

NMFS UPDATE ON 2004 PACIFIC HALIBUT MANAGEMENT

The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) held its annual meeting January 20-23, 2004, in Juneau, Alaska. At that meeting, the IPHC set an Area 2A (waters off Washington, Oregon, and California) total allowable catch (TAC) of 1,480,000 pounds, a 13% increase over the 2003 Area 2A TAC. On February 23, 2004 (69 FR 8162,) NMFS published a proposed rule to implement the 2004 TAC and the Council's recommended changes to the Catch Sharing Plan. In November 2003, the Council had recommended, (1) provide more flexibility for Washington inseason sport fishery management; (2) revise the public announcement process for the Puget Sound sport fishery; (3) revise season dates for the Washington north and south coast sport fisheries; (4) combine the Oregon north and south central subareas; (5) revise the "additional fishing days" season structure for Oregon's spring and summer sport fisheries; (6) extend the season closing date for Oregon/California sport fisheries in the South of Humbug Mountain subarea; (7) change the depth restriction for Oregon's nearshore sport fishery; and (8) revise the inshore boundary of the Rockfish Conservation Area to 40 fm, so it matches commercial hook-and-line fishery restrictions for groundfish. NMFS expects that rule to be finalized in early April, prior to the start of the Area 2A recreational fisheries.

Area 2A TAC Comparison, 2003 & 2004 (in pounds)		
	2003	2004
Treaty Tribes	483,500	543,000
Commercial	456,500	523,600
Ceremonial & Subsistence	27,000	19,400
Non-Treaty	826,500	937,000
Commercial	332,000	367,029
Salmon Troll Incidental	39,300	44,554
Directed	222,700	252,475
Sablefish Incidental	70,000	70,000
Recreational	494,500	
WA Sport	232,499	272,942
OR/CA Sport	262,001	297,029
WA Inside Waters	63,278	76,220
WA North Coast	113,915	126,857
WA South Coast	48,623	61,565
Columbia River	11,923	14,241
OR Central, Inside 30 fm	19,797	22,574
OR North Central (May)	156,835	
OR South Central (May)	14,609	194,703*
OR Central, August	57,660	64,901
South of Humbug Mt.	7,860	8,911
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,310,000</b>	<b>1,480,000</b>

\* North and South Central sub-areas combined for 2004 and beyond