

PROPOSED 2002 INCIDENTAL CATCH REGULATIONS FOR THE
 SALMON TROLL AND FIXED GEAR SABLEFISH FISHERIES

Situation: Regulations governing the incidental harvest of halibut in the salmon troll fishery and the commercial sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis require the Council to adopt recommended halibut landing restrictions to allow incidental harvest while assuring the quotas are not exceeded.

Salmon Troll Fishery

The halibut regulations allocate 15% of the non-Indian commercial halibut allocation in Area 2A to the salmon troll fishery as an incidental catch during May and June (with provision for additional harvest from July through September if sufficient quota remains). A change in the regulations in 2001 directs that the primary management objective is to harvest the incidental quota in the May/June salmon troll fishery, and a secondary objective is to harvest any remaining quota during July through September.

The table below provides the number of licenses, allocation, harvest, and landing restrictions for the incidental halibut fishery since the initial season in 1995. The Council has successfully used landing ratios and a total trip limit to assure a manageable progression of the fishery in past years.

Incidental Halibut Management in Area 2A Salmon Troll Fishery

Year	Licenses Issued ^{1/}				Pounds of Halibut			Restriction		
	WA	OR	CA	AK-2A	Total Allocation	May-June Harvest	Total Harvest	Halibut per Chinook	Trip Limit	
1995	14	104	2	5	125	16,068	2,125	2,125	1 per each 20	none
1996	22	82	5	14	123	16,068	9,521	9,521	1 + 1 per each 15	20
1997	59	187	10	19	275	21,635	17,570	17,570	1 + 1 per each 10	20
1998	44	188	15	18	265	25,344	9,123	13,124	1 + 1 per each 8	25
1999	54	193	12	25	284	23,490	9,955	9,955	1 + 1 per each 5	35
2000	49	154	8	24	235	24,464	20,925	22,350	1 + 1 per each 3	35
2001	63	232	13	37	347	34,046	-	34,324	1 + 1 per each 3	35
2002	-	-	-	-	-	39,300	-	-	-	-

a/ Licenses are issued by vessel number in the following order: AK, WA, OR, CA (i.e., if a vessel has both Alaska and Washington vessel numbers, the licensed would be issued to the Alaska vessel number.

Commercial Sablefish Fishery North of Point Chehalis

The total Area 2A halibut quota is large enough this year (over 900,000 pounds) to provide for an incidental halibut harvest in the commercial sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis. This incidental fishery is allocated that portion of the Washington sport allocation in excess of 214,110 pounds, provided a minimum of 10,000 pounds is available. For 2002, the available incidental harvest amounts to 88,389 pounds. The Council will need to consider landing or other restrictions necessary to manage this fishery within its quota.

In 2001, the first year this fishery was prosecuted, the allocation was 47,946 pounds of halibut. The season opened on August 15 and closed October 31. Regulations restricted incidental halibut landings to 80 pounds (dressed weight) of halibut for every 1,000 pounds (dressed weight) of sablefish landed and up to two additional halibut in excess of the 80 pounds per 1,000 pound ratio per landing. In addition, season landing restrictions were placed on each vessel based on the tier of the permit held when they applied for their International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) license. Final landings for this fishery were 26,945 pounds.

Several factors are different this year than in 2001, which will require a different approach to managing the incidental catch of halibut: the sablefish fishery will be ongoing before the deadline for applying for an IPHC license; sablefish permits will have already been stacked on vessels prior to the start of the season and prior to application for IPHC licenses, and; a much longer season is expected for 2002. In addition, the number of IPHC license holders that fished north of Point Chehalis and landed halibut in 2001 was considerably less than those eligible to do so. It is possible the halibut quota will be reached before the end of the sablefish season and inseason action will be required to halt halibut retention.

Landing restrictions for 2002 could take several forms, including:

1. Equal incidental poundage or numbers of halibut distributed among all the vessels with appropriate licenses operating north of Point Chehalis.
2. Equal incidental poundage or numbers of halibut distributed among all the permits attached to vessels with appropriate licenses operating north of Point Chehalis.
3. Incidental halibut poundage or numbers distributed on the basis of vessel length as in the directed halibut fishery.
4. A simple ratio of halibut to sablefish landed by vessels with appropriate licenses operating north of Point Chehalis similar to the salmon troll regulations.

Because of the overlap between the IPHC application period and the start of the sablefish fishery, the estimate of anticipated effort that would go into a ratio type regulation may need to be delayed until the IPHC application period ends. Therefore, the Council should also consider the appropriate date to begin allowing retention of halibut.

Council Action:

- Adopt a range of landing restrictions for halibut caught incidentally in the May/June troll season to match with the troll salmon management options and assure a reasonable utilization of the incidental catch while not exceeding the quota.
- Identify options for landing limits or other restrictions for incidental halibut harvest in the commercial sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis.

Reference Materials:

1. Incidental Halibut Catch in the Sablefish Fishery North of Point Chehalis (Exhibit E.3.c, WDFW Proposal).

Agenda Order:

- a. Agendum Overview
 - b. State Proposals for the Salmon Troll Fishery
 - c. State Proposals for the Fixed Gear Sablefish Fishery
 - d. Tribal Comments
 - e. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
 - f. Public Comment
 - g. **Council Action:** Adopt Proposed 2002 Incidental Halibut Catch Regulations
- Chuck Tracy
Jim Harp

Groundfish Fishery Strategic Plan Consistency Analysis

The groundfish strategic plan calls for minimizing discarded bycatch. The sablefish fishery prior to 2001 discarded halibut, alive or dead, due to low halibut quota levels. Retaining halibut is consistent with minimizing discarded dead halibut bycatch.