

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL COMMENTS ON
PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE PACIFIC HALIBUT CATCH SHARING PLAN
AND ANNUAL REGULATIONS

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) received a presentation from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) on proposals for halibut catch sharing.

The GAP endorses ODFW proposals for changing the possession limit to 1 halibut on board, 1 on land, and for starting the fishery in June in order to provide some overlap with the salmon fishery. The GAP believes these proposals will ease enforcement burdens and provide a greater recreational opportunity for halibut harvest.

A majority of the GAP endorses the proposal of establishing a split season in the mid-Oregon region, with anglers being allowed to choose between fishing in May and June or August and September. Supporters see this as an opportunity to spread effort over a longer period of time and provide opportunities for smaller boats to harvest halibut during better weather. A minority of the GAP opposed this proposal.

The GAP also recommends the Council examine the following issues when discussing halibut:

- means of reducing bycatch in the commercial and recreational fisheries;
- allowing retention of incidental halibut in the trawl fishery to prevent waste and discards;
- the recreational harvest allocation split between Oregon and Washington relative to biomass abundance in the two areas; and
- examining full retention of incidental halibut take, perhaps in conjunction with other Council full retention programs.