

REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION
ANNUAL MEETING

Mr. Phil Anderson, Council representative to the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC), attended the annual meeting of the IPHC in January, along with where the overall halibut harvest levels for 2007 were set, including that for Area 2A (Agenda Item F.1.a, Attachment 1). Mr. Anderson will provide a brief summary of the results of the meeting (Agenda Item F.1.b, Meeting Summary).

Council Task:

1. Discuss information relative to Area 2A halibut fisheries.

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item F.1.a, Attachment 1: IPHC News Release.
2. Agenda Item F.1.b, Meeting Summary: Summary of International Pacific Halibut Commission Meeting

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview
- b. Summary of Meeting
- c. Agency and Tribal Comments
- d. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- e. Public Comment
- f. Council Discussion

Chuck Tracy
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PFCMC
02/13/07

News Release

P.O. Box 95009, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98145-2009

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HALIBUT COMMISSION COMPLETES 2007 ANNUAL MEETING

The International Pacific Halibut Commission completed its Eighty-third Annual Meeting in Victoria, B.C., with Dr. Laura J. Richards of Nanaimo, B.C. presiding as Chair. The Commission is recommending to the governments of Canada and the United States, catch limits for 2007 totaling 65,170,000 pounds, a 6.7% decrease from the 2006 catch limit of 69,860,000 pounds.

The Commission staff reported on the 2006 Pacific halibut stock assessment which implemented a coastwide estimation of biomass, compared with previous assessments which assessed stock biomass for each individual IPHC regulatory area. The total stock biomass identified by the coastwide assessment is approximately the same as the sum of that from the regulatory area assessments. However, the Commission believed that further examination of options for partitioning the coastwide biomass estimate into estimates of biomass for each regulatory area was required before it adopted the new approach. Accordingly, the Commission relied on the previous methodology of separate regulatory area assessments as the basis for determining catch limits. Lower catch rates in the eastern area of the halibut stock prompted the Commission to recommend more restrictive catch limits for this portion of the stock. Pending recruitment from the 1994 and 1995 year classes appears to be relatively strong in most areas, although Area 4B is showing a notably lower level of recruitment of these same year classes compared with other regulatory areas.

For 2007, the Commission continued with a 22.5% harvest rate for use in Areas 2A through 3A and a rate of 20% for Areas 3B through 4E. Low levels of recruitment and lower estimated levels of productivity in Areas 4B and 4CDE continued to support harvest rates lower than 20% for these areas. Accordingly, the Commission adopted catch limits based on a harvest rate of 15% for Areas 4B and 4CDE. The IPHC conducted additional research projects in Areas 4CDE during 2006 and the results provided an improved assessment base for these areas, however the survey catch rate on the eastern Bering Sea shelf is still estimated to be low, compared with other commercial fishing areas.

Seasons and Catch Limits

The Commission received regulatory proposals for 2007 from the scientific staff, Canadian and United States harvesters and processors, and other fishery agencies. The Commission will recommend to the governments the following catch limits for 2007 in Area 2A (California, Oregon, and Washington), Area 2B (British Columbia), Area 2C (southeastern Alaska), Area 3A (central Gulf), Area 3B (western Gulf), Area 4A (eastern Aleutians), Area 4B (western Aleutians), Area 4C (Pribilof Islands), Area 4D (northwestern Bering Sea), and Area 4E (Bering Sea flats):

2007 Catch Limits

Regulatory Area	Catch Limit (pounds)
Area 2A	
Non-treaty directed commercial (south of Pt. Chehalis)	227,955
Non-treaty incidental catch in salmon troll fishery	40,227
Non-treaty incidental catch in sablefish longline fishery (north of Pt. Chehalis)	70,000
Treaty Indian commercial	461,000
Treaty Indian ceremonial and subsistence (year-round)	33,000
Sport – North of Columbia River	239,636
<u>Sport – South of Columbia River</u>	<u>268,182</u>
Area 2A total	1,340,000
Area 2B (includes sport catch allocation)	11,470,000
Area 2C	8,510,000
Area 3A	26,200,000
Area 3B	9,220,000
Area 4A	2,890,000
Area 4B	1,440,000
Area 4C	1,866,500
Area 4D	1,866,500
	<u>367,000</u>
<i>Area 4E</i>	8,430,000
<i>Area 4 total</i>	
Total	65,170,000

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada (DFO) will allocate the adopted Area 2B catch limit between sport and commercial fisheries.

The IPHC sets biologically-based catch limits for Areas 4A, 4B, and a combined Area 4CDE. The catch limits for Regulatory Areas 4C, 4D, and 4E reflect the catch-sharing plan implemented by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC). The catch-sharing plan allows Area 4D Community Development Quota (CDQ) harvest to be taken in Area 4E.

The catch-sharing plan implemented by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) for Area 2A was adopted by the Commission and is reflected in the catch limits adopted for the Area 2A fisheries. In Area 2A, seven 10-hour fishing periods for the non-treaty directed commercial fishery are recommended: June 27, July 11, July 25, August 8, August 22, September 5, and September 19, 2007. All fishing periods will begin at 8:00 a.m. and end at 6:00 p.m. local time, and will be further restricted by fishing period limits announced at a later date.

Area 2A fishing dates for an incidental commercial halibut fishery concurrent with salmon troll fishing seasons, and the incidental commercial halibut fishery during the sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, will be established under United States domestic regulations by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The remainder of the Area 2A catch-sharing plan, including sport fishing seasons and depth restrictions, will be determined under regulations promulgated by NMFS. For further information of the depth restrictions in the commercial directed halibut fishery, incidental halibut during the sablefish fishery, and the sport fisheries, call the NMFS hotline (1-800-662-9825).

After reviewing staff information and proposals from the harvesting and processing sector, the Commission approved a season opening date of March 10. The Saturday opening date is to facilitate marketing. Therefore, seasons will commence at 12 noon local time on March 10 and terminate at 12 noon local time on November 15, 2007 for the following fisheries and areas: the Canadian Individual Vessel Quota (IVQ) fishery in Area 2B, and the United States Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) and CDQ fisheries in Areas 2C, 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, and 4E. All Area 2A commercial fishing including the treaty Indian commercial fishery will fall within March 10 – November 15, 2007.

Regulatory Changes and Issues

The Commission approved regulations to change the California sport fishery possession limit as part of the catch sharing plan. The sport fishery possession limit on land and on the water in California will be one daily bag limit.

For Area 2B, the Commission adopted a regulation to allow the retention of halibut in sablefish trap gear during the halibut IQ season, provided that harvesters had obtained halibut quota shares for the mortality and retention of halibut. This was passed to assist DFO with the Integrated Groundfish Fisheries Plan, which is a three-year pilot program. The regulation will be reviewed at the 2009 IPHC Annual Meeting to determine if retention of halibut in sablefish traps should continue to be allowed.

For Alaska, the Commission agreed to revise the regulation which prohibits the processing or mutilation of sport caught halibut that prevents the determination of the minimum size or number of fish. The regulation change limits the application to on board the catcher vessels only, so that halibut may be subsequently cut up as necessary off of the vessel.

The Commission agreed to change the recording date from December 1 to November 1 for the CDQ managers to report the amount of sublegal-sized halibut retained in Area 4E and 4D CDQ fisheries.

IPHC regulations require that halibut caught in the commercial fishery that are not retained shall be immediately released outboard of the roller and returned to the sea with minimum of injury. The Commission agreed to revise the regulation to allow halibut to be measured on board the vessel to determine if they meet the legal-size limit and to then be returned to the sea with minimal injury.

The Commission noted that Guideline Harvest Levels (GHL) approved by the NPFMC for the charter/guided recreational halibut fishery in Areas 2C (southeast Alaska) and 3A (central Gulf of Alaska) were exceeded in recent years, substantially so in Area 2C (over 40% higher than the GHL in 2006). Commission staff initiated dialogue with the NPFMC to determine what control measures would be enacted by the Council to constrain harvest to the GHLs in 2007. The NPFMC indicated that, although it is committed to management of this fishery to the GHL limits, it would not be able to

complete analyses and develop a regulatory framework to effect control of this fishery until 2008. The Commission, with the support of its advisory bodies, therefore passed a regulation for a one-fish halibut bag limit for sport guided charter fishing in Area 2C from June 15 - July 31, 2007 and for Area 3A from June 15 - 30, 2007. These bag limit regulations will be effective until the implementation by the U.S. government of domestic regulations to achieve halibut mortality reductions consistent with those that would be achieved by the IPHC recommendations. The Commission takes this action with some reluctance but believes the action to be necessary, given the magnitude by which the charter/guided catches exceeded the GHL limits and the belief that such overharvesting puts at risk the achievement of IPHC management goals for the halibut stock.

Other Actions

The Commission spent considerable time discussing migration, coastwide stock assessment versus closed-area stock assessment, and apportionment among regulatory areas. The Conference Board and Commission staff recommended a workshop be held to allow the industry and agencies to better understand the coastwide stock assessment model. The Commission staff was tasked with determining the best method for the workshop and review, in consultation with the respective agencies.

In addition, the Conference Board requested a report on the effects of hook straightening and careful release in relation to halibut viability. The Commission staff will complete a report prior to next year's Annual Meeting. The Commission will continue its research in Areas 4B and 4CDE, which was also highlighted by the Conference Board.

The Commission honoured Mr. Dylan Hardie of Courtenay, B.C. as the fifth recipient of the IPHC Merit Scholarship. Mr. Hardie was presented with a certificate and plaque, as well as the scholarship of \$2,000 (U.S.). The Commissioners expressed their continued support for the scholarship program and commended the Scholarship Committee for their efforts in assessing the candidates.

The recommended regulations for the 2007 halibut fishery will become official as soon as they are approved by the Canadian and United States Governments. The Commission will publish and distribute regulation pamphlets.

The next Annual Meeting of the Commission is planned for Oregon, at or near Portland, from January 22 to 25, 2008. The United States Government Commissioner, Dr. James W. Balsiger of Juneau AK, was elected Chair for the coming year. The Canadian Government Commissioner, Dr. Laura J. Richards of Nanaimo B.C., was elected Vice-Chair. Other Canadian Commissioners are Clifford Atleo (Port Alberni, B.C.) and Gary Robinson (Vancouver, B.C.). The other United States Commissioners are Ralph Hoard (Seattle, WA) and Phillip Lestenkof (St. Paul, AK). Dr. Bruce M. Leaman is the Executive Director of the Commission.

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SUMMARY OF INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION MEETING

There were two issues that occupied the majority of the discussions at this year's annual International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC):

- 1) A new stock assessment proposal from IPHC staff contained several new elements, including a coastwide stock assessment approach in place of the traditional closed area assessments for each management area, and a subsequent apportionment calculation that used the set-line survey index for each area that is based on a three year average. In addition, an average selectivity was calculated for all of the management areas combined and then used to calculate a harvest rate for each area; this led to a conclusion that Area 2A has been subjected to a 50% harvest rate over the past several years.
- 2) The second issue was driven by the fact that both Canada and the Southeast Alaska sport fisheries have exceeded their preseason catch expectations by over 600,000 pounds. In Alaska, they divided recreational catch expectations between private boat and charter/guide trips and it's the latter that has been the culprit. The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) has failed in its efforts to put management measures in place to limit the harvests even though they have specified a harvest guideline for the charter/guide fleet. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) maintains they have no authority to regulate the halibut fishery and are asking that the NPFMC delegate the authority to them, which would apparently also require a change in the Treaty language.

Yvonne DeReynier, National Marine Fisheries Service, Don Bodenmiller, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and I had an opportunity to make a presentation to the Commissioners during an executive session regarding 2A issues including the Council's catch sharing plan, our approach to managing our recreational fisheries and staying within our catch quotas, and our concerns relative to the staff's recommendations on stock assessment and area apportionment. I would note that if the staff's new stock assessment and apportionment approach was fully implemented this year the 2A quota would have gone from 1.38 million pounds in 2006 to 660,000 pounds in 2007. The Commission ultimately decided to stick with the historic methodology, which resulted in a 2A quota of 1.34 million pounds for 2007. A work group will be formed to review the alternative approach the staff recommended over the summer, and I recommend that the Council be a part of that review process.

Also, as a result of this approach to setting quotas for 2007, the management areas in the western portion of Alaska had their quotas reduced when they thought they were going to get an increase. IPHC reduced the bag limit in the charter/guide fishery for a portion of the summer months in Southeast Alaska in an effort to prevent another massive overage of the harvest guideline and in view of the fact that the NPFMC representatives and ADFG said they would be unable to take any action in time to affect the 2007 fishery. Sources are indicating that there is a "fire storm" erupting from stakeholders in those areas against the IPHC's actions. The Canadians assured the U.S. Commissioners that they would take appropriate action within their governmental infrastructure to address their sport fishery.

INCIDENTAL CATCH REGULATIONS IN THE SALMON TROLL AND FIXED GEAR SABLEFISH FISHERIES

Regulations governing incidental harvest of halibut in the salmon troll fishery and commercial sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis require the Council to adopt recommended halibut landing restrictions to allow incidental harvest while assuring quotas are not exceeded.

Salmon Troll Fishery

The halibut regulations allocate 15% of the non-Indian commercial halibut allocation in Area 2A to the salmon troll fishery as an incidental catch. Regulations (beginning in 2001) direct that the primary management objective is to harvest the incidental quota in the May/June salmon troll fishery with a secondary objective to harvest any remaining quota during July through September. The Council has successfully used landing ratios and a total trip limit to assure a manageable progression of the fishery in past years. A summary of management information for the incidental halibut fishery since the initial season in 1995 is provided in Agenda Item F.2.a, Attachment 1.

Commercial Sablefish Fishery North of Point Chehalis

The total Area 2A halibut quota is large enough this year (over 900,000 pounds) to provide for an incidental halibut harvest in the commercial sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis. This incidental fishery is allocated that portion of the Washington sport allocation in excess of 214,110 pounds, provided a minimum of 10,000 pounds is available, up to a maximum of 70,000 pounds. In past years, the Council has successfully used landing restrictions to maintain the harvest within the allocation. A summary of management information for the incidental halibut fishery since the initial season in 2001 is provided in Agenda Item F.2.a, Attachment 1.

Council Action:

- 1. Adopt for public review a range of landing restrictions for halibut caught incidentally in the non-Indian commercial troll season that comport with the troll salmon management options and assure a reasonable utilization of the incidental catch while not exceeding the quota.**
- 2. Adopt for public review, a range of landing restrictions, including season dates for incidental halibut harvest in the commercial sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, Washington.**

Reference Materials:

- 1. Agenda Item F.2.a, Attachment 1: Summary of Pacific Halibut Incidental Catch Management.**

Agenda Order:

- a. Agenda Item Overview
- b. State Proposals for the Salmon Troll Fishery
- c. State Proposals for the Fixed Gear Sablefish Fishery
- d. Tribal Comments
- e. Reports and Comments of Advisory Bodies
- f. Public Comment
- g. **Council Action:** Adopt Public Review Options for 2007

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PFMC

02/15/07

SUMMARY OF PACIFIC HALIBUT INCIDENTAL CATCH MANAGEMENT

Salmon Troll Fishery

The table below provides the number of licenses, allocation, harvest, and landing restrictions for the incidental halibut catch in the salmon troll fishery since the initial season in 1995.

Incidental Halibut Management in Area 2A Salmon Troll Fishery.

Year	Licenses Issued					Pounds of Halibut			Restriction	
	WA	OR	CA	AK-2A	Total	Allocation	May/June Harvest	Total Harvest	Halibut per Chinook	Trip Limit
1995	14	104	2	5	125	16,068	2,125	2,125	1 per each 20	None
1996	22	82	5	14	123	16,068	9,521	9,521	1 + 1 per each 15	20
1997	59	187	10	19	275	21,635	17,570	17,570	1 + 1 per each 10	20
1998	44	188	15	18	265	25,344	9,123	13,124	1 + 1 per each 8	25
1999	54	193	12	25	284	23,490	9,955	9,955	1 + 1 per each 5	35
2000	49	154	8	24	235	24,464	20,925	22,350	1 + 1 per each 3	35
2001	63	232	13	37	347	34,046	-	34,100	1 + 1 per each 3	35
2002	60	223	7	41	331	39,300	-	41,000	1 + 1 per each 3	35
2003	60	209	10	44	323	39,300	23,296	41,917	1 + 1 per each 3	35
2004	74	212	11	47	344	44,554	29,174	42,798	1 + 1 per each 3	35
2005	79	249	12	52	392	39,918	22,393	42,187	1 + 1 per each 3	35
2006	54	138	6	26	224	41,464	16,739	34,354	1 + 1 per each 3	35
2007	-	-	-	-	-	40,227			-	-

Commercial Sablefish Fishery North of Point Chehalis

The table below provides the allocation, total harvest, landing restrictions, and season dates for the incidental halibut catch in the fixed-gear sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis since the initial season began in 2001.

Incidental Halibut Management in the Area 2A Sablefish Fishery North of Point Chehalis, Washington.

Year	Pounds of Halibut		Restrictions	
	Allocation	Total Harvest	Halibut per Sablefish (dressed weight)	Season Dates
2001	47,946	26,945	2+80 lb per 1,000 lb	Aug. 15-Oct. 31
2002	88,389	66,599	2+150 lb per 1,000 lb	May 1-Oct 31
2003	70,000	65,325	2+150 lb per 1,000 lb	May 1-Oct 31
2004	70,000	67,837	2+100 lb per 1,000 lb	May 1-Oct 31
2005	70,000	68,013	2+100 lb per 1,000 lb	May 1-Oct 23
2006	70,000	64,624	-2+100 lb per 1,000 lb	May 1-Oct 31
2007	70,000	-	-	-

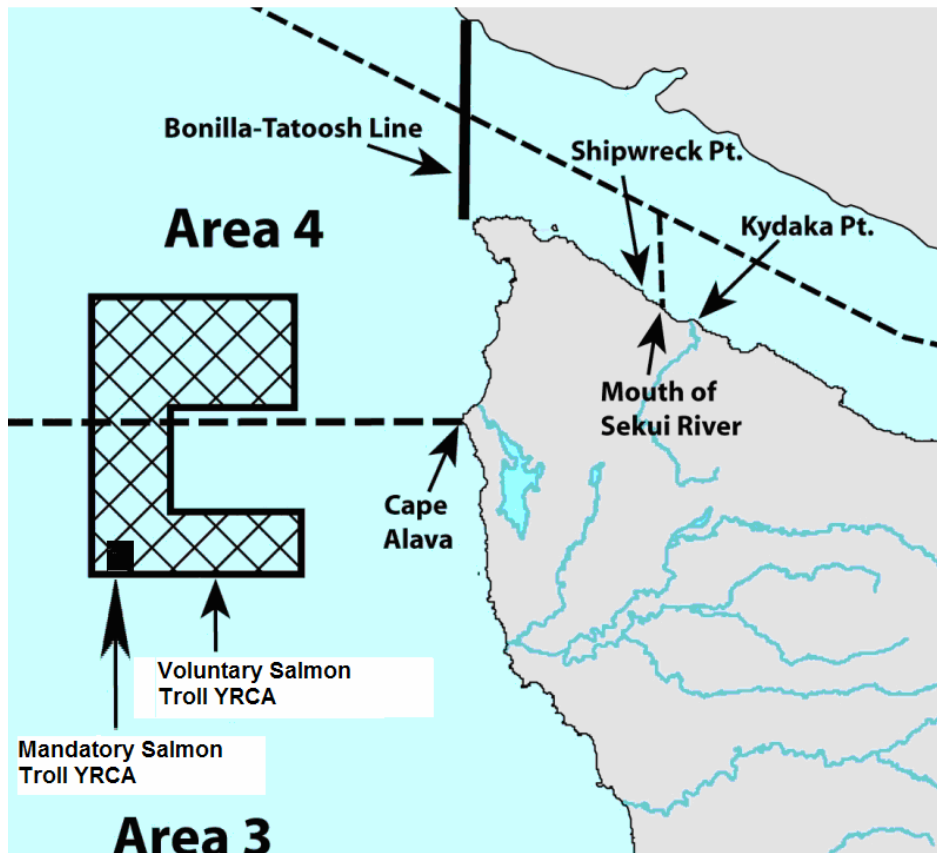
Twenty-seven individual vessels made a total of 130 landings containing halibut in the directed tier-limit sablefish fishery. Of the 130 landings, 50 contained the full amount of halibut provided for in regulation, while the other 80 landings averaged 71% per landing of the potential amount of halibut allowed. The total catch of dressed, head-off halibut in the directed sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis at the conclusion of the fishery on October 31 was 64,624 lbs. which is 92.3% of the established quota.

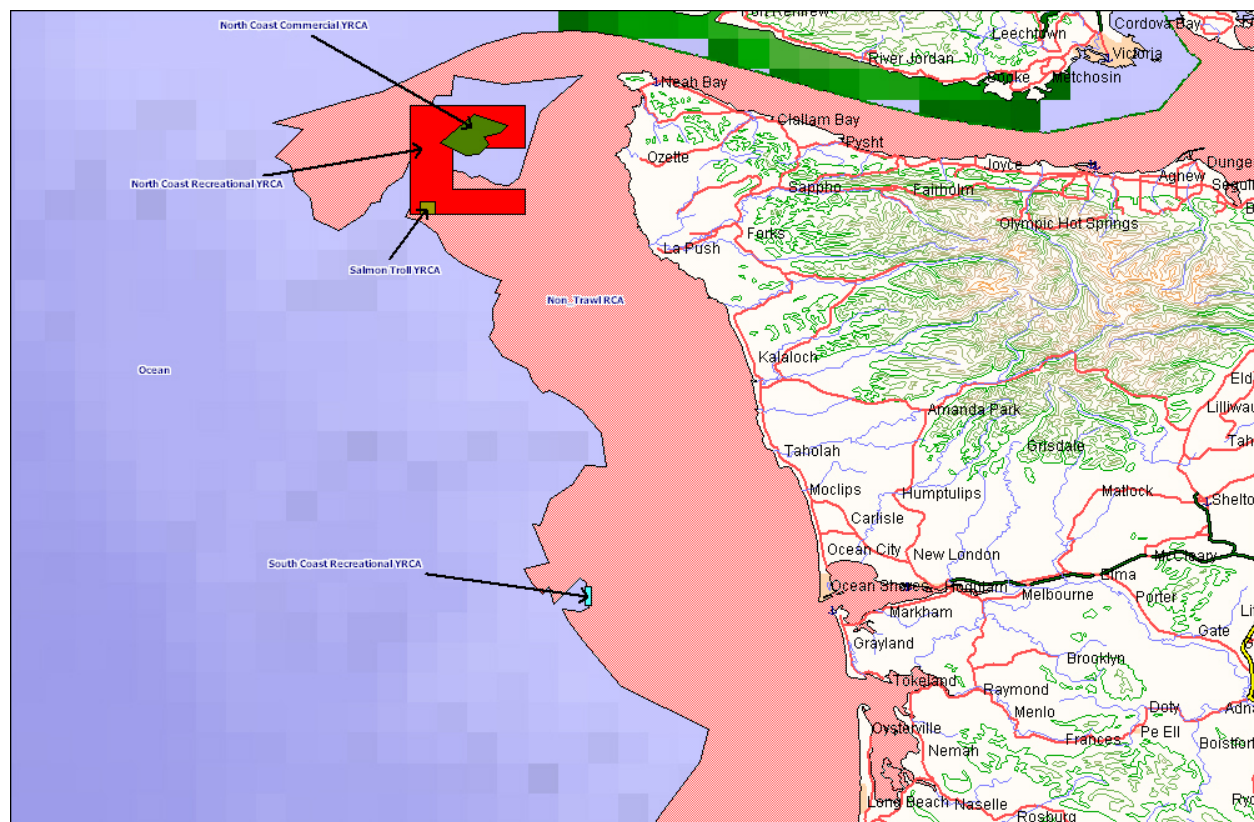
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02/14/07

YELLOWEYE ROCKFISH CONSERVATION AREA SALMON TROLL CLOSURE

At its June 2006 meeting, as part of its recommendations for rebuilding overfished rockfish species, the Council recommended a mandatory closure to salmon troll fishing to protect yelloweye rockfish in a portion of Washington Marine Catch Area 3 (La Push). The Council's recommendation was incorporated into Federal salmon regulations at 50 CFR 660.405 as part of NMFS regulations to implement Amendment 16-4 to the Groundfish FMP (71 FR 78638, December 29, 2006). The closed area also overlaps part of the "C-Shaped" yelloweye rockfish conservation area (YRCA), designated as an area for salmon trollers to voluntarily avoid, which has been in place since 2003.

Although the salmon troll YRCA has already been implemented in salmon regulations, the Council should consider notifying fishery participants of the mandatory YRCA as part of its 2007 annual management process. The Council should also consider how implementation of the two YRCA areas, one voluntary and one mandatory, may affect the fishery.





PFMC
02/28/07

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON
INCIDENTAL CATCH REGULATIONS IN THE SALMON TROLL AND FIXED GEAR
SABLEFISH FISHERIES

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) considered regulations involving incidental halibut harvest of the above fisheries.

Having viewed the fact that harvest quota is to be unchanged from 2006 the GAP recommends status quo for 2007. The range of landing restrictions from the 2006 season would be equally applicable for 2007.

PFMC
03/05/07

SALMON ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON INCIDENTAL CATCH REGULATIONS
IN THE SALMON TROLL AND FIXED GEAR SABLEFISH FISHERIES

The Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS) recommends the following options for public review:

- Option 1: Status quo.
- Option 2: Beginning May 1, license holders may land no more than one Pacific halibut per each two Chinook, except one Pacific halibut may be landed without meeting the ratio requirement, and no more than 30 halibut per trip.

PFMC
03/06/07