

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE PACIFIC HALIBUT CATCH SHARING PLAN FOR THE 2007 FISHERY

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) held two public meetings (Astoria and Newport) to discuss proposed changes to the Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan for 2007 sport fisheries off Oregon. Additionally, ODFW held a public meeting to discuss a proposed change by the Port Orford community to the 2007 commercial fishery for the Oregon area south of 43° N. Latitude. Public input received at the meetings and through correspondence to ODFW is summarized in this report.

Columbia River

In 2006, the Columbia River season was divided into a spring and a summer season. This new summer season was afforded due to a shift in allocation from the Central Oregon Coast sport fishery; doubling the Oregon contribution to the Columbia River sport fishery, and comprising 65 percent of the total Columbia River quota. The spring season opened May 1, and continued seven days per week until May 27, when the fishery closed due to attainment of the spring quota of 14,819 lbs. The summer season opened August 4 and continued every Friday-Sunday through September 3, when the fishery closed due to attainment of the 21,170 lbs combined spring/summer quota.

Public comments regarding the 2007 Columbia River sport fishery:

1. Split the Columbia River subarea quota into two quotas, one for Washington and one for Oregon where each state's quota must be landed into that state.
2. Increase the Oregon allocation to the Columbia River subarea.
3. Combine the Columbia River Oregon fishery with the central coast Oregon fishery as one subarea (either all season or for the summer season only).

Central Coast Subarea

Nearshore Fishery

In 2006, the nearshore fishery opened May 1, seven days per week, inside the 40-fathom line (*defined by waypoints*) through the earlier of the revised quota of 10,345 lbs or Oct. 31. Currently, this fishery is open, as the quota has not been attained.

All-Depth Fishery

The 2006 spring fishery was opened on May 11, and was open on 21 predetermined set and alternate days through July 8. The spring quota was 175,474 lbs and 183,690 lbs were taken. The summer season opened on August 4, and continued every other Friday through Sunday through Labor Day weekend. Beginning September 8, the fishery began operating on a weekly basis (Friday – Sunday), and the daily bag limit was increased to 2 fish. The fishery is scheduled to continue through October 29, or until the revised combined spring/summer all-depth quota of 243,965 lbs is taken.

Public comments relative to the Oregon Central Coast subarea all-depth fishery (the participants of the public meeting in Newport recommended that options 1-3 be combined as a package):

1. Increase the spring portion of the subarea allocation from 75% to 80%.
2. Structure the spring season to open Friday through Sunday, or Thursday through Sunday.
3. Move the inseason date to consider adding a second fish to the daily bag limit from the week after Labor Day to mid-August.
4. Weekly Friday through Sunday fisheries.
5. Allow trolling for salmon in the Stonewall Bank RCA with a halibut on the vessel.

Coastwide

Many public comments received applied to fisheries along the entire Oregon coast:

1. Increase the Pacific halibut daily bag limit to 2 fish.
2. Reestablish the 32-inch minimum length requirement.
3. Allow lingcod harvest either just in the nearshore fishery or in both the nearshore and the all-depth fishery.
4. Allow groundfish retention in conjunction with Pacific halibut.

Directed Commercial Fishery

A public meeting was held in Newport to review a proposal received from the Port Orford community to initiate an incidental retention fishery in the directed sablefish fishery for the Oregon area south of 43° N. Latitude. Meeting participants were generally supportive of the proposal, though there was concern about the level of allocation initially requested. It is our understanding that the requested allocation has been modified to address those concerns.

Oregon Recommendation:

Based on recent increased allocation to the Columbia River subarea from Oregon, ongoing status of the central coast sport fishery, meeting comments, enforcement concerns, and other public input, the ODFW proposes no change to the Catch Sharing Plan for 2007.