

PORT
ORFORD
OCEAN
RESOURCE
TEAM

Agenda Item G.1.d
Public Comment
September 2006

P.O.O.R.T. • PO BOX 679 • PORT ORFORD, OR 97465 • (541) 332-0627 • poort@carrollswab.com

August 24, 2006

Donald K. Hansen, Chairman
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 201
Portland, OR 97220

Dear Chairman Hansen:

I am writing on behalf of the Port Orford Ocean Resource Team (POORT), a nonprofit community fisheries organization, to encourage the Pacific Fishery Management Council to consider our proposal for creating a halibut bycatch fishery for the longline sablefish fishery off the southern Oregon Coast. The fishing community of Port Orford, Oregon has a long history of participation in the Pacific halibut fishery. Management changes over time have diminished the opportunity for our fishermen to access the halibut fishery. The combination of short opening periods and small vessel trip limits in the halibut fishery, and RCA restrictions in the groundfish fishery have almost eliminated Port Orford's ability to catch halibut. Port Orford is a small community that depends on fishery resources for a significant proportion of its income. Small amounts of fish make a big difference for our community.

Currently halibut taken incidentally with sablefish must be discarded south of Pt. Chehalis, Washington. National Standard 9 of the Magnuson-Stevens Acts states that "Conservation and management measures shall, to the extent practicable: (1) Minimize bycatch; and (2) To the extent bycatch cannot be avoided, minimize the mortality of such bycatch." Our proposal would support this national standard reducing bycatch and bycatch mortality of halibut.

Enclosed is a proposal for a change in management for the 2A Halibut program, item G1 on the Agenda, that will address our concerns. The proposal would involve some modification to the Catch Sharing Plan. We will also be attending the halibut user group meeting hosted by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife on August 24th. We will attend the Foster City meeting to also provide public input and be available for questions from the Council.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input into the future management of Pacific halibut. If you have any questions about the proposal, please contact me at (541) 332-0627.

Sincerely,
Leesa Cobb
Program Director

Port Orford and Pacific Halibut – Planning for the Future

Background

The community of Port Orford, Oregon, has a direct economic, cultural, and social connection to the Pacific Northwest halibut fishery; Pacific halibut *Hippoglossus stenolepis* is an abundant resource living in the ocean adjacent to the community. Port Orford commercial fishermen have a long history of participation in the 2A halibut fishery. Beginning in the 1980's, management changes by the International Pacific Halibut Commission, along with Pacific Fishery Management Council spatial management regulations implemented in 2002 have forced Port Orford fishermen out of the fishery.

In 2005 only five Port Orford boats, out of the 40 active vessels eligible to participate, fished in the halibut openers. Specific problems include individual boat quotas set by length of vessel, derby-style fishery openers set during unfavorable weather conditions (strong northwest winds and currents) that create dangerous fishing conditions, and closure of traditional fishing grounds. The community has developed a proposal that would create an incidental halibut fishery in the primary limited entry and open access fisheries for sablefish south of 43° N. lat.

Fishery Management

Since 1923, Pacific halibut has been managed by the United States and Canada through a bilateral commission known as the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC). Each year, the IPHC sets total allowable catch levels for halibut that will be caught in the U.S. and Canadian Exclusive Economic Zones in the northeastern Pacific Ocean. The IPHC refers to U.S. waters off the states of Washington, Oregon, and California collectively as "Area 2A." In 1979, Canada created a limited entry program with individual fishing quotas (IFQs) for the halibut fishery. Following suit, Alaska also implemented an IFQ program in 1995. In the same year, the Pacific Fishery Management Council developed a plan requiring the non-tribal commercial fishermen in Oregon, Washington, and California to choose between participating in the sport charter halibut fishery, commercial directed fishery for halibut, or halibut incidental troll fishery. If the 2A total allowable catch (TAC) is above 900,000 lb, provisions are made to allow for the incidental take of halibut in the sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis (46°53.30' N. lat.). Regulations for Area 2A are set in place by the National Marine Fisheries Service's [Northwest Regional Office](#). Halibut in Area 2A is divided between Tribal and non-Tribal fisheries, between commercial and recreational fisheries, and between recreational fisheries in different states. The [Pacific Fishery Management Council](#) describes this halibut catch division each year in a [Catch Sharing Plan](#).¹

Synopsis of 2A Commercial Regulations

Licensing and Participation:

The IPHC requires a vessel license in area 2A to fish for halibut. Holders of a license may choose to operate either as a charter vessel or a commercial vessel, but not both. Those participating in the sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis, must also possess a longline limited entry permit for the sablefish fishery in addition to the halibut license in order to legally retain incidentally caught halibut. Salmon trollers may also land incidentally caught halibut if they possess a halibut license. Holders of the halibut license may participate in the directed commercial halibut fishery and the sablefish fishery with incidental catch allowance for halibut, or they may participate in the salmon troll fisheries and take halibut incidentally, but not both.

Catch Limits:

Catch limits are initially determined by the IPHC and are based on an annual stock assessment. The 2A stock assessment is based on the quantitative stock assessment of IPHC area 2B and survey information. The 2A biomass is estimated by multiplying results of the 2B quantitative assessment by the ratio of 2A to 2B survey CPUE weighted by halibut habitat area. The TAC set by the IPHC incorporates information about discard mortality occurring in all fisheries. The allowable harvest for Washington, Oregon, and California is apportioned according the aforementioned Council Catch Sharing Plan (Table 1).

Table 1. IPHC Area 2A 2005 Catch Limits.

<i>Fishery</i>	<i>Catch Limits (pounds)</i>
Non-treaty directed commercial (south of Pt. Chehalis)	226,203
Non-treaty incidental catch in salmon troll	39,918
Non-treaty incidental catch in sablefish longline fishery (north of Pt. Chehalis)	70,000
Treaty Indian commercial	452,500
Treaty Indian ceremonial and subsistence (year-round)	38,000
Sport-North of Columbia River	237,257
Sport-South of Columbia River	266,122
Area 2A total	1,330,000

Season and Fishing Period Limits:

The non-treaty directed commercial fishery occurring south of Pt. Chehalis in waters off Washington, Oregon and California can be characterized as a derby fishery. Total catch is set by the IPHC but the Council allocates portions of the catch to the different user groups (see above). The non-treaty directed fishery's portion is determined after subtracting estimates for all other removals, including sport catch, bycatch of legal-sized fish, wastage of legal-sized fish in the halibut fishery, and fish taken for personal use. The fishery is managed by setting 10 hour seasons and typically applies fishing period limits by vessel size to ensure harvest does not exceed the catch limit. For example, in 2005, the non-treaty directed commercial allocation was 226,203 lbs (from above). In area 2A, there is no limited entry program to limit the number of participants in the directed fishery. The IPHC determined there was sufficient effort (by accounting for the number recipients of halibut permits) to require fishing period limits. Period limits are based on relative catch histories by vessel size class (Kaimmer, 1988). Period limits for 2005 are summarized below.

The season opened June 29th at 8:00 AM and ended at 6:00 PM (10 hrs duration). Period limits were in effect at the beginning of the season (Table 2). Three additional 10 hr seasons occurred on July 13th, July 27th, and August 10th. Period limits for the last two 10 hr opener's were successively reduced with the last period limit set at about half of the first period limit (Table3).

Table 2. IPHC Area 2A Fishing period limits for June 29, 2005 season.

<i>Length</i>	<i>Vessel Class</i>		<i>Fishing Period Limit (pounds)</i>	
	<i>Letter</i>		<i>Dressed, head-on</i>	<i>Dressed, head-off</i>
0-25	A		860	755
26-30	B		1,075	945
31-35	C		1,715	1,510
36-40	D		4,735	4,165
41-45	E		5,090	4,480
46-50	F		6,095	5,365
51-55	G		6,800	5,985
56+	H		10,225	9,000

Table 3. IPHC Area 2A Fishing period limits for August 10, 1005 season.

<i>Length</i>	<i>Vessel Class</i>		<i>Fishing Period Limit (pounds)</i>	
	<i>Letter</i>		<i>Dressed, head-on</i>	<i>Dressed, head-off</i>
0-25	A		380	335
26-30	B		475	420
31-35	C		760	670
36-40	D		2,100	1,850
41-45	E		2,260	1,990
46-50	F		2,710	2,385
51-55	G		3,025	2,660
56+	H		4,545	4,000

Area Management:

Rockfish Conservation Area (RCA) regulations in place since 2002 prohibit use of certain gear types within RCA boundaries. Area restrictions between 30 and 100 fm are designed to protect yelloweye rockfish and canary rockfish. A study by Bloeser et al. (2005) indicated that halibut grounds common to Port Orford fishermen fall within RCA boundaries, severely restricting opportunities to harvest halibut (Figure 1).

Size Limits:

The minimum commercial size limit is 32 inches as measured from the tip of the jaw to the middle of the tail, or 24 inches, heads off from the point just forward of the pectoral fin to the middle of the tail. The size limit protects some immature male fish as they begin to mature between the ages of 5 to 13 years at a size of between 30 and 42 inches (Love, 1991). Few of the immature females are protected as they mature between the ages of 8 to 16 years and sizes between 36 and 52 inches (Love, 1991). Yield per recruit analysis have traditionally been used to evaluate size limits, which takes into account the age, size at maturity, fecundity, and growth rate of halibut. Current stock assessments incorporate a selectivity function which reflects the size limit. Harvest levels for the fishery are optimized to maintain a balance between fishing mortality (harvest level), size of entrance into the fishery (size limit and other selectivity factors), and the desired female spawning biomass.

Halibut Incidental Catch Fishery during Salmon Troll Season:

Salmon trollers who obtain an incidental halibut harvest license from the IPHC may retain halibut caught incidentally in Area 2A. License holders may land no more than 1 halibut per 3 Chinook, except 1 halibut may be landed without meeting the ratio requirement and no more than 35 halibut may be landed per trip. Halibut must be legal

size, and those electing to retain incidental halibut may not participated in the directed fishery. The Catch Sharing Plan included an allocation of 39,918 lbs of halibut for the incidental catch in the salmon troll fishery. Once the allocation is taken, halibut may not be retained by salmon trollers.

Halibut Incidental Catch Fishery North of Pt. Chehalis:

Sablefish fishermen with a Limited Entry endorsement for the fixed gear (longline) fishery may retain halibut incidental to the directed sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis. They may also participate in the directed halibut fishery within Area 2A. Incidental catch limits are 100 lbs of halibut (dressed weight) per 1,000 lbs of sablefish (dressed weight), and up to 2 additional halibut in excess of the 100 to 1,000 lbs ratio per landing. In 2005, the Catch Sharing Plan included an allocation of 70,000 lbs of halibut for the incidental catch taken in the sablefish fishery (see Table 1, above). Once the allocation has been taken, halibut may not be retained in the directed sablefish fishery.

Port Orford Fishery Pounds and Value

Port Orford has participated in the directed fishery for commercial halibut for several years (Figure 2). Landings have been as high as 36,000 lb and have averaged around 10,000 lb. Port Orford briefly increased landings in 1986 when more boats began longlining successfully for halibut. IPHC imposed vessel length trip restrictions to control catch in 2A and catches began to decline. Under these regulations, smaller boats received smaller limits and the small boat fleet in Port Orford was adversely affected. Recent landings declined sharply due to RCA restrictions implemented in 2001. Port Orford fishermen experienced reduced opportunities to fish as some of the best halibut grounds near the port fell within the RCA boundaries.

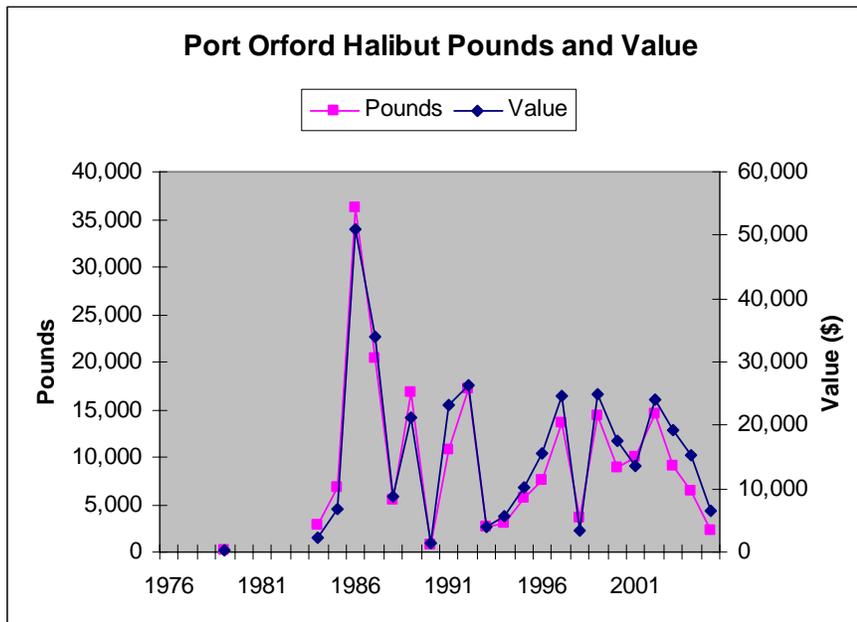


Figure 2. Pounds and value (\$) of Pacific halibut landed into Port Orford (source: Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Pounds and Value Report).

Halibut is a small but important component of the catch mix in Port Orford. Compared to the total commercial fisheries landed catch in Port Orford, halibut represents 0.4 % of the catch by weight and 0.7 % of the value (Table 4).

Table 4. Pounds and value of Port Orford halibut vs. pounds and value Port Orford fish and shellfish.

	<i>Port Orford Halibut</i>			<i>Port Orford Commercial Fish and Shellfish</i>		
	<i>Pounds</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Value/Pounds</i>	<i>Pounds</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>Value/Pounds</i>
20 yr ave. (1986-2005 (partial 05)).	10,455	\$17,535	\$1.78	2,599,082	\$2,560,925	\$0.99
% Halibut in all landings.		0.40%				
% Halibut value of total value		0.68%				

Fleet Characteristics

The Port Orford fleet is presently composed of about 20 open access boats ranging in length from 25 to 38 feet, and 7 vessels with sablefish endorsed permits ranging in length from 34 to 40 feet. The small size of the fleet means that IPHC vessel class period limits have an adverse impact on the Port Orford fleet. Of the 20 open access boats, 17 have nearshore fisheries permits. The 7 sablefish endorsed permitted boats participate in both the weekly trip limit and primary fishery (tier system) for sablefish. Halibut is landed primarily in the directed fishery, although some is also taken incidental to troll salmon.

Bycatch

West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP) data from 2001-2003 indicate bycatch ratios of 8.4% to 23.2% of Pacific halibut to sablefish (total catch of each, prior to discard) in the hook and line fishery for sablefish (NMFS, 2004). Between 81 to 91% of the halibut were discarded. The IPHC assumes a 25% discard mortality (unobserved) of Pacific halibut caught with hook and line gear in the sablefish fishery (Williams, 2004). We propose a bycatch allowance of 10% consistent with the incidental fishery north of Point Chehalis. The rate would allow rules consistent with the incidental fishery north of Point Chehalis: 100 lbs (dressed weight) of halibut per 1,000 lbs of sablefish (dressed weight), and which falls within estimates of bycatch produced by the WCGOP.

Allocation

The Ports of Bandon, Port Orford, Gold Beach, and Brookings were combined in a Southern Oregon (SO) port grouping for purposes of the proposed changes to the CSP. Both SO open access (OA) and limited entry (LE) fleet land halibut and sablefish.

A bycatch cap was estimated using an assumed 10% bycatch rate for sablefish catch by longliners during May-October of the base years 1999-2005. The 10% allowance is consistent with the one established for the longline fishery north of Pt. Chehalis. Sablefish catches by the open access and limited entry fleet averaged 279,292 lb, thus the annual cap was set at 27,292 lb (Table 5). Annual bycatch amounts would still be constrained by the 10% rule. For example, if annual sablefish catches were 200,000 lb, the bycatch of halibut landed could be as high as 20,000 lb. If sablefish catch during the May-October period exceed 279,292 lb, halibut bycatch would be limited to 27,292 lb for the 2A sub-area.

The catch cap of 27,292 lb of halibut would need to be sub-allocated to the south coast bycatch fishery from the existing non-tribal commercial quota share by modifying the CSP.

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Table 5. South coast (Bandon, Port Orford, Gold Beach, Brookings) halibut and sablefish average landings (1999-2005) and estimated bycatch by limited entry (LE) and open access (OA) fleet. Estimated bycatch based on an assumed 10% ratio of halibut to sablefish. Gear types include longline and hook and line. Dressed weight fish included were converted to round weight. LE and OA fleet catch by longline gear only.

Year	Sablefish (lb)	Sablefish OY (mt)	South Coast	Halibut (lb)	2A Halibut Biomass (millions of lb)	10% of Sablefish (lb)	Sablefish (lb) May-October	10% of Sablefish (lb) May-October
1999	348,799	7,900	2.0%	11,319	5.36	34,880	343,562	34,356
2000	304,795	7,900	1.8%	11,514	6.11	30,480	295,194	29,519
2001	264,420	7,011	1.7%	21,398	7.44	26,442	255,202	25,520
2002	140,416	4,596	1.4%	13,147	9.25	14,042	139,350	13,935
2003	356,565	6,794	2.4%	7,085	9.10	35,657	305,456	30,546
2004	318,296	7,786	1.9%	2,767	8.50	31,830	274,606	27,461
2005	571,684	7,761	3.3%	21,230	7.00	57,168	341,672	34,167
2006 ¹	353,706	7,634	--	--	7.60	35,371	300,008	30,001
Average ²	329,282	7,107	2.1%	12,637	7.54	32,928	279,292	27,929

¹ Estimated landings in 2006 are based on the average fraction of coastwide sablefish OY taken south of 43° N. lat. to the Oregon/California by the longline fishery during base years 1999-2005. The average fraction, expressed as a percentage is 2.1% and the sablefish OY is 7,634 metric tons. sablefish OY is 7,634 metric tons.

² Averages based on base years 1999-2005.

Proposed Rule Change

Proposed rule changes suggested here would affect the area south of 43° N. lat. to the Oregon/California border – the operational area for the Port Orford fleet. Affected ports would be Bandon, Port Orford, Gold Beach, and Brookings and vessels delivering there – collectively referred to as the Southern Oregon (SO) fleet. It should also be noted that the 43° N. lat. line is south of Bandon. For purposes of discussion of this proposal, we assume that the fishermen from Bandon who elect to fish sablefish in the bycatch fishery would elect to deliver into ports south of 43° N. lat.

Currently, south coast Pacific halibut landings are mostly from the directed fishery in 2A with a small portion from halibut caught incidental to the troll salmon fishery. All halibut caught south of Pt. Chehalis in other fisheries including open access and primary sablefish fisheries must be released. The proposed rule changes would require changes to the Pacific halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) and would provide for an incidental fishery and directed fishery for halibut.

Meetings were held with representatives of Port Orford fishermen on October 25, 2005 and with ODFW on December 12, 2005. Most of the Port Orford representatives favored changes allowing the taking of halibut incidental to the sablefish fishery, patterned after a similar regulation (See Option 1, Status Quo below) off the Washington coast north of Point Chehalis. Several potential options were discussed including the ability to fish in the directed commercial halibut fishery to the north and the incidental fishery south of the “700” line (43° N. lat.), inclusion of open access fishermen in the incidental fishery, and the ability to bring fish back from the directed fishery south of 43° N. lat. by using a declaration process. Currently, those fishing the directed fishery for halibut must not fish longline gear for 72 hrs prior to the halibut season opener in area 2A. We propose that declaration procedures adopted in the past by ODFW be employed to allow fishermen to bring fish back south that were caught in the directed fishery. It is also the intention of the proposed regulation to prohibit fishing for halibut as bycatch in the sablefish fishery during the short directed fishery for halibut (i.e. no mixing of modes). When fishermen are participating in the bycatch fishery south of 43° N. lat., they would be required to deliver fish to ports within 43° N. lat. and the Oregon / California border. Halibut landed as bycatch must be recorded on the same fish ticket.

Option 2 allows open access vessels and limited entry vessels having a fixed gear-sablefish endorsement to participate in the incidental fishery for Pacific halibut while fishing for sablefish. All options assume that changes in CSP allocations to the commercial fishery would be required to accommodate the incidental fishery. Allocation to the new incidental fishery south of 43° N. lat. would be based on historical catches of sablefish and the incidental catch ratios used in the north of Pt. Chehalis fishery.

Option 1, Status Quo:

Retention of Incidental Halibut Catch in the Primary Sablefish Fishery North of Pt. Chehalis, WA (note, original rule has been edited and drafted with 2006 quota information)

The Pacific halibut CSP and implementing regulations at 50 CFR 300.63 (b)(3) provide for retention of halibut landed incidentally in the limited entry, longline primary sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis, WA (46° 53.30' N.lat.) in years when the Area 2A TAC is above 900,000 lb (408.2 mt). The 2006 Area 2A TAC is 1,380,000 lb (626 mt).

According to IPHC and Federal regulations, Pacific halibut may not be taken by other than hook-and-line gear. Only vessels registered for use with sablefish-endorsed limited entry permits may participate in the primary fixed gear sablefish fishery specified for halibut retention in the CSP. Vessels must also carry IPHC commercial halibut licenses in order to retain and land halibut. Incidental halibut retention in the primary sablefish fishery is only available to vessels operating north of Pt. Chehalis, WA (46° 53.30' N. Lat.). Under Pacific halibut regulations at 50 CFR 300.63, halibut taken and retained in the primary sablefish fishery may not be possessed or landed in the area south of Pt. Chehalis, WA (46° 53.30' N. Lat.).

Similar to 2006, halibut caught incidentally in the primary sablefish fishery may be retained by appropriately licensed longline vessels. In 2007, the amount of incidental halibut retained in the primary sablefish fishery is capped at 70,000 lb (31.8 mt) north of Pt. Chehalis, to ensure that the fishery is maintained as an incidental and not as a directed fishery. The objective for setting annual landing restrictions is to reach the halibut quota for this fishery at about the same time as the primary sablefish season ends, October 31, and to ensure an equitable sharing of halibut landings among fishers. To achieve this objective, incidental halibut retention in the sablefish fishery over the past few years has been structured as a ratio of halibut landings permitted in relation to sablefish landings.

Therefore, the Pacific Council recommended, and NMFS is implementing the following: Beginning May 1, 2007, and continuing until the halibut quota (70,000 lbs or 31.8 mt) is taken, longliners eligible to participate in the primary sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis, WA (46° 53.30' N. lat) (see also 50 CFR 660.372(a)) with appropriate IPHC licenses may retain incidental halibut landings up to 100 lbs (45 kg) (dressed weight) of halibut for every 1,000 lbs (454 kg) (dressed weight) of sablefish landed and up to two additional halibut in excess of the 100 lb (45 kg) per 1,000 lb (454 kg) ratio per landing. Halibut may not be on board a vessel that has any gear other than longline gear on board (e.g., pot or trawl gear).

Option 2:

Retention of Incidental Halibut Catch in the Sablefish Fishery South of 43° N. lat. to the Oregon/California Border (with provision to land Pacific halibut taken north of 43° N. lat. in the directed halibut fishery, south of 43° N. lat.)

The Pacific halibut CSP and implementing regulations at 50 CFR 300.63 (b)(3) provide for retention of halibut landed incidentally in the sablefish fishery south of 43° N. lat. to the Oregon/California border in years when the Area 2A TAC is above 900,000 lb (408.2 mt). The 2006 Area 2A TAC is 1,380,000 lb (626 mt).

According to IPHC and Federal regulations, Pacific halibut may not be taken by other than hook-and-line gear. Only vessels 1) registered for use with appropriate Federal sablefish-endorsed limited entry permits, or 2) **open access vessels participating in the hook-and-line groundfish fishery for sablefish may participate retain incidental Pacific halibut.** Vessels must also carry IPHC commercial halibut licenses in order to retain and land halibut. Incidental halibut retention in the primary and open access sablefish fishery is only available to vessels operating south of 43° N. lat. to the Oregon/California border. Under Pacific halibut regulations at 50 CFR 300.63, halibut taken and retained in the primary and open access sablefish fishery south of 43° N. lat. may not be possessed or landed in the area north of 43° 00' N. lat. **or south of the Oregon/California border.** Pacific halibut taken north of 43° N. lat. directed fishery targeting halibut may not be possessed or landed south of 43° N. lat. without the vessel operator first making a declaration by providing 24 hrs notice to the National Marine Fisheries Service or **designee,** of intent to land fish taken north and landed south of 43° N. lat.

In 2006, the amount of incidental halibut retained in the primary and open access sablefish fishery is capped at (**the amount specified in the CSP**) south of 43° N. lat., to ensure that the fishery is maintained as an incidental and not as a directed fishery. The objective for setting annual landing restrictions is to reach the halibut quota for this fishery at about the same time as the sablefish season ends, to ensure an equitable sharing of halibut landings among fishers. To achieve this objective, incidental halibut retention in the sablefish fishery over the past few years has been structured as a ratio of halibut landings permitted in relation to sablefish landings.

Therefore, the Pacific Council recommended, and NMFS is implementing the following: Beginning May 1, 2007, and continuing until the halibut quota (**the amount specified in the CSP** in Area 2A south of 43° N. lat.) is taken or until October 31, 2007, longliners eligible to participate in the primary and open access sablefish fishery south of 43° N. lat. (see also 50 CFR 660.372(a)) with appropriate IPHC licenses may retain incidental halibut landings up to 100 lbs (45 kg) (dressed weight) of halibut for every 1,000 lbs (454 kg) (dressed weight) of sablefish landed and up to two additional halibut in excess of the 100 lb (45 kg) per 1,000 lb (454 kg) ratio per landing. Halibut may not be on board a vessel that has any gear other than longline gear on board (e.g., pot or trawl gear).

Rationale

This option provides for an incidental fishery in Southern Oregon waters where access to Pacific halibut grounds is limited and participation in the directed halibut fishery is problematical. Option 2 is flexible, allowing open access and limited entry fishermen the ability to participate in the incidental fishery and directed fishery for Pacific halibut. Pacific halibut and sablefish are caught by both open access and limited entry fleets and their contributions to the south coast small port economies are both important. This option allows both classes of fishermen to retain some halibut while fishing for sablefish, thus making better use of the resource. Potential expansion of the open access fleet and/or increased halibut catch is constrained in several ways: 1) the amount of Pacific halibut allocated for the incidental fishery has been limited with a harvest cap, and 2) open access fishing for sablefish is typically constrained by small trip limits. For example, 2006 sablefish trip limits for the open access fishery are 300 lb per day or 1,000 lb per week, not to exceed 3,000 to 5,000 lb per 2 month period (depending on the time of year).

The ratio of incidental catch of halibut is consistent with the incidental fishery north of Pt. Chehalis, is based on historical catches of sablefish in the SO area, and falls within the catch ratios estimated by the WCGOP. The cap of 27,929 lbs falls within a range of bycatch that might be reasonably expected in the sablefish longline fishery. Note that although the cap is based on a round weight, it is assumed that the application of the ration of 100 lbs of halibut to 1,000 lbs of sablefish would be in terms of dressed weight. We anticipate less participation by the SO fleet in the directed fishery due to the difficulties the fleet has had (described above) and benefits of an incidental fishery (non-derby fishery, better use of bycatch, spreading catch throughout season, etc.).

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