

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

At the September 2013 meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) discussed a range of alternatives to reduce the recreational catch of Pacific halibut in the South of Humbug Management Subarea (SOH). The proposed alternatives put out by the Council for public review were based on the recommendations of the South of Humbug Pacific Halibut Policy Committee Report<sup>1</sup> (Policy Committee), which included the intent to reduce catches in California's recreational fishery by 40 to 60 percent from the latest five-year average. Interested parties who attended the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) July 18, 2013 public meeting were notified by email that the alternatives recommended by the Council were available for public review, and additional input was received from constituents. Considering this input, CDFW recommends the following changes to sections (b) ALLOCATIONS and (f) SPORT FISHERIES of the Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) for 2014.

**California Allocation**

**CDFW recommends modifications to the CSP language that create a new subarea management line at the Oregon/California border (42° N. Latitude), and provide a separate recreational allocation for California.** The boundary change and separate allocation were the only measures proposed for 2014 that had widespread support from constituents providing comments. Based on the Council's proposed alternatives, the 2014 California allocation would be equal to 1 percent of the non-Indian allocation (as described in Agenda Item G.1.a Attachment 2), based on converting the South of Humbug portion of the combined Oregon/California recreational allocation to a stand-alone California allocation. Additional strikeout language will be required throughout the CSP to update references to the Oregon/California sport allocation by identifying them as either Oregon or California sport allocations, as appropriate.

Proposed Changes to the CSP language:

*(b) ALLOCATIONS*

*This Plan allocates 35 percent of the Area 2A TAC to U.S. treaty Indian tribes in the State of Washington in subarea 2A-1, and 65 percent to non-Indian fisheries in Area 2A. The allocation to non-Indian fisheries is divided into ~~three~~ four shares, with the Washington sport fishery (north of the Columbia River) receiving 36.6 percent, the Oregon/~~California~~ sport fishery receiving ~~31.7~~ 30.7 percent, the California sport fishery receiving 1 percent, and the commercial fishery receiving 31.7 percent. Allocations within the non-Indian commercial and sport fisheries are described in sections (e) and (f) of this Plan.*

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/D2b\\_SOH\\_POLICY\\_COMMITTEE\\_SEPT2013BB.pdf](http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/D2b_SOH_POLICY_COMMITTEE_SEPT2013BB.pdf)

## Management Measures

**CDFW recommends reducing the 2014 open season dates off California to May 1 through July 31, and September 1 through October 31 (Alternative 3a from September 2013 Agenda Item D.2.b, SOH Workgroup Report<sup>2</sup>).** Based on the Workgroup's analysis, closing the month of August will result in a projected catch reduction of 39 percent. Existing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Northern California waters are also expected to contribute to the potential catch reduction by up to an additional three percent. In combination, these measures are projected by the Workgroup's analysis to reduce catches off California by approximately 42 percent, meeting the Policy Committee's recommended goal of reducing catch off California by 40-60 percent.

During their September discussion, the Council noted that the 40 to 60 percent reduction in catch recommended by the Policy Committee would still result in a potential harvest of almost double the subarea quota amount for 2013 (6,063 lbs). The Council requested guidance from the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) regarding anticipated actions on the part of these agencies in the event that the California allocation is exceeded for 2014, as would be expected based on projections. The direction provided from both agencies indicated that management of the SOH area, and in particular California, was expected to be undertaken in a stepwise manner. While the proposed 2014 management measures may still result in catches that exceed the proposed 2014 California allocation, action to reduce catches by 40 to 60 percent was viewed as meeting the goal of making forward progress. In addition, it was noted that harvest amounts in other subareas of 2A are often at or under the allocated amount, providing enough buffer that there would be no conservation risk to Pacific halibut should catches in the new California subarea exceed the quota.

There was a wide range in public comments concerning which, if any, of the proposed management measures to reduce catches should be adopted for 2014. This lack of consensus was likely a result of the apparently disproportionate impacts the various measures would have on particular ports or fishery sectors [private boats or Commercial Passenger Fishing Vessels (CPFVs) —see below]. Some supported doing nothing in 2014 beyond moving the boundary, and taking an approach similar to that used for 2013. However, a majority of those supporting some action to reduce catches in 2014 would support the August closure. This alternative maximizes time on the water, while also providing for some opportunity during the critical summer months. Given the projected catches meet the Policy Committee's reduction goal, and considering the significant impacts some communities may experience from this action, CDFW is not recommending additional measures be implemented for 2014. [Other alternatives receiving comments in support either don't provide adequate savings when applied alone (e.g., prohibiting salmon retention) or result in substantially fewer available fishing days (day of week closures) during the open season.]

CDFW considered the potential for anglers to shift fishing effort to open months during the season as a result of an August closure, and does not expect a significant re-distribution of effort due to the nature or limitations of tourism and summer vacation seasons, availability of

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/D2b\\_SOH\\_WORKGROUP\\_SEPT2013BB.pdf](http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/D2b_SOH_WORKGROUP_SEPT2013BB.pdf)

necessary infrastructure, and weather. The north coast depends on fishing-related tourism during the peak summer months of July and August to support local businesses and many visitors to Northern California ports do not have the flexibility to schedule their trips earlier or later in the year. In addition, two major port areas for Pacific halibut fishing on the north coast (Trinidad and Shelter Cove, see Figure 1) have temporary launching services and/or facilities that are dependent on the demand for their services during the tourist season. It is typical for these launching services (e.g., private launch ramps or tractors) to be closed or removed by mid-September, which is expected to prevent a significant shift of effort into the later part of the open season. Weather patterns and rough seas are variable, unpredictable, and frequent on the north coast, which generally restricts boat anglers' activities during the spring and early summer, and again in the fall. So, poor weather also prevents effort shifts to other times of the year.

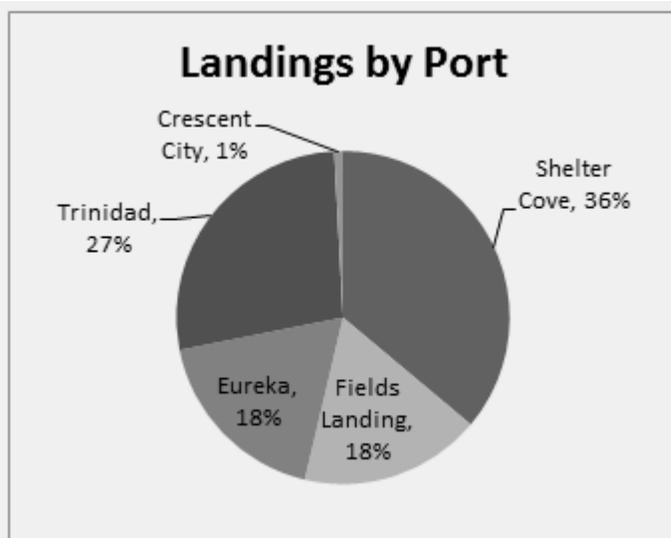


Figure 1. California Recreational Fisheries Survey average proportion of estimated catch of Pacific halibut by private boats and port area from 2008 to 2011 in net pounds. Private boats represent approximately 86% of the total Pacific halibut recreational catch off California.

Closing Pacific halibut fishing in August is expected to have a considerable impact on the North Coast communities, on top of the continued impacts from restrictive groundfish management measures already in place for the recreational fishery. CDFW received reports that Trinidad and Shelter Cove launching services, which are the only way for private boats to utilize these ports, are heavily dependent on July and August for their annual income. August revenues accounted for approximately 40 percent or more of their income, which directly corresponds to available fishing opportunities. Some CPFVs also rely on the launching services, and may be financially impacted by reduced fishing opportunities resulting from an August closure.

Proposed Changes to the CSP:

(f) SPORT FISHERIES ....

(vi) ~~South of Humbug Mountain subarea.~~ California subarea

~~This sport fishery subarea is allocated 3.0~~ 1.0 percent of the ~~Oregon/California Subquota non-Indian allocation.~~ This area is defined as the area south of ~~Humbug Mountain, OR (42°40.50' N. lat.)~~ the Oregon/California border (42° N. Latitude), including all California waters. The structuring objective for this subarea is to provide anglers the opportunity to fish in a ~~continuous~~, fixed season that is open from May 1 through July 31, and September 1 through October 31. The daily bag limit is one halibut per person, with no size limit. Due to inability to monitor the catch in this area inseason, this fixed season will be established preseason by NMFS based on projected 2014 seasonal catch; ~~catch per day and number of days to achievement of the subquota~~; no inseason adjustments will be made, and estimates of actual catch will be made post season.

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### **Recommendations for Future CSP Modifications Beyond 2014**

CDFW views the proposed 2014 CSP amendments as only the first step in establishing a California allocation that is grounded in science and based on data, and supports the Council's expressed intent at the September 2013 meeting to further consider an appropriate California allocation for use in 2015 and beyond. California is interested in engaging with the other states to explore the prospect of using the new survey data and other sources of survey, catch and bycatch information to inform future discussions regarding allocation decisions. The new IPHC research survey stations surveyed off northern California in 2013 will contribute to an abundance index for Area 2A, which will be used in the assessment and apportionment process to ultimately determine the 2014 Area 2A Total Allowable Catch. In addition, information from the survey should provide evidence of the distribution of Pacific halibut off California in relation to the other states. Because the IPHC has indicated there may be budget constraints that prevent the northern California stations from being surveyed annually, CDFW is also interested in considering other approaches to examine and possibly inform the apportionment process to ensure that future allocation discussions appropriately reflect the contribution of Pacific halibut biomass from California.

### **Summary of Recommendations for the 2014 CSP:**

- CDFW recommends modifications to the CSP language that create a new subarea management line at the Oregon/California border (42° N. Latitude), providing a separate recreational allocation for California equal to one percent of the non-tribal allocation for 2014.
- CDFW recommends reducing the 2014 fishery season to May 1 through July 31 and September 1 through October 31 (Alternative 3a from September 2013 Agenda Item D.2.b SOH Workgroup Report). In combination with savings from the implementation of new marine protected areas, this action is expected to provide a projected catch reduction of 42 percent.