

RECOMMENDED MODIFICATIONS TO THE PACIFIC HALIBUT CATCH SHARING PLAN FOR THE 2003 OREGON RECREATIONAL FISHERY

At their September 2002 meeting, the Pacific Fisheries Management Council adopted three issues for public review that could change the way the Oregon recreational fishery for Pacific halibut is conducted in 2003. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife held a public meeting in Newport on October 17, 2002 to discuss the proposals. A description of the proposal, summary of public comment, and Oregon's recommendation are presented below for each issue.

1. Flexible Inseason Management Provision

Proposal

If either the Columbia River or central Oregon coast sport fishery subareas are not projected to utilize their respective quotas by the season ending date, NMFS may take inseason action to transfer any projected unused quota from one subarea to the other. Additionally before the spring fishery, NMFS may transfer quota between the north central and south central Oregon sport fishery subareas to meet the objective of setting equal number of fixed fishing days for the spring fishery.

Public Comment

This proposal was not supported. Concern was expressed that political pressures from the area north of Cape Falcon might be used to take pounds from other areas south of Cape Falcon when there are not extenuating circumstances such as occurred in 2002.

Recommendation

Oregon recommends no change to the present flexible inseason management provision.

2. Extend the Pacific Halibut recreational fishery season south of Cape Falcon.

Proposal

Extend the recreational fishery season for all subareas south of Cape Falcon, both the all-depth and 30-fathom fishery, through October 31.

Public Comment

The extension of the fishery was strongly supported by the public.

Recommendation

Oregon recommends extending the recreational season for all sub-areas south of Cape Falcon through October 31.

3. Change the wording in the catch sharing plan to clarify the description of the Spring and Summer all-depth fishery along the central Oregon coast.

Proposal

Change the wording in the Catch Sharing Plan for the Oregon north central and south central subareas from “May” to “Spring” and from “August” to “Summer”. Furthermore, define the Spring season to cover the May through July period and Summer season to cover the period August through October period (or through September if proposal 2 is not adopted).

Public Comment

This proposal was strongly supported by the public.

Recommendation

Oregon recommends changing the description of the Spring and Summer all-depth fishery along the central Oregon coast in the Catch Sharing Plan.