

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 comment on the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) approved proposals for changes to the Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) for fisheries in 2018. ODFW hosted a public meeting in North Bend on September 26th and in Newport on September 27th and used an online survey to gather public input on the proposals. The Newport meeting was also webcast, so that anglers who were unable to attend in person could still hear the discussions and weigh in. Approximately 95 individuals attended the public meetings in person, five attended via the webinar, staff received emails or phone calls from approximately 30 individuals, and 187 took the online survey. ODFW offers the following summary of public comment and recommendations.

Proposed Changes to the Catch Sharing Plan

Columbia River Subarea

All-Depth Fishery Days Open

Based on input from their public, in September Washington proposed changing the days open for the all-depth fishery.

Alternatives

Status Quo: Open every Thursday through Sunday, until the allocation is met, or October 31, whichever is earlier.

Alternative 1: Open every Thursday, Friday, and Sunday (not open on Saturday), until the allocation is met, or October 31, whichever is earlier.

Rationale

As described by WDFW in [Agenda Item G.1.b., Supplemental WDFW Report 2, September 2017](#), the all-depth fishery quota has been taken quickly in recent years (early June). In 2017 the all-depth fishery was open 14 days, compared to 19 days in 2016 and 2015. This proposal would close the all-depth fishery on Saturday, to spread the season out, while still retaining one weekend day along with two week days per week. This proposal would not increase the total number of days open, just spread them out more.

The main input ODFW received on this proposal is a preference for eliminating one of the days on either end (Thursday or Sunday), rather than closing a day in the middle of the current open days. Having Saturday closed would impact those anglers who wanted to try to be efficient with their fishing days, and target halibut several days in a row. Eliminating either Thursday or Sunday would likely have the same desired effect in slowing catch and extending the season, without having a closed day in the middle of open days each week.

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 has 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, Winchester Bay, Coos Bay/Charleston, Bandon, and Port Orford would become a new Central Oregon Coast Southern Subarea (Figure 1). The ports of Newport, Depoe Bay, Pacific City, and Garibaldi/Tillamook would be part of the new Central Oregon Coast Northern Subarea.

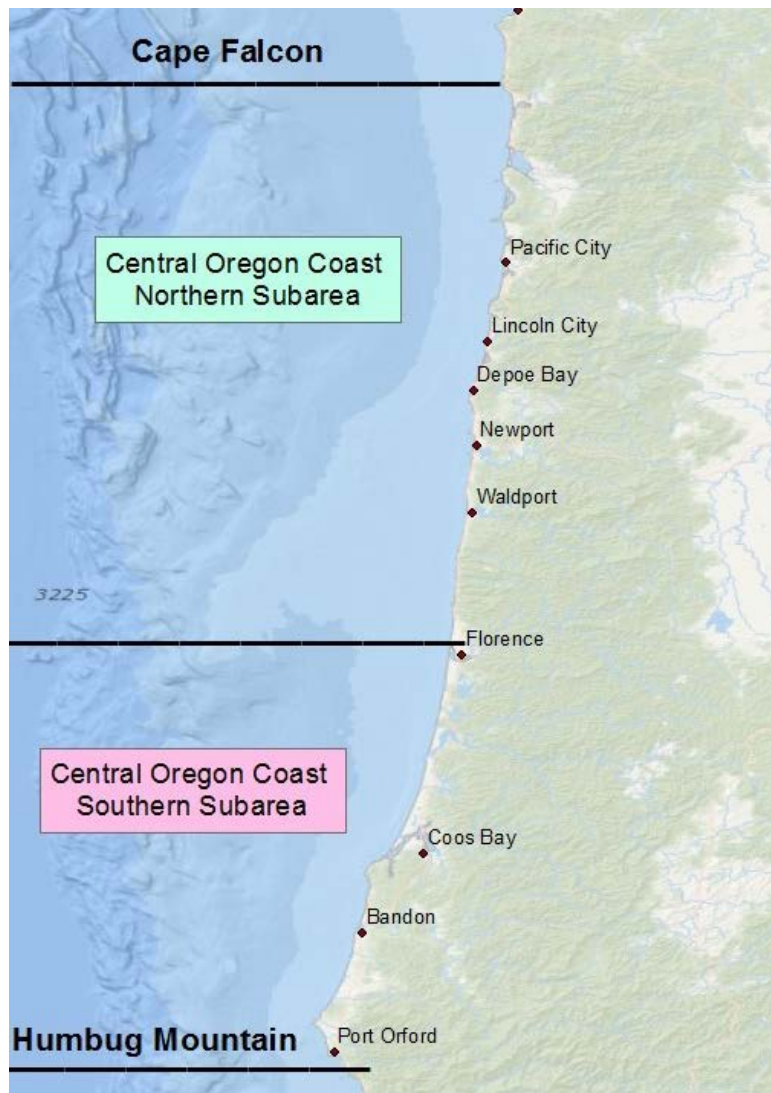


Figure 1. Map of the proposed split of the Central Oregon Coast Subarea.

Alternatives

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

Alternative 1: The current Central Oregon Subarea would be split at the Florence north jetty (44° 01' 08" N. lat.), creating two new subareas with separate allocations and management.

Alternative 1a. Allocation to the two areas based on percentage of 2012-2016 average landings (91% to the North, 9% to the South)

Alternative 1b. Allocation to the two areas based on percentage of 2012-2016 average angler trips (92% to the North, 8 % to the South)

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

Alternative 1d. Allocations to the two areas based on percentage of the 2007-2016 average landings (87.9 % to the North. 12.1 % to the South). This alternative is a slight modification of Alternative 1, and was proposed by a number of anglers during the public meeting and outreach process.

To show the differences between the current poundage allocated to each fishery/area and the three alternatives, Table 1 has the proposed allocation percentages applied to the 2017 Central Oregon Coast Subarea quota.

Table 1. Allocation (in pounds net weight) to the proposed northern and southern areas, based on the 2017 Central Oregon Coast Subarea allocation.

Alternative	1a	1b	1c	1d	2017 Status Quo
North	219,139	221,547	217,212	211,674	240,812
South	21,673	19,265	23,600	29,138	

Currently, the allocations to the various seasons in the Central Coast Subarea are 63 percent to the spring all-depth fishery, 25 percent to the summer all-depth fishery, and 12 percent to the nearshore fishery. These proportions would apply in both subareas in 2018 if a split were made. Table 2 shows how the allocations in Table 1 would then break down by season in the northern and southern areas.

Table 2. Allocations (in pounds net weight) to the northern and southern areas' seasons under the four alternatives compared to the status quo allocation.

Alternative	1a	1b	1c	1d	2017 Status Quo
Spring All-Depth					
North	138,058	139,575	136,844	133,355	130,038
South	13,654	12,137	14,868	18,357	
Summer All-Depth					
North	54,785	55,387	54,303	52,918	51,603
South	5,418	4,816	5,900	7,285	
Nearshore					
North	26,296	26,585	26,065	25,400	24,769
South	2,601	2,312	2,832	3,497	

Rationale

Anglers in the more southern ports in the Central Oregon Coast Subarea often express concerns that “Newport takes all the fish” and closes the season for the entire subarea before they have a chance to catch their fair share. Charleston/Coos Bay and Bandon area anglers have stated that the weather and bar conditions around their ports often do not allow the opportunity to participate in the halibut fishery as often as out of more northerly ports, specifically Newport. By splitting the subarea into 2 subareas, each with its 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.

Background

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, based on the same concerns as heard this year about the northern ports’ dominance.

The southern area had three more all-depth days open than the northern area in 1995 and 1996, and in 2001 the southern area had one more open day than the northern area. In 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2002 both areas were open the same number of days. And in 1997 and 2003, the 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.

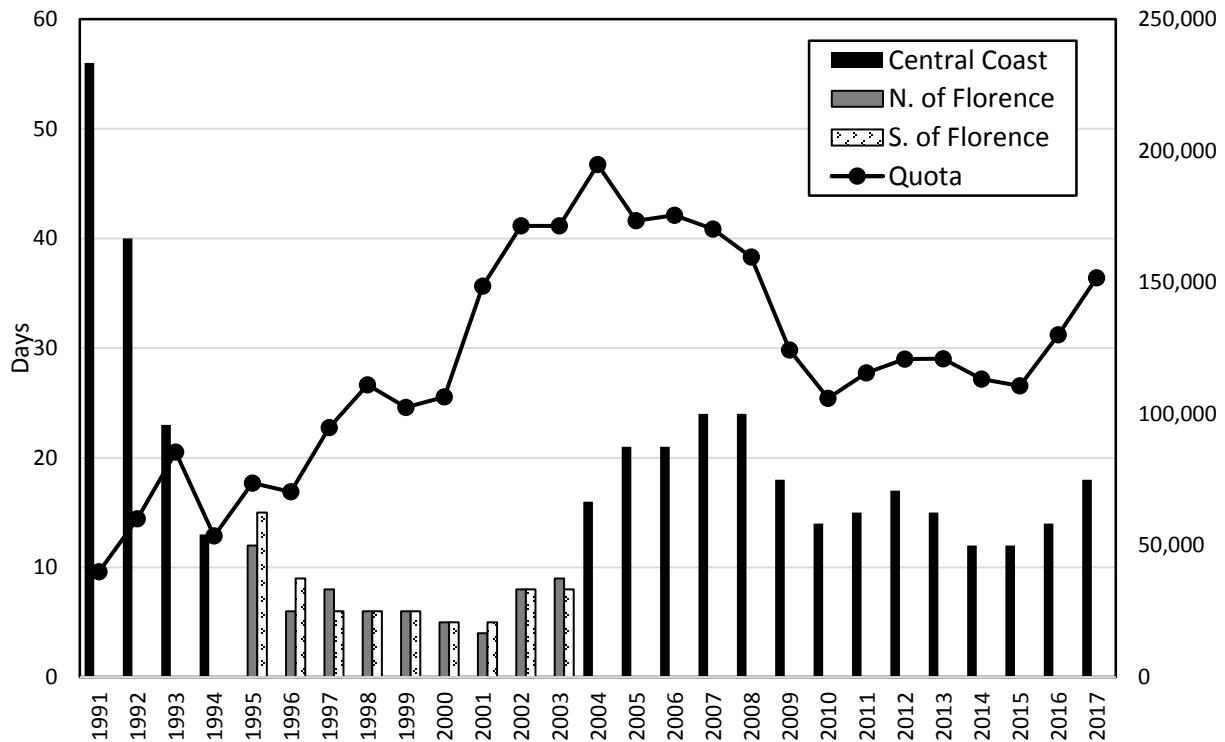


Figure 2. Central Oregon Coast Subarea spring all-depth fishery quota and days open by area, 1991-2017.

The nearshore fishery was also split north and south of Florence beginning in 1995 (Figure 3). That year the southern area had 61 days open and the northern area had 37. However, in three out of the next four years the northern 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.

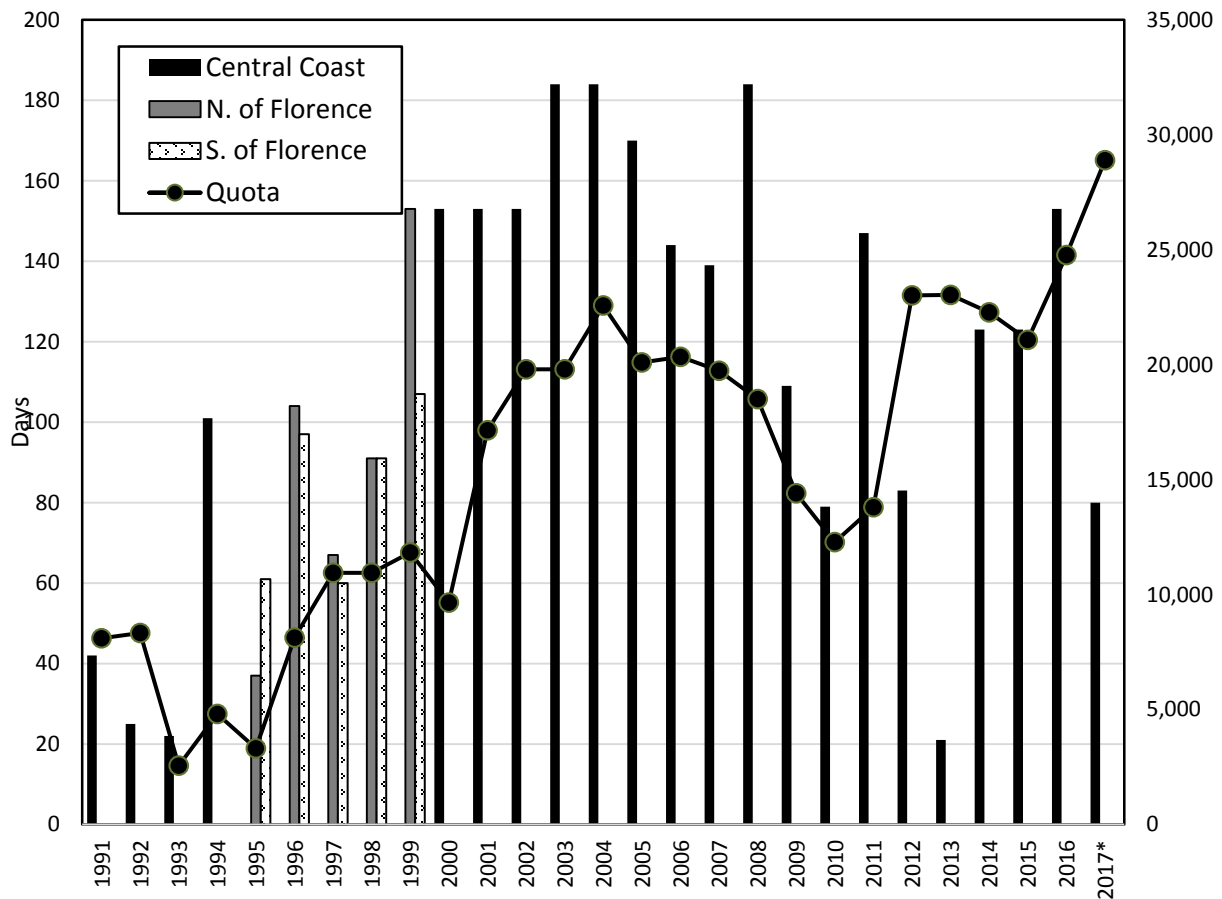


Figure 3. Central Oregon Coast Subarea nearshore fishery quota (pounds, right axis) and days open by area, 1991- 2017.

To accompany the proposal to split the Central Coast Subarea for 2018, which would require allocating the current subarea quota to the two new areas, staff developed three allocation alternatives. Alternative 1a uses the most recent 5 full years of data (2012-2016) to determine average landings into each proposed new subarea (91% north, 9% south). Alternative 1b uses the same data to determine the average number of halibut angler trips (92% north, 9% south). For both of these alternatives, the 5-year period was chosen as representative of “recent years”, following the stated public rationale for requesting consideration of a split, which was that conditions have changed (boating/navigation technologies have evolved, other fisheries are different, etc.) and this warrants revisiting the question of whether a split is needed to ensure equitable access in current circumstances. Alternative 1c uses the proportions from the prior split (90.2% north, 9.8% south).

During the public meeting in North Bend, a request was made to consider an allocation based on the last 10 years, rather than five. Proponents noted that this would result in a higher allocation to the southern ports, as the 5-year period includes three of the lowest landing years for southern ports, whereas the 10-year period also includes more years with higher landings in those ports. Staff calculated that this approach would result in an allocation of 87.9% to the northern area, and 12.1% to the southern area.

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) to estimate total days open by season under each potential allocation alternative (Table 3). 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 and area for allocation alternatives applied to the 2017 Central Oregon Coast Subarea allocation. 2017 Actual days open shown for comparison.

Alternative	1a	1b	1c	1d	2017 Actual
Spring All-Depth					
North	17	18	17	17	18
South	19	17	20	25	
Summer All-Depth					
North	7	7	7	7	8
South	9	8	10	12	
Nearshore					
North	75	75	74	72	125
South	126	112	138	170	

It is important to note that the estimated number of days open under each alternative shown in Table 3 assumes no shift in the geographic distribution of effort (for example, from the northern to the southern ports) relative to recent years. However, anecdotal information from when the split was in place in prior years suggests that there is significant mobility among recreational halibut anglers, and the split and smaller quotas may have resulted in a race for fish. This redistribution of effort could occur again, potentially reducing or negating any increase in the number of days open in the south. Although public comment at the southern public meeting favored a shift of fishing-related business to the southern ports, participants at the northern public meeting commented that they did not want to see business shift from one area of the coast to another due to fishery management regulations. They noted that the northern area includes small ports with characteristics and challenges very different than Newport.

To further understand potential outcomes of the proposed subarea split, ODFW staff also examined historic catch percentage from ports in the two potential new subareas relative to the proposed percentage allocation. Figure 4 shows the percentage of central coast subarea halibut landings taken by the southern ports each year since 1987, along with two of the proposed allocations to the southern ports if a split is made (9% is alternative 1a, based on average share of the landings over the last 5 years; 12.1% is then new alternative, 1d, based on public input). This suggests that making a split, and having a hard allocation to the ports in the southern area, could limit halibut fishing opportunity and catch in the southern area approximately half the time, which may be counter to the intent of the original proposal. Although an additional element of the public

proposal made at the North Bend meeting was to adopt an automatic annual reallocation approach that could mean a higher (or lower) allocation to a new southern subarea in future years, ODFW does not support changing subarea allocations on an annual basis.

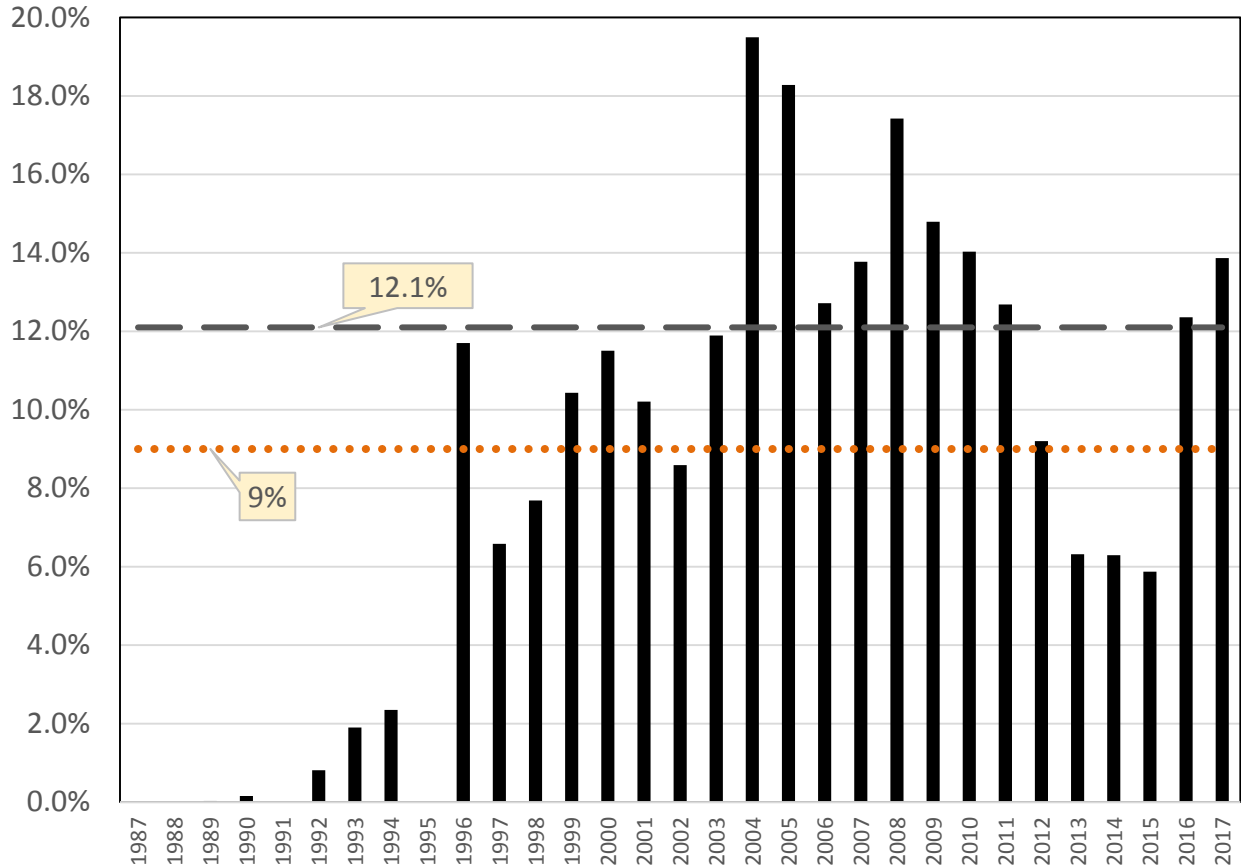


Figure 4. Historic annual percentage of Central Oregon Coast Subarea landed catch from the recreational halibut fishery into ports in the proposed Central Coast-Southern subarea, 1987-2017. Note: Landings from all-depth and nearshore seasons combined; separate subareas from 1995-1999/2003 combined.

Although the southern ports had a low proportion of total Central Coast Subarea landings in 2013, 2014, and 2015, 2016 and 2017 showed a considerably higher percentage of landings into the proposed southern area.. These data also demonstrate that the northern ports’ share of the Central Coast Subarea landings is not on a continuously increasing trajectory, as some had feared.

ODFW staff also reviewed the catch rate, as number of halibut landed per angler trip targeting halibut, in the southern and northern ports of the Central Coast Subarea. The northern ports have many more anglers fishing out of them collectively, due largely to a closer proximity to the large population centers of Portland and the Willamette Valley; and the northern ports as a group account for a large proportion of the total Central Coast Subarea effort and landings. On a per-angler-trip basis, however, anglers in the southern ports consistently do slightly better, with a 10-year average rate of 0.69 halibut per trip, compared to 0.66 for northern ports (Figure 5).

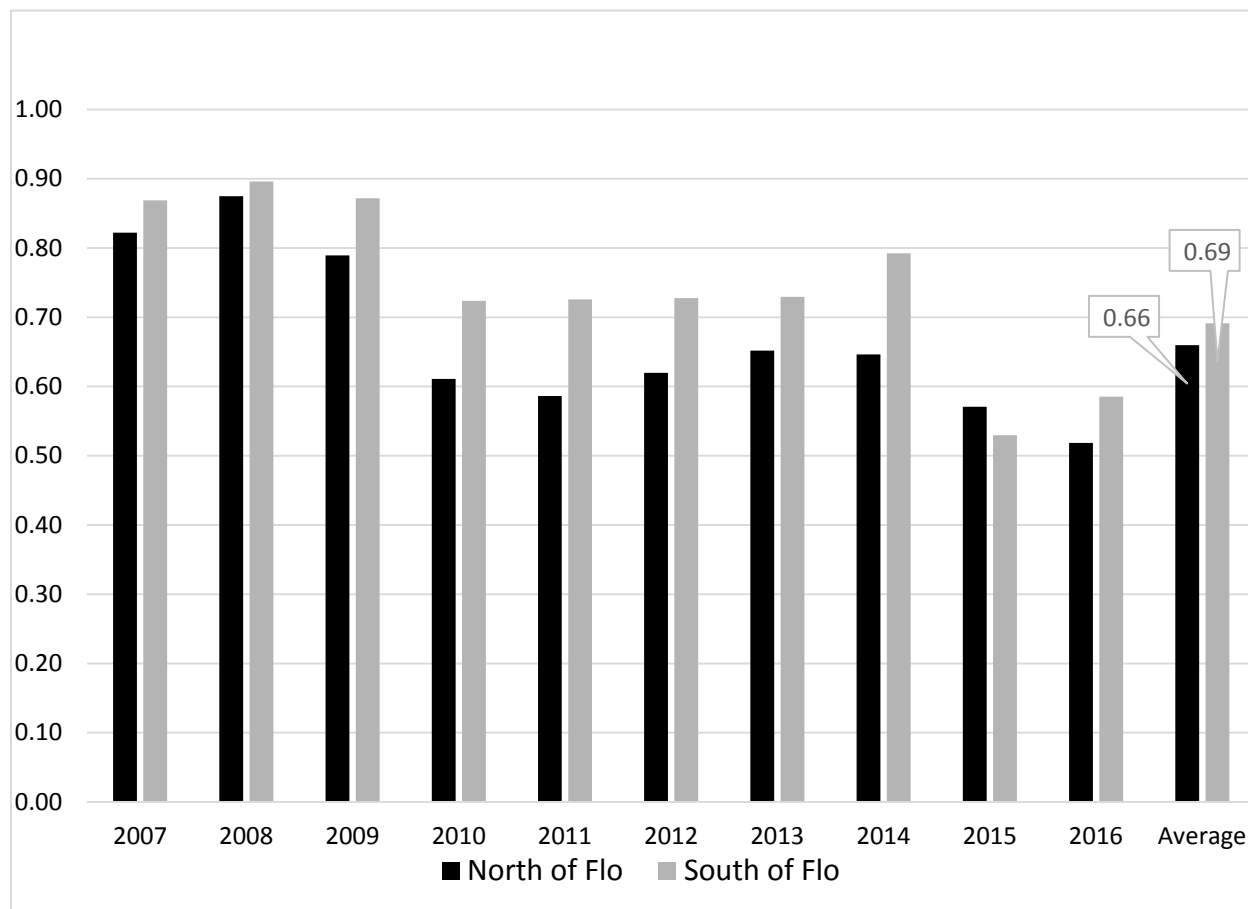


Figure 5. Number of halibut landed per halibut angler trip north and south of Florence, 2007-2016

Some anglers asked if IPHC survey data could be used to apportion halibut quota to subareas within Oregon, based on halibut distribution. Results from the IPHC survey do not produce halibut biomass estimates at the geographic scale of state boundaries or finer, and are not designed for use to support subarea allocation decisions based on halibut distribution.

The available information on effort, landings, and catch rates in the northern and southern portions of the Central Coast Subarea do not support a conclusion that the current regulatory framework is creating an inequitable distribution of opportunity between different areas or limiting potential halibut landings into ports in the southern portion of the subarea. Implementing a split would lead to additional regulatory complexity and would be predicted to limit opportunity in the southern ports in some years. Maintaining current Central Coast Subarea boundaries and management as described in the 2017 CSP meets the current needs of the fishery and will maintain flexibility that can benefit anglers in any part of the subarea.

Based on this, ODFW recommends status quo, continue to manage the Oregon Central Coast Subarea as one area from Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain for 2018.

Southern Oregon Subarea

No proposed changes for this subarea.

Proposed Language Modifications for the CSP

ODFW is not including any proposed language change at this time. Staff will work with PFMC and NMFS staff to draft language after the Council makes their decisions on any proposed changes.