



NOAA
FISHERIES

Annual IPHC Area 2A Enforcement Report to the International Pacific Halibut Commission

NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement
West Coast Division

December 2021

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West Coast Enforcement

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WEST COAST ENFORCEMENT - OVERVIEW



NOAA's Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) protects marine wildlife and habitat by enforcing domestic laws and international treaty requirements implemented to ensure these global resources are available for future generations. The 2021 IPHC Area 2A Enforcement Report summarizes the collective activities of the IPHC Area 2A cooperating federal and state entities, and includes the individual state enforcement reports to provide more detailed information about their respective enforcement and compliance efforts. Tribal reports are provided separately.

Enforcement of the commercial, tribal, and recreational Pacific halibut fisheries in International Pacific Halibut Commission Area 2A is an ongoing multi-agency effort performed cooperatively by NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) West Coast Division (WCD), the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Police (WDFW), Oregon State Patrol Fish and Wildlife Division (OSP), California Department of Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Division (CDFW), and Tribal Enforcement.

Tables 1 through 3 present a consolidated summary of IPHC Area 2A Commercial-Directed, Commercial-Incidental and Recreational enforcement statistics for 2021 using data elements provided by OLE, USCG, WDFW, OSP, and CDFW enforcement partners. Table 1 summarizes *Effort*, *Actions* and *Results* data for the directed commercial Pacific halibut fishery south of Point Chehalis, Washington (46°53'30" N). Tables 2 and 3 summarize general Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) fisheries enforcement that broadly include the two other fishing sectors that catch Pacific halibut: Commercial-Incidental, and Recreational. *Effort* data provides a measure of fisheries-related enforcement coverage and capacity. The *Actions* and *Results* sections allow for an analysis of regulatory compliance and enforcement issues of concern associated with the fishing sectors.

Table 1.






2021 IPHC AREA 2A ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS						
<i>COMMERCIAL - DIRECTED</i>						
	USCG (D13/D11)	NOAA OLE (WCD)	WDFW	OSP - ODFW	CDFW	
						
EFFORT						CONSOLIDATED EFFORT
AIR PATROLS						
Number of Air Patrols	30					30
Air Patrol Hours	96					96
Air Patrol Personnel Hours	N/A	71				71
VESSEL PATROLS						
Number of Vessel Patrols	68		7	4		79
Vessel Patrol Hours	875		31	21		927
At-Sea Personnel Hours	N/A	16	76	42		134
Number of Boardings/Contacts	34	3	19	10		66
SHORESIDE PATROLS						
Number of Shoreside Patrols			2	17	42	61
Shoreside Personnel Hours		178	12	147	116	453
Number of Boardings/Contacts		26	2	11	24	63
OFFICERS/AGENTS/WARDENS						
Number of Assigned Personnel	54	5	6	6	4	75
ACTIONS						CONSOLIDATED ACTIONS
Compliance Assistance		3			1	4
Written Warnings						0
Citations			3	1		4
Other (list below)						0
Not in Compliance			6			6
						0
						0
RESULTS						CONSOLIDATED RESULTS
Undersized Halibut						0
Over Limit						0
Prohibited Gear			4			4
Logbook/Reporting		2				2
Permit/License			1	1		2
Restricted/Closed Area						0
Fail to Validate Tag						0
Illegal Harvest						0
Possess Groundfish w/Halibut On Board						0
Other (list below)						0
Seabird Avoidance Gear Not Used		1				1
						0
						0

Table 2.











2021 IPHC AREA 2A ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS						
<u>COMMERCIAL - INCIDENTAL</u>						
	USCG (D13/D11)	NOAA OLE (WCD)	WDFW	OSP - ODFW	CDFW	
						
EFFORT						CONSOLIDATED EFFORT
AIR PATROLS						
Number of Air Patrols	222					222
Air Patrol Hours	701					701
Air Patrol Personnel Hours	N/A					0
VESSEL PATROLS						
Number of Vessel Patrols	417		1		25	443
Vessel Patrol Hours	6250		6		49	6305
At-Sea Personnel Hours	N/A		12		116	128
Number of Boardings/Contacts	156		4		9	169
SHORESIDE PATROLS						
Number of Shoreside Patrols		2				2
Shoreside Personnel Hours		16				16
Number of Boardings/Contacts		4				4
OFFICERS/AGENTS/WARDENS						
Number of Assigned Personnel	54	2	2		4	62
ACTIONS						CONSOLIDATED ACTIONS
Compliance Assistance		2				2
Written Warnings		1				1
Citations						0
Other (list below)						0
						0
						0
						0
RESULTS						CONSOLIDATED RESULTS
Undersized Halibut						0
Over Limit						0
Prohibited Gear						0
Logbook/Reporting						0
Permit/License						0
Restricted/Closed Area						0
Fail to Validate Tag						0
Illegal Harvest						0
Possess Groundfish w/Halibut On Board						0
Other (list below)						0
Retained Halibut						0
VMS						0
						0

Table 3.

2021 IPHC AREA 2A ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS						
<i>RECREATIONAL</i>						
	USCG (D13/D11)	NOAA OLE (WCD)	WDFW	OSP - ODFW	CDFW	
						
EFFORT						CONSOLIDATED EFFORT
AIR PATROLS						
Number of Air Patrols	222					222
Air Patrol Hours	701					701
Air Patrol Personnel Hours	N/A					0
VESSEL PATROLS						
Number of Vessel Patrols	417		29	19	25	490
Vessel Patrol Hours	6250		201	64	49	6564
At-Sea Personnel Hours	N/A		445	128	116	689
Number of Boardings/Contacts			425	263	77	765
SHORESIDE PATROLS						
Number of Shoreside Patrols		2	35	11	52	100
Shoreside Personnel Hours		18	170	50	126	364
Number of Boardings/Contacts		12	719	19	189	939
OFFICERS/AGENTS/WARDENS						
Number of Assigned Personnel	96	1	19	8	9	133
ACTIONS						CONSOLIDATED ACTIONS
Compliance Assistance						0
Written Warnings		4	130	6		140
Citations			105	19	4	128
Other (list below)						0
Vessels Not In Compliance			105			105
						0
						0
RESULTS						CONSOLIDATED RESULTS
Undersized Halibut						0
Over Limit			4	1		5
Prohibited Gear			80			80
Logbook/Reporting						0
Permit/License		4	52	4		60
Restricted/Closed Area			11			11
Fail to Validate Tag			15	16		31
Illegal Harvest						0
Possess Groundfish w/Halibut On Board				4		4
Other (list below)						0
Prohibited Species			9			9
						0
						0



Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) – Police

WDFW Pacific halibut land-based enforcement activities include conducting dockside patrols to monitor commercial catch off-loads (including incidental catch), ensuring individual and vessel license compliance, coordinating activities related to compliance and verification checks, and carrying out collaborative enforcement efforts. WDFW at-sea responsibilities include patrolling its Pacific Ocean area of responsibility, conducting joint enforcement operations, and inspecting at-sea vessels and personnel for licenses, federal permits, logbooks, marine permits and registrations, and catch, with emphasis on activities within the Exclusive Economic Zone. Pacific halibut is shared among four user groups in Washington State: recreational, directed non-Indian commercial, non-Indian incidental, and Tribal fishermen.

WDFW IPHC Area 2A Enforcement Statistics: 2019 - 2021

WDFW IPHC Enforcement Statistics			
	2021	2020	2019
Participating WDFW Officers	21	20	22
Dockside Personnel Hours	182	219	299
At-Sea Personnel Hours	533	608	430
Boardings/Contacts Made (Total)	1,169	1,680	752
Commercial - Directed	21	N/A	N/A
Commercial - Incidental	4	N/A	N/A
Recreational	1,144	N/A	N/A
Enforcement Actions			
Warnings / Citations	349	216	163

Commercial Halibut

Officers from the Columbia River conducted several boat patrols for the commercial halibut opener. Violations pertaining to the seabird avoidance gear continue to be an issue and were forwarded to NOAA OLE. Several recreational bottomfish, halibut, and salmon contacts were made during these patrols. Violations observed included failure to record catch, and no license on person. Verbal warnings and notice of infractions were issued.

During a commercial halibut boat patrol, officers noticed a single commercial-looking vessel well outside the typical halibut grounds. Upon contact, they found two gentlemen recreational bottomfishing from the Washington-based vessel. Officers Ariss and Barabasz boarded the vessel and found them in possession of one yelloweye rockfish. Additionally, they were fishing offshore Oregon waters (outside 3 miles) without adhering to the offshore longleader gear rule. A citation was issued and the yelloweye was seized for evidence.

Sergeant Dielman and Officer Ariss logged several hours in Marine Area 1 patrolling the second commercial halibut opener and recreational marine salmon. Vessel participation for the second halibut opener declined compared to the first opener. The improper use or non-use of seabird avoidance gear continues to be an issue and was observed by a NOAA Officer riding along. A vessel contacted during the previous opener was discovered to have a crew who lied about crewmember licenses. Having found they did not possess them at all, officers sought them out to see what the story was. One crewmember obtained his license the night before, the other had more excuses. He received a citation. Several recreational marine salmon contacts were made. Several failure to record and use of barbed hooks were addressed with verbal warnings and infraction notices.

Recreational Halibut

Sergeant Alexander, Sergeant Dielman, and Officer Baldwin conducted a boat patrol in Marine Area 2 (Westport) for the first halibut weekend fishery. Many anglers were out pursuing the prized fish with most having great success. Only one charter boat was found to be in possession of one too many lingcod; and the skipper willingly took the blame for not checking on his crew. All anglers were found to have halibut catch cards and properly recorded their catch.

Officers Davidson and Hillman patrolled Marine Area 4 on a recent halibut opening and found higher success rates than in past weeks; but there were also more significant violations detected. One boat with 2 anglers was found to have retained (but not recorded) 4 halibut and a yelloweye rockfish. Another boat east of Tatoosh Island was fishing with illegal gear (more than 2 hooks); and while offshore had retained 3 yelloweye and 2 quillback rockfish. The yelloweye are illegal to retain anywhere in Marine Area 4 and it was illegal to possess the quillback while fishing east of Tatoosh as it is a violation to fish while in possession of a fish not legal to retain at that location. Several other boats were found to have not recorded their halibut immediately upon retention, as required. All the illegal fish were seized and later donated.



Catch from one vessel with only 2 anglers who possessed 2 halibut over their limit and a closed-area yellow eye rockfish.

Officer Ariss and Sergeant Dielman conducted a boat patrol in Marine Area 1 focusing on the open halibut fishery. The catch rate was moderate, with several anglers failing to record their halibut. Infraction notices and verbal warnings were issued.

Officer Davidson, Sgt. Rosenberger, and a USCG Boarding Officer performed a boat patrol in Marine Area 3 and 4. A charter vessel was observed by Officer Murray aboard a USCG helicopter actively fishing more than

20 miles offshore in a halibut hotspot on a closed halibut day. The charter boat was boarded on the water as it was leaving the location. The charter boat captain told Sgt. Rosenberger he started fishing and then realized the area was closed when he saw no other boats around. A safety gear inspection by USCG revealed that the charter vessel had no current flares on the vessel. The USCG ordered the charter boat to return immediately to port for the violation.



Sgt. Rosenberger and USCG boarding charter vessel.

Officers Baldwin and Cilk conducted a boat patrol for the last recreational halibut opener in Marine Area 2. While on patrol, the officers contacted one vessel heading back in with three anglers on board stating that they had been successful. During the inspection, two of the anglers presented catch record cards that had not been filled out, while the third was unable to locate his license. Upon inspecting the anglers' catch, the three were in possession of 7 halibut and 8 lingcod. The group claimed that there had been two additional anglers on board that got on a different friend's boat to head in early after getting sick; though this still would have put the anglers over limit on halibut. The officers were able to verify the third angler's license status; however, without a valid catch card his halibut, along with the four additional halibut, were seized, along with the excess ling cod. The anglers were cited for over limits of lingcod and halibut, failure to record, and fishing without a catch record card.



Officer Baldwin with seized overlimit halibut and lingcod.

While conducting a halibut boat patrol, Officers Baldwin and Cilk approached a recreational charter boat out of Westport. As the patrol vessel approached, the deckhand looked up at the officers, stopped filleting fish, ushered multiple anglers inside the cabin from the rear deck, and then closed the rear door. The anglers could be seen through the rear windows of the boat completing their catch record cards while the skipper on the flybridge refused to look at the patrol vessel which was travelling right beside his vessel. The officers were finally able to get the skipper's attention and approached the vessel. The officers directed the skipper to get his deckhand's attention to stop completing catch cards and move gear blocking their approach. After several minutes, an officer was able to board and discussed the blatant violations. The deckhand was cited for failing to record his catch, and both he and the skipper were warned for the obstruction and failing to complete their catch record cards. After clearing the contact, the officers determined that the charter was not listed as a current holder of a federal license to charter for recreational halibut. Further investigation into the charter's legal status was conducted and relevant charges were forwarded to NOAA OLE.

While checking vessels returning to the boat ramp in Westport, Officer Baldwin contacted a vessel that had fished the previous day's halibut fishery. Both anglers admitted to retaining halibut the previous day, and directed the officer to where all their fish were cleaned, vacuum packed, and labeled. Both anglers provided their licenses and catch record cards, though neither had recorded their halibut. Both anglers were cited for failing to record their catch.

Officers Cilk and Baldwin patrolled the ocean for compliance of halibut and fishing regulations. Violations detected included: no license, catch card, failure to record, and over-limit of halibut and lingcod.



Officer Baldwin inspecting a recreational fishing vessel in Marine Area 2.

Officer Ariss and Sergeant Dielman were returning from a halibut-day boat patrol when they heard a vessel calling for assistance on the marine VHF Channel 16. Despite its dogged effort to cross the choppy Columbia River bar during an ebb tide, the "Sea Dog" caught crab gear in its motor and was unable to break free or make way. A Good Samaritan vessel pulled them away from the rocks of the North Jetty before snapping their tow line. Officers responded to the area in minutes and were able to secure a single tow line and pull the vessel with three men aboard to safety. The vessel was then transferred to the USCG. While enroute to

safety, a large male orca traveled alongside the vessels and put on a show.



Officer Ariss operating the patrol vessel while towing a disabled vessel away from the Columbia River North jetty after a halibut patrol.

Officer Davidson and Sergeant Rosenberger patrolled the Marine Sanctuary, and Marine Area 4 West to monitor halibut anglers during the opening, and to enforce the Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Area (YRCA). One vessel contacted fishing within the closed area had retained halibut. Two halibut were seized and the skipper cited. Weather and sea conditions were very good and allowed for rapid movement around the areas, allowing for numerous contacts. Participation and catch rates were both high. While returning to USCG Station Neah Bay, a boat was contacted just outside of Tatoosh Island. On approach to the vessel, Sergeant Rosenberger observed one male subject tossing fish over the transom of his vessel. Upon contact and further investigation, the boat was found to be overlimit on rockfish. A nearby vessel came over and loaned Officer Davidson a net to scoop up the overlimit rockfish as they floated away. The skipper of the vessel was cited for overlimit of rockfish and failure to have a descending device onboard.



Trail of floating overlimit rockfish suspects were trying to toss overboard as officers approached.

Officers Wessel and Hillman patrolled Marine Area 4, and contacted vessels fishing halibut closed season as well. Anglers were cited for possessing illegal rockfish and having fish aboard in unlawful condition.

Officer Hillman, Sergeant Rosenberger, and Makah Natural Resource Enforcement Sergeant Butterfield patrolled Marine Areas 4 and 5. The officers observed that 100% of the vessels contacted while fishing in Marine Area 5 were in violation of regulations. Violations encountered and cited for included fishing for halibut closed season, fishing with illegal gear, and possession of fish in unlawful condition.

Sergeant Alexander patrolled the Westport docks for halibut and bottomfish activity. One subject was cited for failing to record his, and his friend's, halibut; and another subject was cited for catching and retaining lingcod without a valid license.

Officer Wessel and Officer Davidson patrolled Marine Areas 4 and 5. Several citations for failing to record halibut and fishing with barbed hooks violations were issued.

Sergeant Dielman and Officer Cilk conducted an offshore recreational halibut boat patrol. Participation was low and citations were issued for failing to record.

Officer Davidson and Sergeant Rosenberger conducted a boat patrol in Marine Area 4 West to monitor halibut anglers. Good weather and sea conditions allowed for a far-ranging patrol. Catch success was moderate to good, with most anglers obtaining their limit of halibut and lingcod. Very few violations were noted, and were addressed. While on patrol, Sergeant Rosenberger and Officer Davidson contacted and inspected several commercial salmon trollers, observing that the salmon fishery was off to a slow start with very few fish harvested.



Officer Davidson inspecting a charter fishing vessel in Marine Area 4.

Officers Wessel, Davidson, Beltz and Miller patrolled Marine Area 4 and during their inspection of a recreational vessel, the anglers stated they had retained a yelloweye rockfish. When asked if they had an experimental permit for the retention, they stated they did not. The officers seized the rockfish and the angler cited accordingly. Officers Beltz and Miller are both located on the east side of the state and received rockfish identification training.

While on patrol for the recreational halibut season in Westport, Sergeant Alexander and Officer Baldwin were

approached by an angler who had just returned to the marina. The angler stated that he had to leave but needed to account for his fish on the vessel he departed. He said he had a halibut, two lingcod, and one canary rockfish on the vessel. He provided Sergeant Alexander with his license and catch record card, which did not include the halibut. When asked, the angler said that the dealer had handed him a separate portion for halibut, which he pulled out of the license wallet and provided. The piece was approximately 1" tall and appeared to be the halibut portion of another catch record card that had been cut off. Sergeant Alexander and Officer Baldwin explained that this was not how a catch card would print and began asking where the license came from. The angler remained adamant that this was how he was given his license. Finally, after confirming that he had not purchased a halibut catch card, and showing him that the WDFW logo and cut mark did not match with any of his licenses, the angler decided to come clean. He said that once he realized he didn't have a catch card, they cut the halibut portion from the skipper's son's catch card and attempted to pass off the lie. The angler was cited for unlawful use of a license, providing false information, and fishing without a license. Additionally, his halibut was seized and donated. The skipper was also given a stern warning on the license use violation.

30

Do you fish for Sturgeon? — Yes — No

Do Not Record Released Sturgeon Release All Green Sturgeon

CATCH CODE	MO. (1-12)	DAY (1-31)	SPECIES CODE	FORK LENGTH
1				
2				

*Species Code: W=White

HALIBUT Did you fish for Halibut? — Yes — No

Do Not Record Released Halibut

CHARTER AREA CODE	MO. 1-12	DAY 1-31	CHARTER PRIVATE*	CATCH AREA CODE	MO. 1-12	DAY 1-31	CHARTER PRIVATE*
2	6	17	C	3			C P
2			C P	4			C P

*Circle Boat Type: C=Charter P=Private

Falsified halibut catch card.



Oregon State Police (OSP) – Fish & Wildlife Division

OSP IPHC Area 2A Enforcement Statistics: 2019 - 2021

OSP IPHC Enforcement Statistics			
	2021	2020	2019
Participating OSP Troopers	8	17	13
Dockside Personnel Hours	197	264	191
At-Sea Personnel Hours	170	461	162
Boardings/Contacts Made (Total)	303	802	379
Commercial - Directed	21	93	99
Commercial - Incidental	0	N/A	N/A
Recreational	282	709	280
Enforcement Actions			
Warnings / Citations	26	57	18

Fish and Wildlife Troopers conducted a halibut patrol on the ocean off Newport and made contact with numerous halibut and rockfish anglers. Multiple Electronic Licensing System (ELS) related warnings were issued. Seven citations were issued for *Fail to Immediately Validate Harvest Card - Halibut*.

Marine Fisheries Team Troopers conducted an ocean patrol out of Newport for the All Depth Halibut fishery. Citations were issued for *Failure to Immediately Validate Harvest Card* and *Angling Prohibited Method*. Warnings were issued for *Possession of Groundfish After Retention of Halibut*.

Fish and Wildlife Troopers conducted a boat patrol on the ocean out of Newport and made contact with numerous halibut and rockfish anglers. Multiple ELS related warnings were given. Citations were issued for *Fail to Immediately Validate Harvest Card - Halibut*, and *Exceed the Daily Limit of Halibut* to a boat with two anglers that claimed to keep “1 halibut and 2 petrale sole”, but subsequently found to have 3 Pacific halibut.

A Fish and Wildlife Trooper conducted an ocean patrol off of Cape Falcon and made contact with multiple salmon, halibut, and rockfish anglers. One citation was issued for *Fail to Immediately Validate Harvest Card - Halibut*.

Marine Fisheries Team (MFT) Troopers conducted an offshore Guardian patrol out of Newport for the commercial halibut season. Multiple boats were observed fishing and no violations were noted. Several recreational salmon anglers were also contacted, again with no violations.

While checking anglers who were returning from fishing in the ocean, a Fish and Wildlife Trooper contacted a subject who retained halibut and a lingcod on an All-Depth Halibut day. The subject was cited for *Take/Possession of Groundfish with Halibut on Board - All-Depth Halibut Days*.

Fish and Wildlife Troopers conducted an ocean patrol from Manzanita to Cannon Beach. Numerous ocean salmon, rockfish, and halibut anglers were contacted, and multiple warnings were given. Four citations were issued for *Angling Prohibited Method - Barbed Hooks for Salmon*, and two citations were issued for *Fail to Immediately Validate Harvest Card*.

Newport MFT Troopers conducted an ocean patrol during a very busy salmon and halibut weekend. During the patrol eighteen citations were issued for angling violations that included *Fail to Immediately Validate Harvest Card*, *No Harvest Card*, *Angling Prohibited Method - Barbed Hooks*, and *Angling More Than One Rod*. Two fish were seized.

Fish and Wildlife Troopers conducted an ocean patrol from Nehalem Bay to Cape Falcon. Multiple salmon, rockfish, and halibut anglers were contacted. Citations and warnings were issued for *Angling Prohibited Method - Barbed Hooks for Salmon*, and for *Angling Prohibited Method - Treble Hooks for Salmon*.



OSP Fish and Wildlife Trooper checking anglers.



California Department of Fish & Wildlife (CDFW) – Law Enforcement Division

CDFW IPHC Area 2A Enforcement Statistics: 2019 - 2021

CDFW IPHC Enforcement Statistics			
	2021	2020	2019
Participating CDFW Wardens	9	9	11
Dockside Personnel Hours	178	66	85
At-Sea Personnel Hours	116	9	13
Boardings/Contacts Made (Total)	319	161	399
Commercial - Directed	24	14	20
Commercial - Incidental	9	N/A	N/A
Recreational	286	147	379
Enforcement Actions			
Warnings	1	0	0
Citations	4	0	1

CDFW Wildlife Officers worked joint operations with USCG and NOAA OLE uniformed personnel during the 2021 halibut season. The CDFW halibut patrols covered the major ports in Mendocino, Humboldt and Del Norte Counties, and approximately 15 sport boat launch ramps. CDFW patrolled, contacted, and regularly checked 9 party boats targeting halibut between Shelter Cove and Crescent City. Offshore halibut patrols were made in combination with salmon and rockfish patrols.

9 CDFW officers were involved in halibut season patrols patrolling from the Gualala River north, working the ports of Pt. Arena, Albion, Noyo Harbor, Shelter Cove, Eureka, Trinidad, and Crescent City.

49 hours of near-shore vessel hours were used in support of enforcement of halibut fishing regulations.

33 commercial contacts and 286 recreational contacts were made enforcing halibut regulations.

One verbal warning was issued to a commercial trawl vessel for unlawfully retaining one halibut. Four citations were issued for angling with too many rods for halibut.



CDFW's 38' patrol boat utilized for enforcement of offshore fisheries in the Eureka area. The vessel was purchased with CDFW and NOAA Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA) funding, and is docked at the Woodley Island Marina in Eureka.



CDFW's Warden Michael Hampton working aboard CDFW's Patrol Boat "Mako".



NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement – West Coast Division

During 2021, OLE's West Coast Enforcement Division (WCD) continued to work closely with the USCG and Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA) partners to monitor activity associated with Pacific halibut fisheries, pursuant to IPHC regulations. As one of its annual enforcement priorities, OLE-WCD Enforcement Officers (EOs), along with JEA partners from WDFW, OSP, and CDFW, conducted patrols and vessel boardings, primarily focused on enforcement of Area 2A Pacific halibut directed commercial fishery regulations.

INTERNATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT COMMISSION (IPHC) AREA 2A 2021 HALIBUT OPENERS

The IPHC has set forth the Pacific Halibut fishing periods for Area 2A in Section 9 Part 2 of the 2021 IPHC Halibut Fishery Regulations, and is adopted by US regulation at 50 Code of Federal Regulations §300.62. The fishery is restricted to waters south of Point Chehalis, Washington (46°53'30" N) under regulations promulgated by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). Fishing activities occur predominantly along the 100-150 fathom curve off Grays and Astoria Canyons, Heceta and Stonewall Banks, and the Bandon High Spot. The 2021 Area 2A Commercial Halibut directed fishery was the second season for these annual three day openers. The first opener for the 2021 season began on Tuesday, June 22, at 8 a.m. PST; and ended on Thursday, June 24, at 6:00 p.m. PST. Additional openers were conducted on July 6th -8th, and July 20th -22nd, 2021 after the Commission determined the landing limits specified for IPHC Regulatory Area 2A was not yet attained.

OPERATION FLATFISH FRENZY

Operation Flatfish Frenzy is planned and executed annually in support of the IPHC Area 2A Commercial Directed Fishery. NOAA OLE WCD, USCG District 13 (Washington and Oregon) and District 11 (California), WDFW, OSP, and CDFW coordinate efforts, assets, and personnel to ensure compliance of fishing regulations during Area 2A Directed Halibut openers.

Operation Flatfish Frenzy enforcement efforts focused on ensuring commercial fisherman participating in the 2021 fishery were practicing careful release methods for Pacific halibut, complying with opener start and stop times, adhering to area restrictions, properly recording offloads, and following retention requirements.

ENFORCEMENT CONCERNS

- This was the second year longline fishing vessels landing groundfish were required to use Tori lines (Seabird Avoidance Gear) when setting gear.
- Vessel participation was affected by crew members who opted to take advantage of increased COVID unemployment benefits, rather than fish.
- Complaints were received from fisherman concerning lost time caused by vessel boardings.
- The Commercial Halibut fleet recommended better coordination among federal and state enforcement agencies to avoid multiple boardings by enforcement officials on the same day.
- Morning helicopter flights were difficult throughout the three openers due to poor visibility.

ENFORCEMENT EFFORT

- 1st Derby (22-24 June)
 - Daily USCG C-27 flights from Joint Base Lewis McChord with NOAA rider.
 - Daily USCG helicopter flights from Newport and North Bend with NOAA riders.
 - Patrol vessel (PV) deployments: ELM, ORCAS, ALERT, BENJAMIN BOTTOMS.
 - D13 Stations: Increased bar and boat patrols, and shoreside backup for NOAA OLE and states.
 - WDFW deployed 2 PVs out of Westport and Ilwaco, and provided a shoreside presence.
 - OSP PV GUARDIAN deployed out of Newport.
 - NOAA OLE provided riders for aircraft and shoreside patrols alongside state JEA partners.
 - 3 WCD EOs and 1 WCD Supervisory Enforcement Officer (SEO) conducted a total of 76 hours of land patrols, 36 hours of air patrols, 6 hours of at-sea patrols, and 14 boardings in support of Operation Flatfish Frenzy. 14 dockside boardings were conducted that resulted in 0 violations identified. Based on boarding interviews with fishermen, violations have decreased due to outreach efforts and knowledge of increased USCG, JEA and NOAA OLE presence during all aspects of the derby.
- 2nd Derby (6-8 July)
 - Enforcement effort throttled back as in previous years.
 - Daily USCG helicopter flights with NOAA OLE riders continued.
 - OSP GUARDIAN and WDFW ORLISS patrol vessels deployed.
 - 4 WCD EOs and 1 WCD SEO logged a total of 58 hours of land patrols, 35 hours of air patrols, 10 hours of at-sea patrols, and 9 boardings. 1 violation during an at-sea patrol was identified when the captain self-reported not using seabird avoidance gear that morning, which resulted in compliance assistance.
- 3rd Derby (20-22 July)
 - Enforcement effort throttled back as in previous years.
 - Daily USCG C-27 flights were cancelled due to aircraft mechanical issues.
 - Daily USCG helicopter flights with NOAA OLE riders continued.
 - OSP GUARDIAN and WDFW CORLISS patrol vessels deployed.
 - 4 WCD EOs and 1 WCD SEO conducted a total of 44 hours of land patrols, 5 hours of air patrols, and 9 boarding's. There were 0 documented violations.



NOAA Enforcement Officer observing fishing vessel during USCG air patrol.