

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON PROPOSED
CHANGES TO CATCH SHARING PLAN
AND 2010 ANNUAL REGULATIONS

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) held a recreational halibut meeting to develop and consider proposed changes to the Pacific Fishery Management Council's Catch Sharing Plan for 2010, in Montesano, on August 20, 2009.

As noted last year, one concern that continues to be expressed is with regard to ensuring that the public receives adequate notice in advance of halibut season openers and closures. In response, for the 2009 season, WDFW worked with constituents to identify specific time periods pre-season that would be closed to halibut fishing in both the North Coast and South Coast subareas. These closures are intended to provide staff time to tally the catch and provide notice for additional openings if sufficient quota remains. We are proposing to extend the same approach to the Columbia River area and to work with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to identify those time periods pre-season.

Based on the public input we received, we would support the following changes to the 2010 Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan for Area 2A, section (f) SPORT FISHERIES, to be approved for public review, in addition to the status quo alternative.

Washington South Coast Sub-area

For this area, implement the following changes:

- a) Continue the Sunday, Tuesday primary season structure through the third week in May. For the fourth week in May, the primary fishery will be open on Sunday only. Beginning the following week, the fishery would resume the Sunday, Tuesday structure until the primary season quota is attained.
- b) Specify that the season will be open in the nearshore area seven days per week.
- c) Revise the nearshore area to align the northern and western boundaries with the line approximating the 30-fm depth restriction.
- d) On days that the primary halibut season is open, allow the retention of lingcod seaward of the 30-fm line.

Rationale:

- a) Revising the days open per week balances the harvest opportunity between those who like to fish on weekends and those who like to fish weekdays. Having the fourth week open only on Sunday allows us to tally the catch and provide sufficient notice of a reopener the following week, if quota is available.

- b) Increasing the number of days that the nearshore fishery is open during the primary season and after the offshore quota is reached will allow better access to the set aside quota and reduce the amount of incidentally caught halibut that would otherwise be discarded.
- c) Currently, the nearshore boundary and the 30-fm line overlap (see Figure 1). Aligning the nearshore boundary with the 30-fm line (Figure 2) would promote ease of compliance and enforcement. In talking with charter operators who fish in the nearshore area targeting bottomfish, there are no “targetable” areas for halibut within the revised area, so this would remain an incidental retention opportunity.
- d) The 30-fm restriction is in place primarily for the protection of yelloweye rockfish; however, during days that the primary halibut season is open, anglers have been forced to discard lingcod caught while targeting halibut offshore without encountering yelloweye rockfish. Those same anglers then moved shoreward of 30 fms only to catch smaller lingcod or no lingcod at all. WDFW accounts for incidental yelloweye catches associated with the halibut fishery under current management and this change is not expected to increase yelloweye harvest above current estimates. In any event, WDFW will monitor Washington’s yelloweye harvest, and will take inseason action as appropriate to ensure our harvest target is not exceeded.

Figure 1. Current configuration.

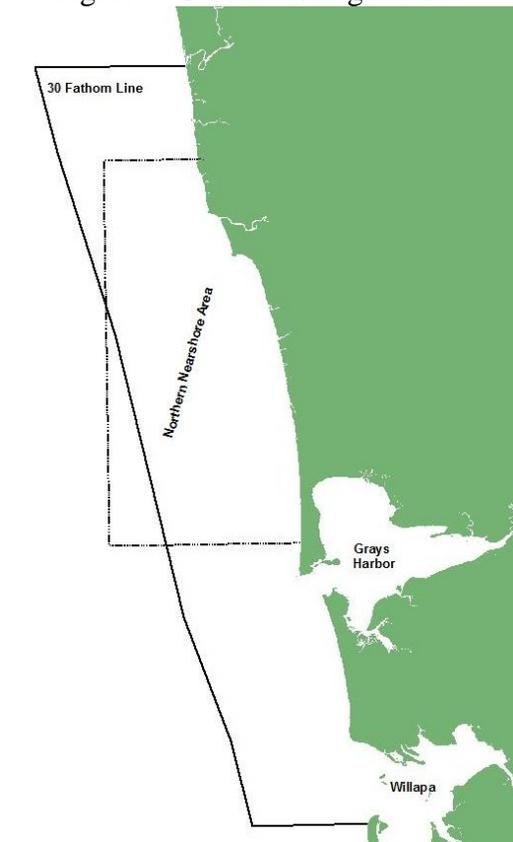
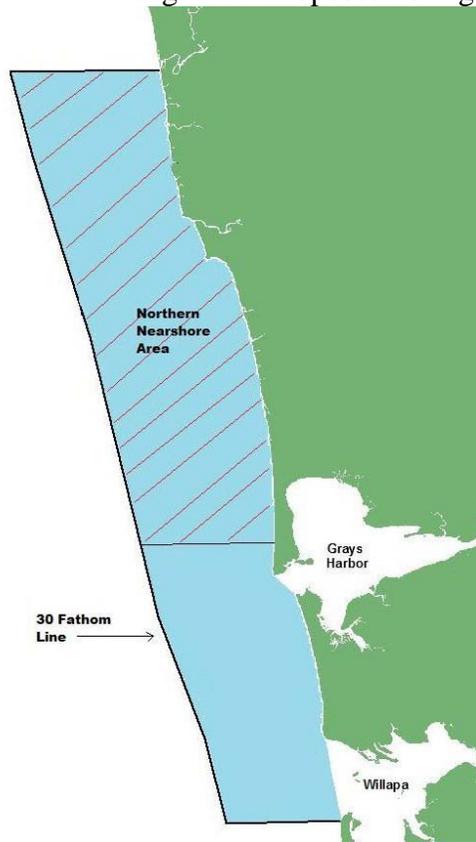


Figure 2. Proposed configuration.



Suggested revisions to the Catch Sharing Plan language to incorporate the above proposed changes are as follows:

(f) SPORT FISHERIES

(1) (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°31.70' N. lat.) and north of Leadbetter Point (46°38.17' N. lat.). The structuring objective for this subarea is to maximize the season length, while maintaining a quality fishing experience. The south coast subarea quota will be allocated as follows: 10% or 2,000 pounds, whichever is less, will be set aside for the nearshore fishery with the remaining amount allocated to the primary fishery. The fishery will open on the first Sunday in May. The primary fishery will be open two days per week, Sunday and Tuesday, in all areas, except where prohibited. ~~Starting~~ **During** ~~the third~~ **fourth** week in May, the primary fishery will be open on Sundays only. **Beginning the following week, the fishery would continue two days per week, Sunday and Tuesday,** until the quota for the primary fishery season is reached or September 30, whichever is earlier. If there is insufficient quota remaining to reopen the primary fishery for another fishing day, the remaining primary fishery quota will be added to the nearshore quota. The nearshore fishery takes place, in the area from ~~47°25.00'~~ **47°31.70'** N. lat. south to 46°58.00' N. lat. and **east of a line approximating 30 fathoms as described by the following coordinates:**

47°31.70' N. lat, 124°37.03' W. long

47°25.67' N. lat, 124°34.79' W. long

47°12.82' N. lat, 124°29.12' W. long

46°58.00' N. lat, 124°24.24' W. long

~~124°30.00' W. long.~~ During the primary season the nearshore fishery will be open ~~three~~ **seven** days per week, ~~Thursday, Friday and Saturday, in addition to any days on which the primary fishery is open.~~ Subsequent to the closure of the primary fishery, the nearshore fishery will continue ~~on Thursdays, Friday, Saturdays and Sundays~~ **seven days per week** until the remaining quota is projected to be taken. If the fishery is closed prior to September 30, and there is insufficient quota remaining to reopen the nearshore areas 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.

Recreational fishing for groundfish and halibut is prohibited within two YRCA's off Washington's southern coast. The South Coast Recreational YRCA and the Westport Offshore YRCA are defined by straight lines connecting latitude and longitude coordinates. Coordinates for these Recreational YRCAs are specified in groundfish regulations at 50 CFR 660.390 and will be specifically defined annually in federal halibut regulations published in the *Federal Register*.