

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE PACIFIC HALIBUT CATCH SHARING PLAN FOR THE 2021 FISHERY

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) solicited public input via e-mail, phone, and a webinar on July 28 to discuss proposed changes to the Pacific halibut (halibut in remainder of report) Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) for fisheries off of Oregon in 2020. Normally ODFW does a series of in person public meetings in several coast ports and Salem. However due to restrictions on gatherings and staff travel due to COVID, it was necessary to conduct the meeting online only. Ten members of the public participated in the webinar, additionally five e-mails, and three phone calls were received. Based on public input, ODFW provides the following information for consideration by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) in determining which alternatives to adopt for further public review.

Oregon Coastwide

Allow All-Depth Halibut Fishing and Longleader Gear Fishing on the Same Trip

The longleader gear fishery requires the use of specialized gear designed to fish off the bottom and avoid areas where yelloweye rockfish live (Figure 1). Fishing with this gear is currently allowed at any depth and time of year, including seaward of the 40 fathom seasonal depth restriction. Current regulations allow for a 10-fish bag limit of 10 mid-water rockfish species when anglers are utilizing the specific gear seaward of the 40 fathom regulatory line. Anglers have requested that this opportunity be allowed when also participating in the all-depth halibut fishery.

Status quo: Longleader gear fishing not allowed on the same trip as all-depth halibut

Alternative 1: Allow longleader gear fishing on the same trip as all-depth halibut

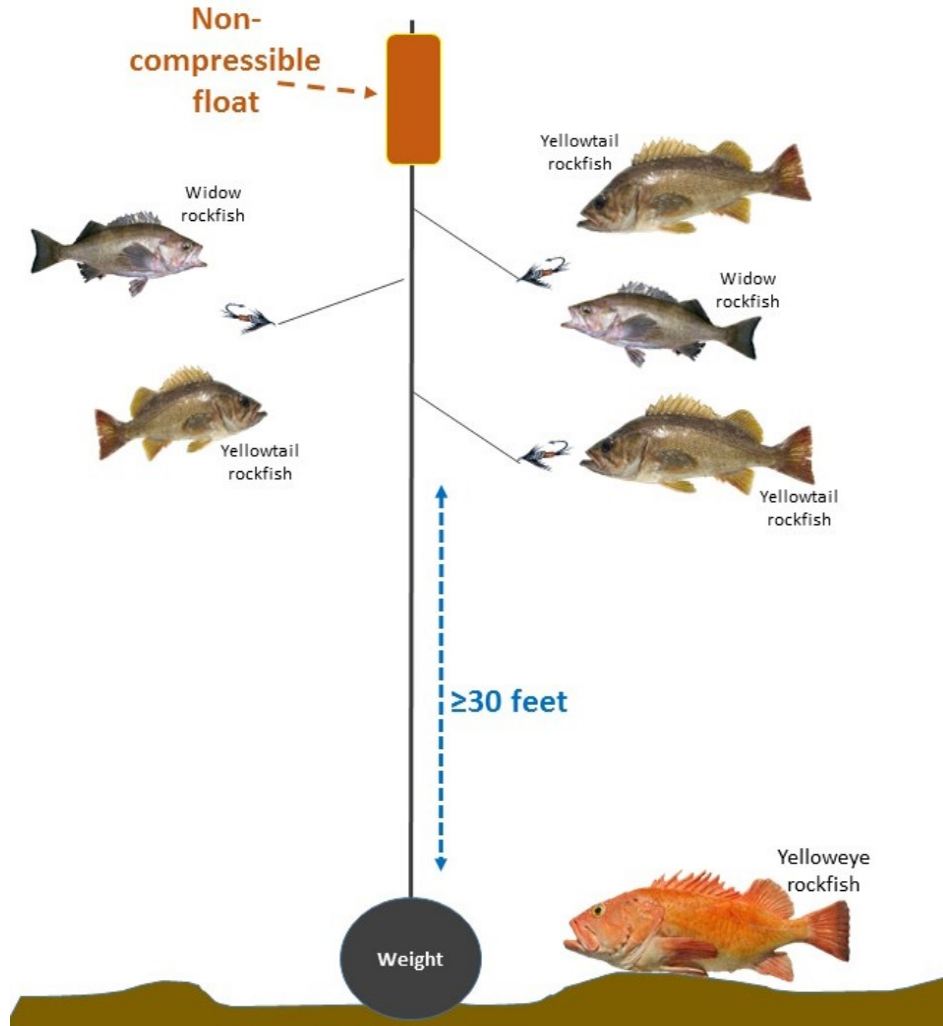
Rationale

Retention of most species of groundfish is prohibited when participating in the all-depth halibut fisheries to reduce the potential for interactions with and impacts to yelloweye rockfish. Since the longleader gear is specifically designed to avoid yelloweye rockfish and has been demonstrated successful in that goal, allowing it when fishing for all-depth halibut would add little, if any, additional risk to yelloweye rockfish. If halibut fishing is slow, it would allow anglers additional fishing opportunities while they are offshore.

Projected impacts to yelloweye rockfish are 0.4 mt, which when added to the impacts from the recreational bottomfish and halibut fisheries, is well within the 2021-2022 Oregon recreational harvest guidelines (6.9 and 7.1 mt respectively). Additional impacts to salmon are also projected to be minor, 0.6 Chinook salmon annually and 6 coho salmon annually.

Allowing all-depth halibut fishing and longleader gear fishing on the same trip was added to the groundfish regulations adopted by the Council and anticipated to be implemented by the National Marine Fisheries Service beginning in 2021. It needs to also be implemented into the halibut regulations in order to be available for 2021.

Figure 1. Schematic of longleader gear. Requires at least 30 feet between the weight and the lowest hook along with a non-compressible float above the highest hook.



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.