

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 Portland, Oregon, November 1-5, 2004. Comments 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:

1. Change the opening date of the Washington 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 would open on the first Tuesday after May 1. This proposal would reinstate the traditional May 1 opening date.
2. Close the Washington south coast subarea fishery when 2,000 pounds are projected to remain in the subarea quota. Subsequent to this closure, the nearshore area (northern [east of 124°40'00"] and southern [east of 124°27'00"] subareas) would reopen on Friday and Saturday only, until the remaining quota is projected to be taken. This proposal would reinstate some nearshore opportunity that could be used by small vessels.
3. Set an annual bag limit of five halibut per person, per calendar year for the combined Washington north coast and south coast subareas. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) 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 WDFW at the end of the season.
4. In addition to the annual limit of five halibut per person, per calendar year for the combined Washington north coast and south coast subareas, include a weekly limit of two halibut per person, per calendar week. Proposals 3 and 4 are intended to provide opportunity to more individuals and lengthen the season.
5. For the Oregon Cape Falcon to Humbug Mt. all depth recreational spring fishery (May through July), add Thursdays to all openings.
6. For the Oregon Cape Falcon to Humbug Mt. all depth recreational summer fishery (August to October) add Sundays to all openings.

Proposals 5 and 6 would add a third day to scheduled openers to lessen the likelihood that poor weather and ocean conditions would prevent fishing opportunity during scheduled open periods.

7. For the Oregon Cape Falcon to Humbug Mt. all depth recreational summer fishery, increase the daily bag limit to two halibut with a 32-inch minimum length. The summer fishery quota has not been harvested recently, and a second fish in the bag limit may generate additional interest in the fishery.
8. For the Oregon Cape Falcon to Humbug Mt. all depth recreational summer fishery, fishery openings will be scheduled to provide more angler opportunity to harvest the entire season subarea quota.
 - (A) If a two fish bag limit is not adopted: (1) 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. season quota (combined all-depth and inside 40-fathom quotas) is 60,000 pounds or more, the fishery automatically reopens on every Friday through Sunday (versus every other weekend); and (2) 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 will reopen on every Friday through Sunday with a bag limit of two fish at least 32 inches in length. Any excess quota projected to remain after the needs of the inside 40 fathom fishery (scheduled May through October) are met would be transferred into the remaining all-depth quota.
 - (B) If a two fish bag limit is adopted: 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 will reopen on every Friday through Sunday. Any excess quota projected to remain after the needs of the inside 40 fathom fishery (scheduled May through October) are met would be transferred into the remaining all-depth quota.
9. Adopt a “yelloweye rockfish conservation” closure area located on Stonewall Banks. The 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 latitude/longitude waypoints.
10. For the Leadbetter Point, Washington to Cape Falcon, Oregon subarea recreational fishery, split the subarea quota at the Washington/Oregon border, with halibut landed in each state’s ports attributed to its share of the quota. The allocation to the Oregon ports quota would increase from 2% to 4% of the total Oregon/California recreational allocation. This would reduce the quota in the Central Oregon subarea from 95% to 93%. There would be no change in the Washington allocation to its ports quota. When a state’s share of the subarea quota was attained, halibut landings into that state’s ports would be prohibited. The purpose of the proposal is to provide additional opportunity to Oregon anglers in the Columbia River subarea.

11. For all subareas south of Leadbetter Point, Washington, eliminate the minimum length requirement. This would reduce the length of time required to catch the daily limit and allow anglers a quicker return to port, which would improve safety of the fishery. It may also reduce mortality on species of concern, especially canary and yelloweye rockfishes.
12. For all-depth fisheries south of Leadbetter Point, Washington, prohibit retention of groundfish. This would help reduce incidental take on prohibited species such as canary and yelloweye rockfishes.

For additional information on the proposals, contact Ms. Michele Culver (WDFW) for Washington proposals (culvemkc@dfw.wa.gov or 360-249-4628); Mr. Don Bodenmiller (ODFW) for Oregon proposals (Don.Bodenmiller@state.or.us or 541-867-0300) x223; or Chuck Tracy at the Council office (Chuck.Tracy@noaa.gov or 503-820-2280).