

## COUNCIL NEWSLETTER ARTICLE ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE AREA 2A PACIFIC HALIBUT CATCH SHARING PLAN

At the September meeting, the Council adopted several proposed changes to the Area 2A Pacific halibut catch-sharing plan for public review. Final adoption of the plan will take place at the Council's meeting in Foster City, CA, October 28 to November 1. Comments on the proposals can be sent or emailed to the Council office, and comments will also be taken at the October Council meeting.

The following proposals affect Oregon and Washington sport fisheries and the Washington commercial directed fixed gear sablefish fishery.

1. Develop framework language allowing inseason action to transfer quotas between the Columbia River and Central Oregon Coast sport subareas.
2. Develop framework language allowing preseason transfer of quotas between the North Central and South Central Oregon coast sport subarea May (spring) seasons to meet the plan's objective of setting equal number of fixed fishing days for the two subareas.

Flexibility to transfer the unused sport quota between subareas already exists for areas north of Cape Falcon, but not south of Cape Falcon. The 2002 catch limit for the central Oregon subarea will probably not be entirely taken. At the same time, the Columbia River subarea, which closed May 25, could have used the leftover central Oregon quota to access the remaining 1,400 pounds of its allocation.

Another example of the need for flexibility to move poundage between subareas occurred during the spring all-depth fishery between the north-central and south-central subareas off Oregon. These fisheries are managed under the fixed day approach, which [explain]. Sometimes during the preseason process to set the number of fixed days, the projected quota for one sub-area is not enough to allow the same number of fixed days as the other subarea. At the same time the second subarea appears to have excess poundage. These subareas are combined for the summer fishery in order to have an equal number of season days for both subareas. The central coast area is split into two subareas during the spring fishery because often the north central subarea is able to fish when the south central area is not due to adverse weather and/or bar conditions.

3. Extend the recreational season for all subareas south of Cape Falcon from September 30 to October 31.

As noted above, it appears that the 2002 catch limit for the central Oregon area will not be entirely taken. If the fishery ending date were October 31, it would allow opening additional days to take the available poundage remaining after the May through September fishery.

4. Change language defining the central Oregon recreational fisheries to spring and summer seasons rather than May and August seasons, and include the months of May to July in the spring season and the months of August to September (or October) in the summer season.
5. Redefine the Washington North Coast recreational season dates to allow a flexible opening dates in May.

Allowing flexible opening dates for the Washington north coast recreational season will allow openings later in the month when weather is more likely to be favorable. This will probably only

be done in years when allocations are low and unlikely to last the entire month of May.

6. Allocate 65% of the Washington North Coast recreational subarea quota to the season opening in May and 35% to the season opening in July.

Dividing the subarea allocation into May/June and July seasons guarantees fishing opportunities around the popular July 4<sup>th</sup> time, when weather is usually milder than in May.

7. Expand the closed Yelloweye Conservation Area in the recreational Washington North Coast sub-area to provide additional protection for yelloweye rockfish. The proposal is for an “L” shaped area defined by the following coordinates:

48°00'00" 124°59'00"  
48°00'00" 125°18'00"  
48°18'00" 125°18'00"  
48°18'00" 125°11'00"  
48°04'00" 125°11'00"  
48°04'00" 124°59'00" and back to  
48°00'00" 124°59'00"

In 2002 the Council added a yelloweye conservation area to the existing Halibut Hotspot closure. The new area enlarges and includes the area west of the Halibut Hotspot closure. The primary purpose of this closure is to reduce incidental yelloweye rockfish take during halibut fisheries.

8. Remove the existing Halibut Hotspot closure from the recreational Washington North Coast subarea.

Allowing halibut fishing in the Hotspot area may provide anglers a chance to target halibut directly while avoiding incidental catches of yelloweye rockfish. The Hotspot closure area was originally intended to control halibut catch as a means to extend the season.

9. Specify a cap on the landing restriction in the directed fixed gear sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis of no more than 150 pounds (dressed weight) of halibut per 1,000 pounds (dressed weight) of sablefish plus an additional two halibut in excess of the ratio.
10. Allow unused halibut allocation in the directed fixed gear sablefish fishery to be returned to the Washington sport allocation.

If the total Area 2A halibut quota is large enough (over 900,000 pounds) to provide for an incidental halibut harvest in the commercial sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, this 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. The Council recommends annual landing restrictions in such years, and for 2002 the restriction was no more than 150 lbs dressed weight of halibut for every 1,000 lbs dressed weight of sablefish, plus two halibut not subject to the ratio. Landings through August 22 were only about 34,000 lbs of the more than 88,000 lbs allocated in 2002. Having a cap on the landing restriction would allow a projection of landings in future years so that any unused allocation could be returned to the Washington sport allocation for ongoing fisheries.