

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 an online survey to gather input on the proposed change to the Pacific halibut (halibut in remainder of report) Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) for fisheries off of Oregon in 2021. 336 people provided input via the online survey with two others providing input via email and phone. 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 2021.

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, and has a 10-fish bag limit of 10 mid-water rockfish species¹. Anglers have requested that this opportunity be allowed when also participating in the all-depth halibut fishery, to maximize fishing opportunities when offshore.

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, with minimal risk of additional yelloweye rockfish impacts. ODFW will work with recreational fishing stakeholders and enforcement representatives to facilitate understanding and compliance with the rules associated with this opportunity.

ODFW recommends the Council adopt Alternative 1.

¹ Yellowtail, widow, canary, redstripe, greenstriped, silvergray, chilipepper, blue, deacon and bocaccio rockfish.

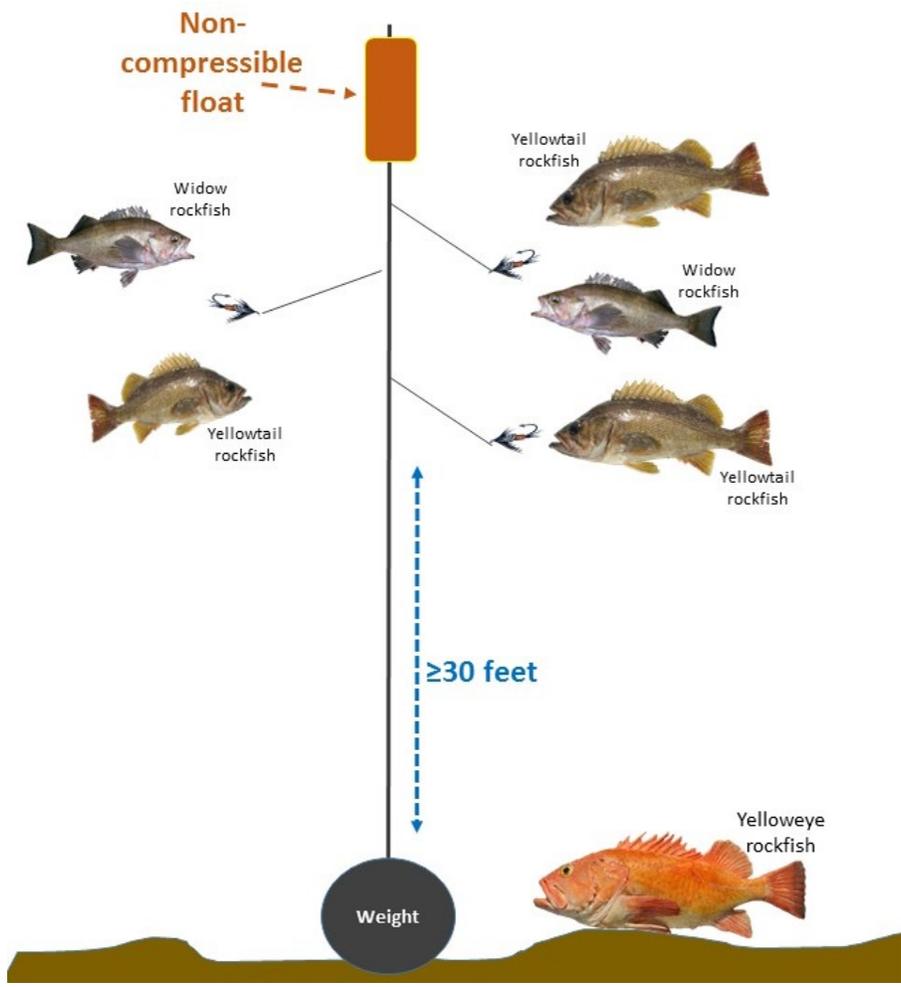


Figure 1. Schematic of longleader gear. Requires at least 30 feet between the weight and the lowest hook along with a non-compressible float above the highest hook.

Catch Sharing Plan Language

Below is draft language updating the Catch Sharing Plan language to reflect this recommendation. ODFW staff will work with NMFS staff to finalize the language after the Council takes action.

6.10 Columbia River Subarea

g. Groundfish regulations

No groundfish may be taken, possessed or landed when halibut are on board the vessel with the following exceptions. When allowed by groundfish regulations sablefish, Pacific cod, flatfish species may be retained, ~~and~~ lingcod caught north of the Washington-Oregon border (46° 16' N. lat.), and species caught with longleader gear (as defined at § 660.351) south of the Washington-Oregon border (46° 16' N. lat.) may be retained during the recreational halibut fishery.

6.11 Oregon Coast Subarea

6.11.1 Oregon central coast subarea

g. Groundfish regulations

During days open to all-depth halibut fishing when the groundfish fishery is restricted by depth, no groundfish may be taken and retained, possessed or landed, except sablefish, Pacific cod, flatfish species when allowed by groundfish regulations, except with longleader gear (as defined at § 660.351), if halibut are on board the vessel. During days open to all-depth halibut fishing when the groundfish fishery is open to all depths, any groundfish species permitted under the groundfish regulations may be retained, possessed or landed if halibut are on aboard the vessel. During days open to nearshore halibut fishing, flatfish species may be taken and retained seaward of the seasonal groundfish depths restrictions, if halibut are on board the vessel.

6.11.2 Southern Oregon subarea

g. groundfish regulations

No groundfish may be taken and retained, possessed or landed, except sablefish, Pacific cod, ~~and~~ flatfish species when allowed by groundfish regulations, except with longleader gear (as defined at § 660.351), in areas closed to groundfish, if halibut are on board the vessel.