

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

2021 Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) Changes to Sport Season Structure

As part of routine changes to the CSP for 2021, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) proposes including for public review an option to extend the ending season date of the sport fishery in California beyond October 31.

The Area 2A CSP states “sport fisheries generally occur May through October annually, but seasons vary by geographic subarea.” More specific season structure language for the California sport fishery is included in the CSP and currently states:

“The fishery will be structured to provide recreational fishing opportunity seven days per week, from May 1 until the quota is projected to be taken, or until October 31, whichever is earlier. Additional closed periods during this season, such as closed weeks or months and including a later opening date, may be established preseason by NMFS based on the subarea quota and projected catch.”

CDFW proposes an end date to the California sport fishery no later than November 15 which is based on the availability provided in IPHC regulations for the non-tribal commercial fisheries in other management areas to routinely operate past October 31 to meet management objectives. Public input and Council discussion recommending an alternative end date beyond October 31 could be considered. These dates would not be guaranteed fishing days but would provide maximum flexibility in the fishery. All other season structure and management provisions would remain the same.

Extending the season length can provide additional management flexibility given that over the last several years the sport fishery performance in California has been highly variable. In 2019, the sport fishery was open seven days per week from May 1 through October 31, but less than half of the quota (39,000 net pounds) was achieved. In 2020, with the same quota and season dates in regulation as in 2019, the quota was projected to be met by mid-August and the fishery closed for the year on August 12. Extension of the fishery beyond October 31 would allow additional time for the quota to be caught in years like 2019, when there are fewer successful fishing trips.

Changes to 2021 Fishery Dates

Following the determination of the 2021 Area 2A Fishery Constant Exploitation Yield and subsequent California sport quota amount, CDFW may conduct a web-based survey in early February 2021 to solicit constituent input on season dates. Based on this

input, CDFW will formulate a recommendation to National Marine Fisheries Service on the preferred 2021 season dates for inclusion in the Federal rule.

Considering the exceptional recreational fishery performance in 2020 ([I.1.a, CDFW Report 1, September 2020](#)), CDFW may consider a return to two-week open/closed blocks for the fishery in 2021. This fishery date arrangement would allow time to tally catch compared to the quota, and could extend fishing longer into the season, which CDFW has been told is a priority for some constituents.