

**OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
REPORT ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE
PACIFIC HALIBUT CATCH SHARING PLAN
FOR THE 2005 FISHERY**

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) held a public meeting on August 30, 2004 to discuss proposed changes to the 2004 Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan for Area 2A. Based on the meeting comments, and other public input, the ODFW recommends the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) approve the following proposals for additional public review.

Cape Falcon to Humbug Mt. All-Depth Recreational Fishery

Spring Fishery (May-July)

1. Add Thursdays to all openings during the Spring fishery

Presently the fishery opens as a Thursday-Saturday fishery during the "fixed dates" and then reopens every other week as a Friday-Saturday fishery until the quota is taken (with exceptions to avoid adverse low tidal conditions). Adding a third day (Thursday) to scheduled openers (Friday-Saturday) will lessen the likelihood that poor weather and ocean conditions would prevent fishing opportunity during scheduled open periods.

Summer Fishery (August-October)

2. Add Sundays to all openings during the Summer fishery

Adding a third day to scheduled openers (Friday-Sunday) will lessen the likelihood that poor weather and ocean conditions would prevent fishing opportunity during scheduled open periods. Presently the fishery open periods are Friday-Saturday.

3. Add a second halibut with a 32-inch minimum length to the daily bag limit

In the last few years the Summer quota has not been entirely harvested. A second fish in the bag limit would generate more angler interest.

4. Automatic inseason action to add more angler opportunity to harvest entire season sub-area quota

a) If after the first scheduled open period of the Summer fishery (the first period starts the first Friday in August) the remaining Cape Falcon to Humbug Mt. entire season quota (combined all-depth and inside 40-fathom quotas) is 60,000 pounds or more, the fishery automatically re-opens on every Friday-Sunday (versus every other weekend). Any excess quota projected to remain after the needs of the inside 40-fathom fishery (scheduled May-October) are met would be transferred into the remaining all-depth quota. This assumes a 2-fish bag limit is not adopted.

b) If after the third scheduled open period of the Summer fishery (the third period starts Friday of Labor Day weekend) the remaining Cape Falcon to Humbug Mt. entire season quota (combined all-depth and inside 40-fathom quotas) is 30,000 pounds or more, the fishery automatically re-opens on every Friday-Sunday. Under this provision, the bag limit would be 2 fish with a 32-inch minimum length. Any excess quota projected to remain after the needs of the inside 40-fathom fishery (scheduled May-October) are met would be transferred into the remaining all-depth quota.

5. Adopt a “yelloweye rockfish conservation” closure area located on Stonewall Banks

The incidental catch of yelloweye rockfish in the all-depth halibut fishery was a concern in 2004 and higher than expected preseason. Much of the impact is reported to have occurred in the area designated at Stonewall Banks, encompassing the “high spots” (such as shown on the attached map). Stonewall Banks is an area approximately 15 miles offshore of Newport and is a popular halibut area for private boat anglers with small to mid-size boats.

This designated area would be closed to halibut fishing on all-depth halibut days to reduce impacts on species of concern, especially yelloweye and canary rockfishes, while allowing access to productive halibut areas around Stonewall Banks. No groundfish retention would be allowed on halibut trips. The closed areas would be identified by lat long waypoints.

Leadbetter Pt., Washington to Cape Falcon, OR Sub-Area Recreational Fishery

6. Increase allocation to the Columbia River sub-area

The allocation to the Columbia River sub-area would be increased from 2 to 4 percent of the total Oregon/California recreational allocation. This would reduce the quota in the Central Oregon sub-area from 95 to 93 percent. This proposal assumes that an equal amount of poundage would be allocated to the Columbia River sub-area from Washington. The purpose of the increase is to provide additional angler opportunity in the Columbia River sub-area.

7. The increased allocation to the Columbia River sub-area would be split at the Oregon/Washington border. Catch would be attributed to each state’s share of the quota based on the port of landing.

The allocation to the Columbia River sub-area would be increased from 2 to 4 percent of the total Oregon/California recreational allocation. This would reduce the quota in the Central Oregon sub-area from 95 to 93 percent. This proposal assumes that the Columbia River sub-area would be split for halibut at the Oregon/Washington border. This split would not apply to other species, such as salmon. The purpose of the increase is to provide additional angler opportunity to Oregon anglers in the Columbia River sub-area.

This assumes that all halibut landed in each state’s ports within the Columbia River sub-area would be attributed to that state’s share of the quota (in which that port is located). Halibut landed in Washington ports would be counted towards the Washington share of the sub-area quota. The same would apply for Oregon. When Oregon’s share of the sub –area quota was attained, halibut landings into Oregon ports would be prohibited. This assumes that the same would apply for Washington.

All sub-areas south of Leadbetter Pt., Washington

7. Eliminate the minimum length requirement

Presently the minimum length requirement is 32-inches. Eliminating the minimum length requirement for the first halibut would reduce the length of time required to catch the daily limit and allow anglers a quicker return to port (safety issue). It may also reduce mortality on species of concern, especially canary and yelloweye rockfishes.

8. No groundfish retention allowed during the all-depth fishery

This would prevent any incidental take of prohibited species during the all-depth halibut open periods.

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Maximum of 6 points to describe

