

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 Del Mar, California, November 3-7, 2003. Comments on the proposals can be sent or emailed to the Council office, and comments will also be taken at the November Council meeting.

The following proposals affect Oregon and Washington sport fisheries:

**Remove the requirement to “sponsor a public workshop shortly after the International Pacific Halibut Commission annual meeting”** to develop the season structure for the Puget Sound recreational fishery. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) already has an annual public process to review all sportfishing rules and consider regulatory changes at the end of every calendar year. The season structure for the Puget Sound fishery is not expected to change in the next few years, so another meeting is probably unnecessary.

**Change the opening date of the Washington north coast subarea fishery** from May 1 to May 15. This would increase the likelihood of favorable weather and of the fishery lasting through Memorial Day.

**Change the opening date of the Washington north coast area June fishery** from the third Wednesday in June to “during the third week of June.” This would allow flexibility in setting an opening date that accounts for variation in tides.

**Add a statement to the Washington north coast, Washington south coast, and Columbia River subareas** that, subsequent to a closure prior to September 30, if there is insufficient quota remaining to reopen that given subarea for another fishing day, then any remaining quota may be transferred in season to another Washington coastal subarea by National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) via an update to the recreational halibut hotline. Allowing the transfer of remaining quota from a closed subarea provides more opportunity for anglers to achieve the overall recreational quota without impacting the closed subarea.

**For the Washington south coast subarea, have an automatic switch from a five-day/week fishery to a seven-day/week fishery** beginning on the opening day of the coastal recreational salmon season. The salmon season in the south coast area generally opens around the beginning of July for five-days/week (closed Fridays and Saturdays). Once the salmon season is open, most charter operations choose to target salmon, rather than halibut, during the weekdays. This change would allow anglers to take halibut trips when the salmon fishery is closed, which would help the subarea to achieve its halibut quota. The opening day of the salmon season is set at the Council's April meeting. The seven-day/week fishery would be announced on the NMFS halibut hotline.

**Open the spring Cape Falcon to Humbug Mt. all-depth recreational fishery** Thursday through Saturday beginning the second Thursday in May, based on dates set preseason. Allow any remaining quota to be used by opening every other Friday and Saturday, but allow some weeks to be closed to avoid adverse tidal conditions.

**Open the all-depth recreational fishery between Cape Falcon and Humbug Mt.** summer fishery on every other Friday and Saturday beginning with the first Friday in August, but allow some weeks to be closed to avoid adverse tidal conditions. Unused quota could be transferred to the nearshore fishery. These last two proposals are intended to add potential open days to the fishery. During both 2002 and 2003, insufficient “back-up” dates were established preseason and quota was left unharvested. These proposals would help avoid that situation in the future.

**Change the depth restriction in the Cape Falcon to Humbug Mt. nearshore recreational fishery** from 30 fathoms to 40 fathoms during June through September 2004 for consistency with the 2004 recreational groundfish fishery regulations.

**Prohibit possession of Pacific halibut taken in the Cape Falcon to Humbug Mt.** nearshore recreational fishery in other areas to ease enforcement of closed areas.

**Extend the closing date for the South of Humbug Mt. recreational fishery** to October 31 for consistency with other Oregon halibut fisheries south of Cape Falcon.

For additional information on the proposals, contact Ms. Michele Robinson (WDFW) for Washington proposals (robinmkr@dfw.wa.gov or 360-249-4628); Mr. Don Bodenmiller (ODFW) for Oregon proposals (Don.Bodenmiller@state.or.us or 541-867-0300); or Mr. Chuck Tracy at the Council office (Chuck.Tracy@noaa.gov or 503-820-2280).