

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE PACIFIC HALIBUT CATCH SHARING PLAN FOR THE 2006 FISHERY

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) held two public meetings to discuss proposed changes to the 2006 Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan for fisheries off Oregon. The first meeting occurred on August 18, 2005 in Astoria and the second on September 6, 2005 in Newport. 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.

Columbia River Subarea

Increase the allocation to the Columbia River sub-area from 2.6 to 5 percent of the total Oregon/California sport allocation. This would reduce the allocation in the Central Oregon sub-area from 94.4 to 92 percent. The purpose of the increase is to provide additional angler opportunity in the Columbia River sub-area.

Central Coast Subarea

All-Depth Fisheries

The following proposals are for the purpose of increasing the number of angler days so as to provide sufficient opportunity to harvest the entire catch limit, which has not been taken in recent years.

1. All open periods to occur on consecutive weeks rather than every other week.
2. Change allocation between Spring and Summer seasons from 75%/25% to 80%/20%
3. If 25,000 pounds or more remain available for harvest on the combined all-depth and nearshore fishery catch limit after the Labor Day weekend, the daily bag limit increases to two fish.

Nearshore Fishery

Allow no more than 1 halibut per vessel on all-depth days if rockfish are on vessel. Presently on all-depth days no groundfish, except sablefish, are allowed if a halibut is on the vessel no matter what depth the fishing occurs. The purpose of the groundfish retention prohibition on all-depth dates is to reduce yelloweye and canary rockfish impacts in the offshore fishery. The existing provision prevents the incidental take of halibut in nearshore fisheries on all-depth dates, which is contrary to the objective of the nearshore fishery.

North of Humbug Mt (Columbia River and Central Coast Subareas)

Allow the retention of groundfish, except rockfish, with a halibut on vessel during all-depth openings (see exception for the Nearshore Fishery Central Coast Subarea as discussed above). Current language specifies that all groundfish, except sablefish, cannot be retained with a halibut on vessel, which was originally proposed as a measure to reduce yelloweye and canary rockfish impacts. This has led anglers to discard species such as lingcod and flatfish, which are caught incidentally while targeting halibut. Changing the regulation to still prohibit the retention of rockfish will allow anglers to retain healthier species, while still discouraging targeting of rockfish and subsequent impacts on yelloweye and canary rockfish.

Statewide

Increase the possession limit on land in Oregon from two daily limits to three daily limits. This allows the angler to fish all three open days during all-depth weeks in the central coast and legally transport the fish on land.