

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

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is proposing several changes to the 2004 Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan for Area 2A to be approved for public review. Attached is a ~~strikeout~~/underlined version of the proposed changes to the current Catch Sharing Plan language. The changes include:

1. Changing the opening date of the north coast subarea from the first Tuesday between May 9-15 to May 1 of each year. If May 1 falls on a Sunday or Monday, then the fishery will open on the first Tuesday after May 1.

Rationale: Even though harvest rates in the north coast subarea fishery have increased significantly over the past few years, there are some people who favor moving the opening date back to May 1, which is the traditional opening date for the coastal areas. Others support the status quo opening date in mid-May in an effort to have the opportunity to fish during Memorial Day weekend. By moving the opening day to May 1, it is unlikely that the fishery would last through the end of May; however, those who favor the May 1 opening place a higher priority on fishing in early May than in late May. The Department does not have a preference at this point in the process—status quo vs. opening May 1—but does support both options being approved for public review at this time.

2. In the south coast subarea, close the fishery when 2,000 lbs are projected to remain in the subarea quota. Subsequent to this closure, the nearshore area (northern and southern areas) would reopen on Friday and Saturday only, until the remaining quota is projected to be taken.

Rationale: From 1996-2000, there was a provision in the catch sharing plan that set aside 1,000 lbs of halibut for the northern nearshore area. This was revised in 2001 to include language which provided for a nearshore fishing opportunity if quota remained that was insufficient for an offshore fishery, but sufficient for a nearshore fishery. For 2004, this language was again revised and the reference providing a specific nearshore fishing opportunity was removed. There are some people, primarily smaller boat anglers, that would like to reinstate a set aside of quota for nearshore fishing opportunity. After much discussion, it was decided that 1,000 lbs may be too small an amount to manage to (as an increase in the weekly average weight could potentially use the remaining quota). With regard to reopening on Friday and Saturday only, the Department has sampling goals that need to be met and port sampling staff are overtaxed with sampling both salmon and halibut fisheries when they are open simultaneously. As such, reopening the nearshore area on Friday and Saturday only, when salmon fishing is closed, would allow sampling

- staff to sample both fisheries without compromising the attainment of sampling goals.
3. Add a statement to the north coast and south coast subareas that sets an annual bag limit of five halibut per person, per calendar year. The Department would require its Catch Record Card (currently required in Puget Sound) to apply to the coastal marine areas for halibut as well. Recreational fishers would be required to record their catches on the Catch Record Card, which can be inspected by enforcement staff during the season and is turned in to the Department at the end of the season.

Rationale: There are many anglers who fish continuously for halibut, resulting in a significant amount of halibut being caught by a fewer amount of individuals. As the fishing effort has increased (dramatically, in some cases), halibut quotas in subareas, such as the north coast, can be attained in less than three weeks. Setting an annual limit on the number of halibut per angler would help distribute the catch among a greater number of individuals. It is thought that a limit at five halibut is a sufficient amount of halibut for an individual in a calendar year, but may be too high to have the desired effect. The intent would be to reevaluate the limit amount for future years, if this provision is adopted. The Department recognizes that there are enforcement issues which need to be addressed with this proposal as, currently, anglers can obtain a replacement Catch Record Card if the original one is lost. Department staff will work with enforcement to address how best to implement this proposal, given these challenges.

4. Add a statement to the north coast and south coast subareas that sets an annual bag limit of five halibut per person, per calendar year, with an additional weekly limit of two halibut per person, per calendar week. Again, the Department would require anglers to complete a Catch Record Card to record their halibut catch.

Rationale: This proposal further assists with achieving the objective of distributing the catch among a greater number of individuals. Having an annual limit of five halibut per person without a weekly limit may not have the desired effect as the fishery in the north coast catches its subquota within a few weeks. This proposal would also address some of the enforcement issues as there is currently a one fish daily bag limit and a two fish daily possession limit. Anglers with multiple limits in their possession must have a portion of the fish in a processed (which includes frozen) form. This proposal would limit anglers to a total of two fish in their possession per calendar week which should be easier to enforce than the current regulations.

(f) SPORT FISHERIES

(1) (ii) Washington north coast subarea.

This sport fishery subarea is allocated 62.2 percent of the first 130,845 lb (59.4 mt) allocated to the Washington sport fishery, and 32 percent of the Washington sport allocation between 130,845 lb (59.4 mt) and 224,110 lb (101.7 mt) (except as provided in section (e)(3) of this Plan). This subarea is defined as all U.S. waters west of the mouth of the Sekiu River, as defined above in paragraph (f)(1)(i), and north of the Queets River (47°31'42" N. lat.). The management objective for this subarea is to provide a quality recreational fishing opportunity during May and the latter part of June. To meet this objective, the north coast subarea quota will be allocated as follows: 72% for the month of May and 28% for the latter part of June.

The fishery will open on ~~the first Tuesday between May 9 and 15~~, **May 1**, and continue 5 days per week (Tuesday through Saturday) until the May allocation is projected to be taken. **If May 1 falls on a Sunday or Monday, the fishery will open on the following Tuesday.** The fishery will then reopen during the third week in June and continue until the remaining quota is projected to be taken, 5 days per week (Tuesday through Saturday.) No sport fishing for halibut is allowed after September 30. If the fishery is closed prior to September 30, and there is insufficient quota remaining to reopen this subarea for another fishing day, then any remaining quota may be transferred inseason to another Washington coastal subarea by NMFS via an update to the recreational halibut hotline. The daily bag limit in all fisheries is one halibut per person with no size limit. **There is an additional limit of two halibut per person, per calendar week, not to exceed five halibut per person, per calendar year. Anglers are required to record their catch and submit a state Catch Record Card to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.** A "C-shaped" yelloweye rockfish conservation area that is closed to recreational groundfish and halibut fishing is defined by the following coordinates in the order listed:

48°18' N. lat.; 125°18' W. long.;
48°18' N. lat.; 124°59' W. long.;
48°11' N. lat.; 124°59' W. long.;
48°11' N. lat.; 125°11' W. long.;
48°04' N. lat.; 125°11' W. long.;
48°04' N. lat.; 124°59' W. long.;
48°00' N. lat.; 124°59' W. long.;
48°00' N. lat.; 125°18' W. long.;
and connecting back to 48°18' N. lat.; 125°18' W. long.

(iii) Washington south coast subarea.

This sport fishery is allocated 12.3 percent of the first 130,845 lb (59.4 mt) allocated to the Washington sport fishery, and 32 percent of the Washington sport allocation between 130,845 lb (59.4 mt) and 224,110 lb (101.7 mt) (except as provided in section (e)(3) of this Plan). This

subarea is defined as waters south of the Queets River (47°31'42" N. lat.) and north of Leadbetter Point (46°38'10" N. lat.). The structuring objective for this subarea is to maximize the season length, while maintaining a quality fishing experience. The fishery will open on May 1. If May 1 falls on a Friday or Saturday, the fishery will open on the following Sunday. The fishery will be open Sunday through Thursday in all areas, except where prohibited, and the fishery will be open 7 days per week in the **northern nearshore** area from Queets River south to 47°00'00" N. lat. and east of 124°40'00". ~~Beginning July 1, the halibut fishery will be open 7 days per week.~~ The fishery will continue until **2,000 lbs. are projected to remain in the quota or** September 30, ~~or until the quota is achieved,~~ whichever occurs first. Subsequent to this closure, **the northern and southern nearshore areas will reopen on Fridays and Saturdays only, until the remaining quota is projected to be taken. The southern nearshore area is defined as the area from 47°00'00" N. lat. south to Leadbetter Point (46°38'10" N. lat.) and east of 124°27'00" W. long.** If there is insufficient quota remaining to reopen this subarea for another fishing day, then any remaining quota may be transferred inseason to another Washington coastal subarea by NMFS via an update to the recreational halibut hotline. The daily bag limit is one halibut per person, with no size limit. **There is an additional limit of two halibut per person, per calendar week, not to exceed five halibut per person, per calendar year. Anglers are required to record their catch and submit a state Catch Record Card to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.**