

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON  
PACIFIC HALIBUT CATCH SHARING PLAN CHANGES

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is submitting this additional report on halibut issues to introduce two options for the Columbia River alternatives, which we believe fit within the analyzed range of alternatives, and make a correction to the results in Attachment 1 of WDFW Report 2, which describes how our Puget Sound season-setting methodology may be applied to the California recreational halibut fishery. On this latter topic, WDFW would like to acknowledge a significant error on our part in estimating the average number of fish caught per day in the California halibut fishery—we had originally estimated 195 fish per day; however, this number should be 34 fish per day.

**Columbia River – Increase Nearshore Days of the Week**

WDFW had proposed that the number of days that the nearshore area would be open be increased to include Thursday and Friday; these days would overlap with the scheduled all-depth fishery. WDFW has heard from Columbia River charter constituents that they need increased fishing opportunity to attract customers to take halibut trips. As noted in Agenda Item G.1.b, ODFW Report, the Columbia River subarea has had little catch or effort after mid-July and has left 2,500-3,500 pounds of halibut quota un-harvested each year. Maximizing sportfishing opportunity to achieve their quota is the primary objective of the subarea, but Washington charters have expressed difficulty attracting anglers to take halibut trips when other species, such as lingcod and rockfish, cannot be retained with halibut onboard. By allowing a slight increase in nearshore opportunity, which would allow anglers to retain groundfish caught in the nearshore area with a halibut onboard, provides additional incentive for anglers to take halibut trips.

WDFW understands the concerns expressed by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) about potential increased catches of yelloweye rockfish associated with lingcod areas off Oregon and agrees with ODFW on the desire to have consistent regulations throughout the subarea. In recognition of this, WDFW would like to offer an option that would limit the increased nearshore opportunity to the month of June only. As the range of alternatives spanned from status quo (i.e., open Monday-Wednesday) to open every Thursday and Friday, we believe that limiting the addition of Thursday and Friday to the month of June only fits within the range considered.

While this option may not fully achieve the objective, it is a positive step that we would recommend for the 2015 halibut season.

## **Columbia River – Modify Oregon Sport Allocations**

As described in our WDFW Report, in general, we believe that contributions from states that share management areas should be done equitably. However, we also recognize that, in this particular case, the Columbia River subarea has fallen short of achieving its quota for several years and Oregon has a need in other areas for additional halibut—partly in response to Oregon having given up a portion of its Central Coast subarea quota to the newly created Southern Oregon subarea. As such, WDFW can support ODFW’s recommendation to reduce its contribution to the Columbia River subarea to around 75% of Washington’s contribution, but we would rather this be expressed as a standalone allocation of Oregon’s sport quota, rather than as a percentage of Washington’s contribution. In the future, as halibut abundance and fisheries’ needs change, WDFW would like to retain the flexibility to potentially shift the Washington sport quota around among our subareas (as ODFW is proposing to do with this action) without necessarily impacting the Oregon contribution to the Columbia River.

Using the current 2A TAC of 960,000 pounds, 75% of Washington’s contribution to the Columbia River subarea equates to about 2.3% of Oregon’s sport quota. Given the uncertainty in future TAC levels, and the way the Catch Sharing Plan is structured, we understand that ODFW may choose to revise this percentage and/or may want to have varying allocations under different TAC levels. However, WDFW recommends that the approach we have described be used in the 2015 Catch Sharing Plan to express Oregon’s contribution to the Columbia River subarea.

## **Application of Puget Sound Season-Setting Methodology to the California Fishery**

As noted above, WDFW inadvertently miscalculated an average catch per day for the California sport fishery and have a revised estimate of 34 fish per day, which is the most recent two-year average (2013 and 2014). We note there was a significant increase in effort (and resulting catch) from 2012 to 2013 that appears to have continued in 2014; therefore, we would propose using a two-year average catch per day (rather than a three-year average). The corrected results and conclusions—again, using an average weight of 20 pounds and the status quo 2A TAC of 960,000 pounds—are in the table below.

	Alternative 3	Alternative 4	Alternative 5
CA Sport Quota (lbs)	18,720	24,960	31,200
Quota (estimated number of fish)	936	1,248	1,560
Estimated Season Length	28 days	37 days	46 days
Example Potential Season Dates for 2015	May 1-June 30	May 1-July 19	May 1-July 31 and Sept 1-11