

## **CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE 2018 PACIFIC HALIBUT CATCH SHARING PLAN**

At its June 2017 meeting, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) forwarded a range of alternatives to modify the non-tribal allocation in the Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) for public review and analysis, including several alternatives proposed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW; Agenda Item G.1.b, Supplemental CDFW Report, June 2017).

### **Scoping/Stakeholder Input on CSP Alternatives**

On July 27, 2017, CDFW held a teleconference hearing to solicit public input on the range of alternatives discussed at the June 2017 Council meeting. The teleconference attendees included participants representing recreational and commercial fishery interests.

With regard to the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) report on spatial biomass data for Area 2A (Agenda Item G.1.a, IPHC Report, June 2017), constituents generally supported use of these data to inform future discussions and decision-making regarding CSP allocations. A number of speakers noted that the proportions of biomass reported in California, specifically in years where the IPHC survey was conducted in California waters (Table 1) are significantly higher than the current recreational California allocation in the CSP and provide rationale to support an increase to a California subarea allocation.

However, specific to the alternatives in the CDFW report, commercial fishery constituents did not support combining the recreational and commercial sectors under a single statewide allocation that would be shared by both sectors and allocated between them. There was also no interest in eliminating the directed commercial fishery and replacing it with an incidental-only commercial fishery, though several commercial groundfish fishery stakeholders expressed interest in allowing small-volume harvest opportunity incidental to directed groundfish fisheries.

Directed commercial fishery constituents expressed support for maintaining open access fishery opportunities on the west coast, and the desire to continue participating in a coastwide directed Pacific halibut fishery under the same terms as participants in Oregon and Washington. They also indicated that although directed commercial fishery participation in California is relatively new, and involves only a handful of individuals, catches have increased since 2015 (Table 1), and it is important to maintain this fishing opportunity as part of their fishing portfolios. For example, at least one directed commercial fishery participant noted that minimal commercial salmon fishing opportunity off Northern California in 2017 prompted his participation in the directed commercial halibut fishery this year.

If a single statewide allocation was going to be recommended by CDFW, there was support for considering a halibut fishery incidental to commercial groundfish fisheries that would provide some opportunity for Pacific halibut when targeting nearshore, or shelf/slope groundfish. Meanwhile, both open access and limited entry sablefish participants who commented

expressed interest in incidental retention concepts, though not at the exclusion of a directed commercial fishery for halibut.

### **Alternatives for the Directed Commercial Fishery**

Several California commercial directed fishery participants expressed support for the alternatives that would extend the existing derby fishery to longer time periods, with reduced trip limits depending on the vessel's size class. However, analysis on what these trip limits might look like was not available during the teleconference hearing. CDFW notes that it has never seen 100 percent attainment of a daily directed trip limit by any vessel participating in the fishery off California. CDFW expects some of the alternatives to be favored by California directed participants over the status quo, as it would add some flexibility when prosecuting the fishery to account for weather and other conditions.

### **Recreational Allocation Alternatives**

Some recreational constituents expressed support for the Groundfish Advisory Subpanel alternative to increase the California allocation from four percent to six percent (Agenda Item G.1.b, GAP Report, June 2017).

### **Incidental Salmon Troll Commercial Fishery**

Despite the commercial sector's lack of interest in pursuing a single statewide allocation for all sectors, constituents expressed continued concern about the lack of opportunity for participation in the incidental salmon troll fishery in California waters, and the desire for California to have access to this opportunity. Per the CSP language, "the primary management objective for this fishery is to harvest the troll quota as an incidental catch during the April-June salmon troll fishery". Due to ongoing constraints imposed by Klamath River salmon stocks, the California salmon troll fishery is largely precluded from participating in incidental halibut opportunity because the salmon season typically opens in September in the California Klamath Management Zone, at which time the halibut quota has already been fully attained. CDFW notes that the Salmon Advisory Subpanel (SAS) has an opportunity to provide recommendations to structure the management objectives of the fishery differently at this meeting, or alternatively, the SAS will deliberate the 2018 incidental retention limits this upcoming spring, which could include a discussion on options for the 2019 CSP and beyond that might improve access to incidental halibut opportunity in salmon troll fisheries off California.

After considering input from California constituents during the scoping process, **CDFW does not recommend forwarding the alternatives described in the CDFW Report for additional review or analysis**, but appreciates the thoughtful review and input from a variety of stakeholder perspectives.

### **2018 Catch Sharing Plan - Changes to CA Recreational Season Structure**

As part of the routine changes to the CSP for 2018, CDFW is not proposing any changes to the current language. Following the determination of the 2018 Area 2A Total Allowable Catch and subsequent California quota amount, CDFW is expecting to conduct outreach with constituents in early February 2018 to discuss open fishing season dates for the 2018 California recreational season. Based on this input, CDFW will formulate a recommendation to National Marine

Fisheries Service on the preferred 2018 season dates for inclusion in the Federal rule. CDFW encourages all interested parties to continue providing feedback on the 2017 season structure to help inform decision making for the 2018 season.

### Update on 2017 Pacific Halibut Fisheries In California

To date, California constituents have actively participated in both the commercial and recreational fisheries for Pacific halibut. Five vessels participated in the directed commercial fishery, with preliminary landings at approximately 3,850 pounds – nearly double that of 2016.

Following consultation with National Marine Fisheries Service, IPHC and Council staff, CDFW notified the public of closure of California’s recreational Pacific halibut fishery on Sunday, September 10<sup>th</sup> due to projected quota attainment. CDFW has been tracking catches weekly and providing routine updates on catch progress throughout the season. The season was open 86 days this season, from May 1- June 15, July 1-15, August 1-15 and September 1-10. The highest catches came during the month of August, when weather was very favorable. CDFW will provide updated cumulative catch estimates in November, when additional information is available.

Table 1. Comparison of California Catch and Landings to Proportional Biomass from 2004-2017. Values in bold represent years where IPHC survey data in California are available.

	Total CA Sport Catch <sup>1</sup>	Total CA Commercial Landings <sup>2</sup>	Total CA Catch/Landings	Total 2A Catch/Landings <sup>1</sup>	CA % of 2A Catch/Landings	CA % of Total 2A Biomass <sup>3</sup>
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	0.40%	19.6%
2008	14,040	-	14,040	1,192,820	1.20%	18.5%
2009	40,607	64	40,671	998,449	4.10%	21.4%
2010	28,587	230	28,817	834,638	3.50%	16.6%
2011	15,852	805	16,657	950,524	1.80%	13.0%
2012	27,442	69	27,511	1,044,780	2.60%	12.4%
<b>2013</b>	<b>43,254</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>43,294</b>	<b>1,058,977</b>	<b>4.10%</b>	<b>12.1%</b>
<b>2014</b>	<b>31,226</b>	-	<b>31,226</b>	<b>1,015,084</b>	<b>3.10%</b>	<b>11.0%</b>
2015	24,906	155	25,061	1,013,400	2.50%	9.8%
2016	30,893	1,259	32,152	1,109,276	2.90%	10.7%
2017 <sup>4</sup>	34,580	3,859	38,439	1,330,000	2.90%	TBD

Note: All values are in pounds

<sup>1</sup> Values are from Agenda Item G.1 Attachment 3, June 2017

<sup>2</sup> Values are from annual CDFW Commercial Landings Reviews (<https://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Fishing/Commercial/Landings>).

Commercial catches are in dressed weight in pounds, not net weight.

<sup>3</sup> Values are from Agenda Item G.1.a IPHC Letter, June 2017

<sup>4</sup> Values for 2017 are preliminary and incomplete