

NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE REPORT ON REGULATORY CHANGES
NECESSARY TO ALLOW ROCKFISH RETENTION USING LONG-LEADER GEAR
FISHING ON PACIFIC HALIBUT TRIPS

At the September 2019 Council meeting, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife presented proposed changes to the Pacific halibut Area 2A Catch Sharing Plan, including allowing anglers to use long-leader gear and retain rockfish species on all-depth recreational Pacific halibut fishing days. During the discussion of the motion on proposed Catch Sharing Plan changes for public review, we said we would need to investigate the regulatory changes necessary to allow this type of trip.

Upon further review of the groundfish regulations at 50 CFR 660.360, Pacific halibut regulations at 50 CFR 300.63, and the Catch Sharing Plan, we have determined that revisions are needed to clarify whether anglers may use long-leader gear on halibut trips. The Council would need to recommend adjustments to the groundfish regulations at 660.360(c)(2)(iii)(D). The current regulations only allow vessels on all-depth recreational Pacific halibut fishing days in the federal waters off Oregon to retain certain groundfish stocks, namely sablefish, Pacific cod, and other species of flatfish (sole, flounder, sanddab). The Council could choose to recommend expanding this list to include other groundfish stocks. Additionally, we recommend revising the Catch Sharing Plan and annual management measures published in the *Federal Register* to clarify that anglers may use long-leader gear fishing on halibut trips. No revision to the Pacific halibut regulations at 50 CFR 300.63 is needed.

We advise that the Council consider analyzing the groundfish regulatory change as part of the 2021-2022 Pacific Coast Groundfish harvest specifications action. If the Council chooses to include this adjustment, we could implement the change at the start of the 2021 groundfish fishing year. The revisions to the Catch Sharing Plan, halibut regulations, and management measures could be made through the 2021 Pacific halibut Council process, and both changes would be in place for the start of the 2021 recreational Pacific halibut season.