport fishing for halibut is allowed after September 30. 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 in all fisheries is one halibut per person with no size limit.

Recreational fishing for groundfish and halibut is prohibited within the North Coast Recreational Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Area (YRCA). The North Coast Recreational YRCA is a C-shaped area off the northern Washington coast and is defined by straight lines connecting latitude and longitude coordinates. Coordinates for the North Coast Recreational YRCA are specified in groundfish regulations at 50 CFR 660.70(a) 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 an amount equal to the contribution from the Washington sport allocation from the Oregon/California sport allocation. The Columbia River subarea quota will be allocated as follows: 10% or 1,500 pounds, whichever is less, will be set aside to allow incidental halibut retention in the area shoreward of 30 fathoms, with the remaining amount allocated such that 80 percent is reserved for an early season beginning in May. 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 ~~Friday~~ ~~Thursday~~ in May or May 1 if it is a ~~Friday~~, Saturday or Sunday, ~~34~~ days per week, ~~Thursday~~ ~~Friday~~ through Sunday until 80 percent of the subarea allocation is taken. The fishery will reopen on the first ~~Friday~~ ~~Thursday~~ in August and continue 3 days per week, ~~Friday~~ ~~Thursday~~ - 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.

***Lingcod retention Option 1:***

No groundfish may be taken and retained, possessed or landed, except lingcod, sablefish and Pacific cod when allowed by groundfish regulations, if halibut are on board the vessel.

***Lingcod Retention Option 2:***

No groundfish may be taken and retained, possessed or landed, except [lingcod](#), sablefish, and Pacific cod when allowed by groundfish regulations, if halibut are on board the vessel. [Lingcod retention when halibut are on board is only permitted during the early season; until 80 percent of the subarea quota is taken or until the first Thursday in August whichever occurs first.](#)