

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON SCOPING OF CATCH SHARING PLAN
CHANGES AND INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION REPORTS

The Situation Summary for today's action describes that the Council should identify the allocation issues to be addressed for future catch sharing plans (CSP) and 'provide guidance on developing a range of alternatives for analysis.' The Situation Summary further explains that the Council is scheduled to adopt proposed CSP changes for public review at its September 2017 meeting, with final action scheduled for the November 2017 meeting.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) notes that Council Operating Procedure 9, schedule 4, defines the annual management cycle and activities related to Pacific halibut, including the provision that minor changes to the CSP shall be considered in September. Following that, in September or October, the states may conduct public workshops on the proposed CSP changes if appropriate. The schedule is silent on what activities are to be conducted at the June meeting.

Based on discussions with Council staff and members of the Groundfish Advisory Panel (GAP), CDFW offers the following alternatives to be forwarded for public review at this meeting in order to bookend the range of alternatives that may be considered at the September meeting. CDFW is concerned that there may be uncertainty between what a 'minor' versus 'major' change is, and would not want to preclude consideration of adjustments to the CSP at that time because they were deemed to be 'major.' Therefore, CDFW offers these alternatives at this scoping meeting with the goal of ensuring analysis of a somewhat wider range of alternatives than those offered by the GAP or SAS at the June meeting.

Utilizing information provided in the IPHC data report and in response to the IPHC request to the Council to consider alternative approaches for the existing Area 2A commercial directed fishery, CDFW proposes the following alternatives be forwarded for public review which would eliminate the commercial derby fishery off California. CDFW notes these alternatives should not be viewed as agency recommendations, and acknowledges that these ideas have not had the benefit of any scoping, state-sponsored public workshops or discussion with other agencies, industry representatives or other stakeholders. CDFW looks forward to comments received as part of the public review process.

Catch Distribution

CDFW summarized the total California catch over the time series, compared with total catches from Area 2A, and the estimated California share of the biomass north of 39 degrees provided by IPHC (Table 1). While acknowledging IPHC's cautionary remarks on the variability and uncertainties in the stock distribution estimates, Table 1 reflects the clear pattern that California's percent of catch in Area 2A each year falls substantially below the percent estimated biomass, attributable to regulations implementing the CSP that constrain catch off California.

Table 1. Comparison of California catch vs proportional biomass

	Total CA sport catch ¹	Total CA commercial ²	Total CA catch	Total 2A catch ¹	CA % of 2A catch	CA % of Total 2A Biomass ³
2004	45	-	45	1,386,123	0.0%	16.2%
2005	794	-	794	1,299,569	0.1%	15.9%
2006	3,778	249	4,027	1,364,431	0.3%	19.4%
2007	5,427	196	5,623	1,310,152	0.4%	19.6%
2008	14,040	-	14,040	1,192,820	1.2%	18.5%
2009	40,607	64	40,671	998,449	4.1%	21.4%
2010	28,587	230	28,817	834,638	3.5%	16.6%
2011	15,852	805	16,657	950,524	1.8%	13.0%
2012	27,442	69	27,511	1,044,780	2.6%	12.4%
2013	43,254	40	43,294	1,058,977	4.1%	12.1%
2014	31,226	-	31,226	1,015,084	3.1%	11.0%
2015	24,906	155	25,061	1,013,400	2.5%	9.8%
2016	30,893	1,259	32,152	1,109,276	2.9%	10.7%

Note: all values are in pounds

¹ Values are from Agenda Item G.1 Attachment 3, June 2017

² Values are from annual CDFW Commercial Landings Reviews (<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Fishing/Commercial/Landings>). Commercial catches are round weight pounds, not net weight.

³ Values are from Agenda Item G.1.a IPHC Letter, June 2017

Allocations: IPHC carefully highlights uncertainty in, and caveats with, using these data to inform allocation considerations in Area 2A. Table 4 in the IPHC data report, years 2013 and 2014 (years when the IPHC survey took place in CA) correspond with point estimates that are 12.1 and 11.0 percent of the estimated share of the biomass north of 39 degrees, respectively. IPHC notes that the quality of the estimates for California are ‘very poor in years other than those in which the survey took place, as indicated by the wide 95 percent intervals’ (page 2) and further explains that ‘estimates of biomass shares by State (Table 4) and Region (Table 5) are all imprecise, although we note the 95 percent intervals are narrowest in the year with the most complete survey, 2014.’ While the 2013 and 2014 point estimates are imprecise, they are nonetheless informative, and might serve as a reasonable basis to evaluate whether the current CSP allocations are roughly proportional to biomass, noting that the percentages ascribed to California in 2013 and 2014 are among the lowest of the point estimates in the 19-year time series.

However, because the CSP’s first dividing point is between the tribal and non-tribal share, only 65 percent of the distribution attributed to California could actually be allocated to the state of California for non-tribal fisheries.

Alternative 1a: Use the average of the 2013 and 2014 CA distribution values =
 $((12.1 + 11)/2 * 0.65) = 7.51$

Alternative 1b: Use only the 2014 CA distribution value =
 $(11 * 0.65) = 7.15$

Concept: In response to the IPHC’s request that the Council consider alternatives to the directed commercial derby fishery, create a new California Subarea, South of 42 Degrees, which would involve precise and structured management of both sport and incidental commercial halibut fisheries in

California. Existing definitions in the CSP, as summarized in the schematic presented in Agenda Item G.1 Attachment 2, would be modified as follows: “Commercial” would be re-defined as “Commercial north of 42 degrees” and “CA sport” would be re-defined as the “CA Subarea (south of 42 degrees).”

Reallocate a total of (either 3.51 or 3.15) percent from the existing coastwide Commercial allocation to the new California Subarea, to better align potential catch under the CSP with stock distribution.

This percentage, combined with the existing 4 percent currently allocated to the California Sport sector, would total (7.51 or 7.15) percent of the TAC in the CSP, which aligns with either the average of the two best point estimates of stock distribution off California, or alternatively, the best point estimate, minus the 35 percent set aside for Tribal fisheries.

Management in the California Subarea, South of 42 Degrees: The first 30,000 pounds shall go to the CA sport fishery. If there are more than 10,000 pounds remaining, that remainder shall be split equally between the CA sport and the CA incidental commercial fisheries. If there are less than 10,000 pounds remaining, that remainder shall go to the CA sport fishery.

- The CA sport fishery shall be managed with a fixed season, tracking catches inseason and closing the fishery on projected attainment of the CA sport portion of the quota is attained (status-quo management approach).
- The CA commercial fishery would be an incidental-only fishery, with the two-fold goal of providing minor harvest opportunity over a fixed season while reducing halibut discard that must occur when retention is not allowed. The incidental fishery shall be defined as follows: One halibut may be landed per trip, but must be landed incidental to a directed non-trawl federal salmon or federal groundfish fishery. “Landed incidental to” means the following: 1) salmon or groundfish must be landed in a volume (pounds) greater than the volume of the one halibut landed; 2) salmon or groundfish must be aboard the vessel when the one halibut is aboard the vessel. Landings will be tracked inseason until the CA commercial quota is projected to be attained.
- Permitting alternatives for incidental commercial fisheries off CA would require discussions with IPHC.
- This approach would re-structure the commercial halibut fishery opportunities off California to allow some small incidental retention in directed salmon and groundfish fisheries over a fixed season, as an alternative to the directed derby fishery and the incidental salmon fishery which almost always precludes participation off California. It will also allow other states to develop future alternative approaches for the directed commercial fishery independently.
- While more scoping will be needed, CDFW believes it can effectively implement inseason quota tracking on this proposed incidental California commercial fishery using existing catch tracking and monitoring procedures, including the recently implemented e-ticket program for sablefish. Near-realtime progress of the fishery can be tracked to ensure catches remain within limits.