

**COUNCIL BLOG SUMMARIZING PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE
2015 PACIFIC HALIBUT CATCH SHARING PLAN AND
ANNUAL FISHERY REGULATIONS**

At the September meeting, the Council considered proposed changes to the 2015 Pacific halibut regulations and the Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) for Area 2A. The Council adopted for public review a range of seven non-treaty commercial and recreational fishery allocation options intended to provide for a greater recreational allocation for the California subarea, in response to new information indicating a higher abundance of Pacific halibut and greater fishery interest in this area than when the CSP was originally adopted. Recreational fishery options for Washington, Oregon, and California were also adopted for public review. Details of the options are described below.

The Council is scheduled to take final action on proposed changes for the 2015 Area 2A halibut fisheries at the November 14-19, 2014 Council meeting in Costa Mesa, California. Public comment on the options can be submitted to pfmc.comments@noaa.gov. Those comments received by Friday, October 17 will be included in the advanced briefing materials, which are mailed to Council members and advisory bodies. Comments received after October 17 but before November 4 will be handed out on the first day of the meeting.

Changes to the Non-Treaty CSP Allocations

Description of the Allocation Alternatives

The Council adopted the following range of non-treaty commercial and recreational allocations. Allocations under Alternatives 2-5 are related to the level of the Area 2A Total Allowable Catch (TAC).

	Status Quo	Alt 1	Alt 2				Alt 3		Alt 4		Alt 5	
			Option A		Option B		2A TAC	Portion of 2A TAC	2A TAC	Portion of 2A TAC	2A TAC	Portion of 2A TAC
			2A TAC ≤ 1 M. lb	2A TAC > 1 M. lb	2A TAC ≤ 1 M. lb	2A TAC > 1 M. lb						
WA Sport:	36.60%	36.60%	36.60%	36.60%	36.60%	18.5-25.9%	35.93%	35.60%	35.60%	35.27%	35.27%	34.93%
OR Sport:	30.70%	30.70%	30.70%	30.70%	30.70%	15.5-21.7%	30.03%	29.70%	29.70%	29.37%	29.37%	29.03%
CA Sport:	1.00%	3.00%	3.00%	4.00%	3.00%	30-50%	3.00%	4.00%	4.00%	5.00%	5.00%	6.00%
Commercial:	31.70%	29.70%	29.70%	28.70%	29.70%	16-22.4%	31.03%	30.70%	30.70%	30.37%	30.37%	30.03%

Status Quo: The non-treaty allocation is apportioned according to the 2014 CSP: Washington sport (36.60%), Oregon sport (30.70%), California sport (1.00%), and commercial (31.70%).

Alternative 1: Maintain allocations as described in the CSP (Status Quo), except increase the California sport allocation by two percent, for a total California sport allocation of three percent, by reducing the non-treaty commercial fishery share.

Alternative 2, Option A: Same allocations as described in Alternative 1 when the 2A TAC is one million pounds or less. When the 2A TAC is above one million pounds, the California sport allocation would increase by an additional one percent, for a total California sport allocation of four percent, by reducing the non-treaty commercial fishery share.

Alternative 2, Option B: Same allocations as described in Alternative 1 when the 2A TAC is one million pounds or less. When the 2A TAC is greater than one million pounds, the first one million pounds of the 2A TAC shall be distributed according to the Alternative 1 allocations. For the portion of the 2A TAC that exceeds one million pounds, the California sport allocation would increase to 30-50 percent of the non-treaty share, and allocation percentages for the non-treaty commercial and recreational (Washington and Oregon) would be reduced to remain proportional to the status quo non-treaty shares.

Alternative 3: Increase the California sport allocation by two percent, for a total California sport allocation of three percent, when the 2A TAC is less than one million pounds by reducing the three major non-treaty group allocations (i.e., Washington sport, Oregon sport, and commercial). When the 2A TAC is greater than one million pounds, the first one million pounds of the 2A TAC shall be distributed according to the Alternative 3 allocations. For the portion of the 2A TAC that exceeds one million pounds, the California sport allocation would increase to four percent of the non-treaty share by reducing the three major non-treaty group allocations.

Alternative 4: Increase the California sport share by three percent, for a total allocation of four percent, when the 2A TAC is less than one million pounds by reducing the three major non-treaty group allocations. When the 2A TAC is greater than one million pounds, the first one million pounds of the 2A TAC shall be distributed according to the Alternative 4 allocations. For the portion of the 2A TAC that exceeds one million pounds, the California sport allocation would increase to five percent of the non-treaty share by reducing the three major non-treaty group allocations.

Alternative 5: Increase the California sport share by four percent, for a total allocation of five percent, when the 2A TAC is less than one million pounds by reducing the three major non-treaty group allocations. When the 2A TAC is greater than one million pounds, the first one million pounds of the 2A TAC shall be distributed according to the Alternative 5 allocations. For the portion of the 2A TAC that exceeds one million pounds, the California sport allocation would increase to six percent of the non-treaty share by reducing the three major non-treaty group allocations.

Maximum Limits to the California Sport Allocation

After adopting the CSP allocations from the range described above, the Council will then decide whether to instate a maximum limit on the California sport allocation.

Status Quo: No maximum limit on the California sport allocation.

Maximum Limit A: Include a maximum limit on the California sport allocation of 75,000 pounds in an effort to not strand pounds. This limit may be combined with Alternatives 1, 2A, or 2B described in the table above. Any amount above 75,000 pounds would remain in the non-treaty commercial fishery share.

Maximum Limit B: Include a maximum limit on the California sport allocation of 50,000 pounds in an effort to not strand pounds. This limit may be combined with Alternatives 3 – 5 described in the table above. Any amount above 50,000 pounds would remain in the Washington sport, Oregon sport, and commercial fisheries in proportion to their respective shares under the Alternative.

Washington Recreational Fisheries, as summarized from the [WDFW Report](#)

Columbia River Nearshore Allocation Option

1. Reduce the nearshore set aside from 1,500 pounds to 500 pounds.

Rationale: The amount of halibut caught in the nearshore fishery was very low in 2014. The proposed allocation amount would still accommodate catches in the nearshore area when the all-depth fishery is closed.

Columbia River Season Allocation Option

2. Manage the fishery to one season by removing the early (80 percent) and late season (20 percent) splits.

Rationale: Since 2008, fishing effort has significantly declined during the late season off Washington and Oregon. Managing to one season in the early period will ensure the quota is available during the peak of halibut fishing effort and allow the all-depth fishery to continue uninterrupted.

Columbia River Nearshore Days of the Week Option

3. Increase the number of days that the nearshore area is open from Monday through Wednesday to Monday through Friday. This would include two days (Thursday and Friday) when both the nearshore and all-depth fisheries are open.

Rationale: Increasing the number of days per week is expected to increase attainment of nearshore quota and provide greater groundfish retention.

Oregon Recreational Fisheries, as summarized from the [ODFW Report](#)

Options for the Columbia River and Southern Oregon Subarea Allocation

1. Increase the Southern Oregon subarea allocation; reduce the Oregon contribution to the Columbia River allocation.

	No Action	Alternative 1	Alternative 2
Columbia River	equal to WA contribution	75% of WA contribution	50% of WA contribution
Central Oregon Coast		96%	96%
Spring All-Depth	61%	63%	63%
Summer All-Depth	25%	25%	25%
Nearshore	12%	12%	12%
Southern Oregon	2%	4%	4%
Shaded cells are percentages of the Central Oregon Coast allocation			

Rationale: In recent years the Columbia River allocation has not been attained and reallocating the quota would increase overall attainment of the Oregon sport quota.

Columbia River and Central Oregon Subareas

2. Groundfish Retention Options

Status Quo: During all-depth Pacific halibut days, most species may not be taken along with Pacific halibut except for salmon, sablefish, Pacific Cod, tuna, and offshore pelagic species

Alternative 1: All groundfish, with the exception of rockfish and lingcod, could be retained during all-depth halibut days

Alternative 2: Same as Status Quo but also include other flatfish species

Rationale: The proposed groundfish retention options are intended to increase utilization and reduce regulatory discards while staying within the overfished species limits for groundfish (e.g., yelloweye rockfish).

Central Coast Subarea

3. All-Depth Seasons

No Action: The spring all-depth season opens the second Thursday in May, three days per week (Thursday –Saturday), until the quota is caught. Weeks can be skipped due to adverse tides. The summer all-depth season opens the first Friday in August, two days per week (Friday and Saturday), every other week until the quota is attained.

Alternative 1a: Combine the spring and summer all-depth quotas and seasons. Open May 1, every other Friday and Saturday, until the entire all-depth quota has been attained.

Alternative 1b: The same as Alternative 1a, except begin on the first weekend in May, which avoids dates with large negative tides, especially in the spring.

Rationale: The proposed options are designed to extend the season, avoid negative tides, and provide halibut opportunities prior to salmon and tuna.

Southern Oregon Subarea

4. Season Dates

No Action: Open May 1, seven days per week, until the quota is attained

Alternative 1: Open June 1, seven days per week, until the quota is attained

Alternative 2: Open July 1, seven days per week, until the quota is attained

Rationale: The proposed options are designed to provide a greater chance of halibut opportunities later in the summer, when salmon opportunity slows.

California Recreational Fisheries, as summarized from a Council motion

1. Season Dates and Inseason Action

No Action: A fixed season that is open from May 1 through July 31 and September 1 through October 31. No inseason adjustments will be made.

Alternative 1: Revise the season length so that the fishery is open for one month during the timeframe May 1 through October 31. Selection of the month would occur under final action in November. Inseason adjustments may be made.

Alternative 2: Revise the season length so that the season is open for a 15 consecutive day period during the timeframe May 1 through October 31. Selection of the 15 consecutive day period would occur under final action. Inseason adjustments may be made.

The Council also provided the following guidance to NMFS: In establishing the California sport fixed season, NMFS should work with CDFW to use a formula similar to that used in the Puget Sound area, which is to calculate a projected catch per day and number of days to achieve the subarea quota.

NMFS Recommended, as summarized from [NMFS Report 2](#)

1. Amend language for the directed commercial fishery to allow earlier transfer of unused quota to the salmon troll fishery. Current language refers to the “fall salmon troll fisheries”; however, salmon regulations do not have a defined “fall” fishery. The goal of this change is to allow flexibility for inseason transfer of the unused portion of the directed commercial halibut allocation.

2. In the CSP and regulations, update references to Northwest Region and Northwest Administrator to West Coast Region and West Coast Administrator due to the recent merger and name change.