

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE PACIFIC HALIBUT CATCH SHARING PLAN FOR THE 2018 FISHERY

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) solicited public input via e-mail, phone, webinar, and public meetings to discuss proposed changes to the Pacific halibut (halibut in remainder of report) Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) for fisheries off of Oregon in 2018. Public meetings with recreational anglers occurred on July 24 in Newport, July 25 in Salem, July 31 in Brookings, and August 1 in North Bend. Public meetings with commercial halibut fishery participants occurred on July 31 in Port Orford, August 1 in North Bend, August 2 in Astoria, and August 3 in Newport. Based on public input, ODFW provides the following information for consideration by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) when deciding to approve the following alternatives for public review.

Allocations

In June, the Council recommended the following allocation proposals be further developed for Council consideration in September, when a range of alternatives for changes to the 2018 CSP is scheduled to be adopted for public review¹:

- Options for a combined commercial and recreational allocation for California, which would be 7.51 or 7.15 percent of the non-tribal allocation by reducing the non-tribal commercial allocation by 3.51 or 3.15 percent.
- Increase the California recreational allocation from 4 to 6 percent by equally reducing the Washington and Oregon recreational allocations by 1% each.

ODFW staff made a preliminary estimate of the potential impact of reducing the Oregon recreational allocation from 29.7 percent to 28.7 percent of the 2A non-tribal allocation on Oregon's recreational halibut fisheries, in terms of poundage and possible days open (Table 1). The Columbia River Subarea all-depth season would likely be reduced by 1-2 days (open 14 days in 2017). The Central Oregon Coast Subarea spring all-depth season would likely be reduced by one day (open 18 days in 2017). The Central Oregon Coast Subarea nearshore season would likely be reduced by 5-7 days (open 60 days in 2017). The Central Oregon Coast Subarea summer all-depth season and the Southern Oregon Subarea would likely have no change in the number of days open, based on the catches the last several years.

¹ <http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/JuneDecisionSummaryDocument.pdf>

Table 1. Oregon recreational Pacific halibut fisheries estimated allocations (in pounds net weight), based on reducing the Oregon recreational percentage, and applying to the 2017 non-tribal allocation.

	2017 Allocation (lbs.)	If OR Rec Allocation (lbs.) reduced by 1%	Difference (lbs.)	Potential Reduction in Days Open
Columbia River	12,799	12,600	199	
All-Depth	12,299	12,100	199	1-2
Nearshore	500	500	0	0
Central OR Coast	240,812	232,704	8,108	
Spring All-Depth	151,712	146,604	5,108	1
Summer All-Depth	60,203	58,176	2,027	0-1
Nearshore	28,897	27,925	972	5-7
Southern OR Subarea	10,039	9,701	338	0

During ODFW’s outreach efforts, there was no support for the proposed allocation changes for 2018 from any of the recreational or commercial fishery participants that provided input. In general, the commercial fishery participants were against moving any allocation from commercial fisheries to what would become primarily a recreational fishery allocation, stating that reallocation that would primarily benefit recreational fishing should come from existing recreational allocations. The recreational fishery participants expressed concern that the Council had recently spent several years on what was referred to as the “South of Humbug” process. The outcome of that lengthy process has only been in place a short time and it is too soon to determine how the new allocations and fisheries will settle out. Recreational fishery participants also emphasized the economic value of Pacific halibut to Oregon’s recreational fisheries and coastal communities.

Oregon Recreational Fisheries

Columbia River Subarea

No proposed changes

Central Coast Subarea

Split the Central Oregon Coast Subarea into Smaller Areas

The Central Oregon Coast Subarea (Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain) is currently managed as one area. Over the last several years, ODFW been asked, by anglers who primarily fish out of Bandon and Coos Bay, to look at reinstating the split of the Central Oregon Coast subarea at the north Florence jetty as was in place from 1995-2003 for the spring all-depth fishery, and 1995-1999 for the nearshore fishery. If the split were to be reinstated, the ports of Florence south to Port Orford would become a new Central Oregon Coast Southern Subarea (Figure 1). The ports

of Newport north to Garibaldi/Tillamook would be part of the new Central Oregon Coast Northern Subarea.

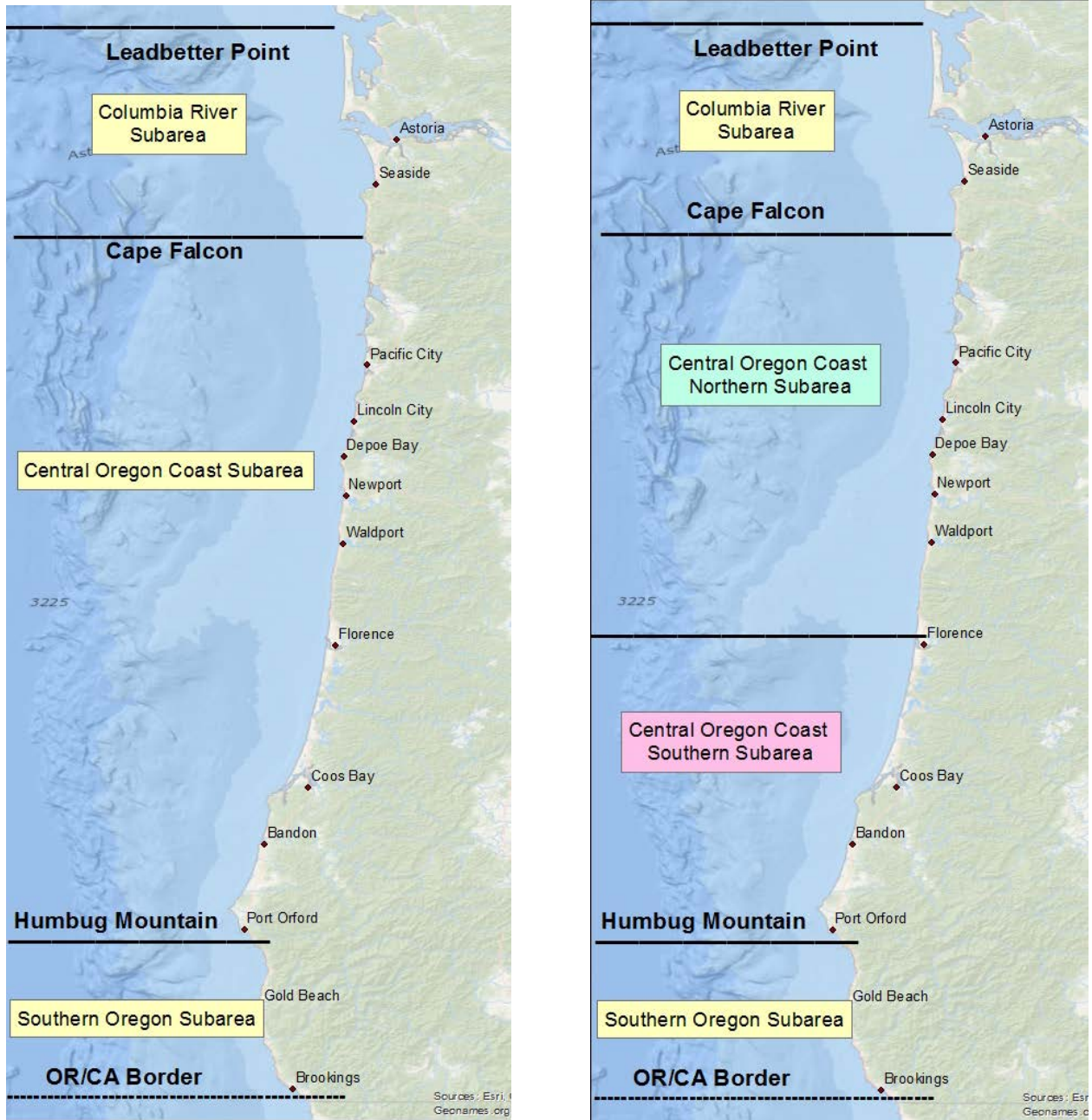


Figure 1. Map of the current Oregon recreational Pacific halibut subareas (left map) and with proposed split of the Central Oregon Coast Subarea (right map).

Alternatives

Status Quo: The area between Cape Falcon and Humbug Mountain will be managed as one area.

Alternative 1: The current Central Oregon Coast Subarea (Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain) would be split at the North Florence jetty (44° 01' 08" N lat.), creating two new subareas that would be allocated and managed separately (Figure 1)

Alternative 1a. Allocation to the two areas based on percentage of 2011-2016 average landings (91% to the Northern, 9% to the Southern)

Alternative 1b. Allocation to the two areas based on percentage of 2011-2016 average angler trips (92% to the Northern, 8% to the Southern)

Alternative 1c. Allocation to the two areas based on the percentage when the area was previously split (1995 CSP 90.2% to the Northern, 9.8% to the Southern)

To show the differences between the current poundage allocated to each fishery/area and the three alternatives, Table 2 has the allocation percentages applied to the 2017 allocations.

Table 2. Allocations (in pounds net weight) to the northern and southern areas under the three alternatives compared to the status quo allocation, based on the 2017 Central Oregon Coast Subarea allocation.

Spring AD	1a	1b	1c	SQ
Northern	138,058	139,575	136,844	151,712
Southern	13,654	12,137	14,868	
Summer AD	1a	1b	1c	SQ
Northern	54,785	55,387	54,303	60,203
Southern	5,418	4,816	5,900	
Nearshore	1a	1b	1c	SQ
Northern	26,296	26,585	26,065	28,897
Southern	2,601	2,312	2,832	

Background

Anglers in the more southern ports in the Central Oregon Coast Subarea often express concerns that “Newport takes all the fish”. Anglers regularly state that the weather and bar conditions around Charleston/Coos Bay and Bandon often do not allow anglers the opportunity to participate in the halibut fishery on the same days, or as often, as out of more northerly ports, specifically Newport. By splitting the subarea into 2 subareas, each with their own quota, anglers fishing out of the proposed Central Oregon Coast – Southern subarea believe that there may be more open fishing days in their area.

Between 1991 and 1994, there was a drastic decrease in the number of days open in the spring all-depth fishery (56 in 1991 down to 13 in 1994; Figure 2), even as the quota increased. This in part led to the Central Oregon Coast Subarea being split north and south of Florence beginning in 1995. The split was an attempt to provide for some additional opportunities, particularly for ports to the south. In 1995, 1996, and 2001, the southern area had more open days than the northern area. In 1998-2000 and 2002 both areas were open the same number of days. And in 1997 and 2003, the more northern area had more days open (1-2 days). For the 2004 fishery, anglers requested that the split be removed and the area managed as one unit again, because the southern area was open fewer days than the northern area. Since that time the number of open all-depth days for the combined subarea has been higher than the number of open days for either smaller area during the years of the split.

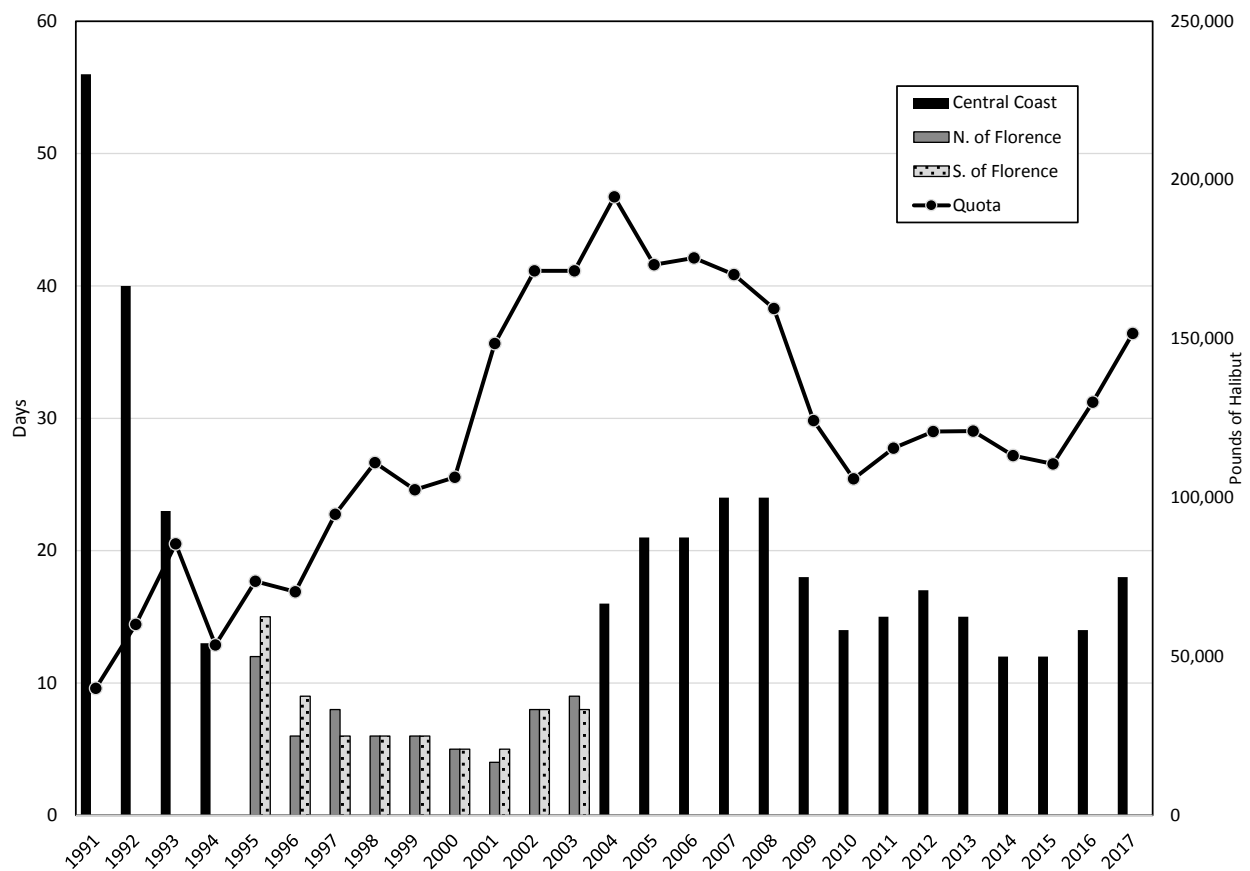


Figure 2. Central Oregon Coast Subarea spring all-depth fishery quota and days open by area, 1991-2017.

The nearshore fishery was also split north and south of Florence beginning in 1995 (**Error! Reference source not found.**). That year the southern area had more days (61) than the north area (37). However, in three out of the next four years the north area had more days, and in the fourth year both areas had an equal number of days. For the 2000 fishery, anglers requested that the split

be removed and the area be managed as one unit again. Since 2000, with the exception of four years, the nearshore fishery has been open the same number or more days as one combined area than it was for either area when split.

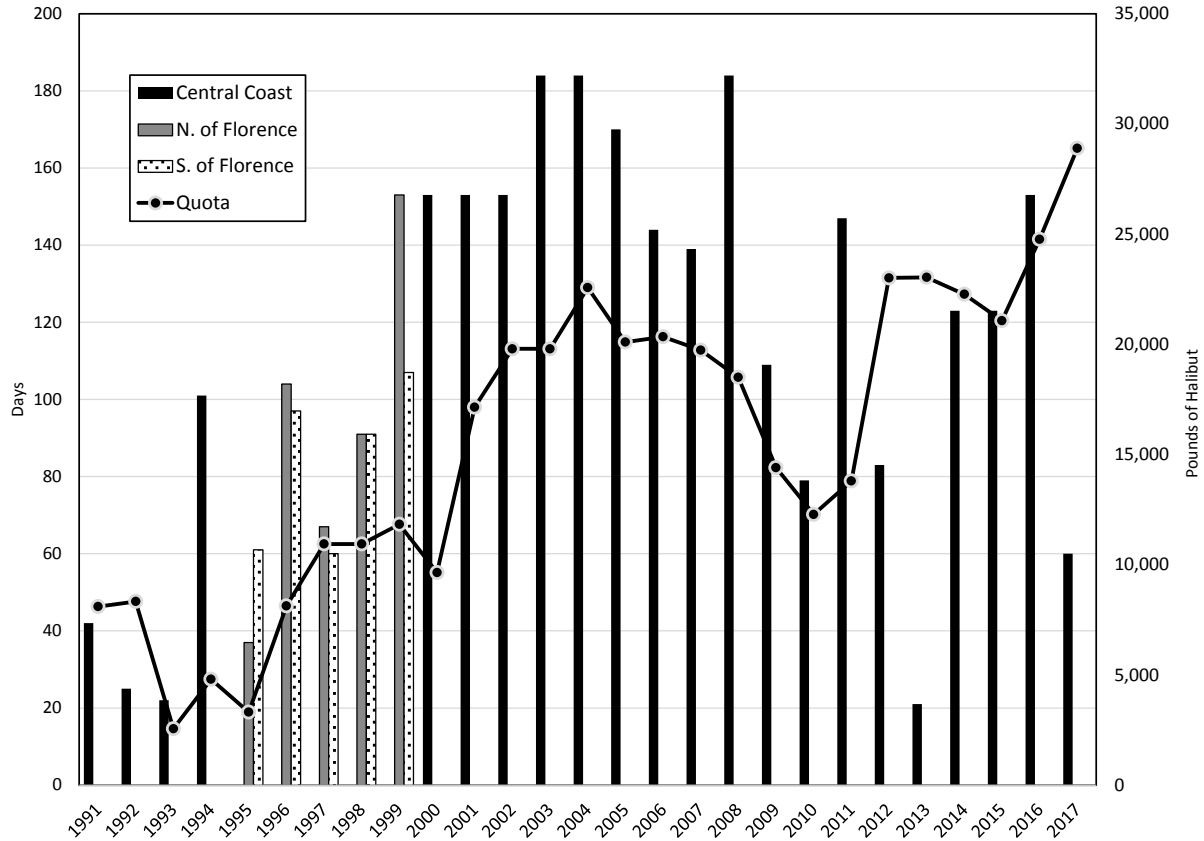


Figure 3. Central Oregon Coast Subarea nearshore fishery quota and days open by area, 1991-2017.

To provide some information on what the halibut seasons might look like in terms of days open under each alternative for each area, compared to status quo, ODFW staff used the average catch per day from the most recent five full years of data available (2012-2016; Table 3) applied to the allocations in Table 2. Those five years include years with varying salmon and tuna opportunities, and should therefore be reflective of a range of halibut effort.

Table 3. Projected number of days open by fishery (based on average catch 2012-2016) and area for the allocation alternatives applied to the 2017 Central Oregon Coast Subarea allocation. 2017 actual days open shown for comparison.

Spring AD	1a	1b	1c	2,017
Northern	17	18	17	18
Southern	19	17	20	
Summer AD	1a	1b	1c	2,017
Northern	7	7	7	N/A
Southern	9	8	10	
Nearshore	1a	1b	1c	2,017
Northern	75	75	74	60
Southern	126	112	138	

Staff note that these estimates are based on average catch (pounds per day) which can have large within-year and between-year variability. As an example, if just 2016 was used, the northern area nearshore fishery would be projected to be approximately 150 days long, while the southern area would only have 60-70 days open. But if just 2013 catch rates were used, the northern area would be open 26-27 days while the southern area would be projected to be open the maximum 184 days, and likely leave quota unharvested.

Input Received

Anglers who attended the public meeting in North Bend and supported reinstating the split acknowledged that it did not work as intended in the early 2000s, however, the nature of recreational halibut fishing off of Oregon has changed a great deal since that time. The nearshore fishery in particular has changed from an incidental fishery to a targeted fishery in the last several years, particularly out of Newport, and to some extent Pacific City for part of the summer.

Due to the length of time since the Central Coast Subarea was last split, and the changed nature of particularly the nearshore fishery, ODFW staff believes this proposal warrants further discussion and consideration. Therefore, **ODFW recommends forwarding Alternatives 1a-1c, along with status quo, for additional public comment.**

Southern Oregon Subarea

No proposed changes

Directed Commercial Fishery

Will be addressed in a separate report.

Catch Sharing Plan Language

ODFW does not have proposed changes to the language in the Catch Sharing Plan for the above items at this time. As the alternatives are finalized, ODFW will draft the appropriate language revisions to the Catch Sharing Plan, in consultation with staff at the NMFS West Coast Region.