

**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE UPDATE
ON THE 2022 RECREATIONAL PACIFIC HALIBUT FISHERY**

The 2022 recreational Pacific halibut fishery in California was open May 1-August 7, with a daily bag limit of one fish per person per day. The fishery closed for the year on August 7, due to projected attainment of the 38,740 net-pound quota. CDFW tracked recreational Pacific halibut catches daily during the season, and consulted with the National Marine Fisheries Service, International Pacific Halibut Commission, and Council staff to take action to close the fishery.

Monthly catch is estimated by CDFW’s California Recreational Fishery Survey (CRFS) Program. The 2022 total season catch estimate for the California recreational sector is 48,009 net pounds, or 124 percent of the quota (Table 1). Similar to 2021, the fishery began slowly in May, and then rapidly intensified in mid-June, with periods of high catch rates associated with fair weather events.

Table 1. 2022 Pacific halibut catch estimates (net pounds) in California by month. CDFW projection values are used in real-time as a temporary monitoring tool. They are provided in ~~strikeout~~ to illustrate the process of replacing the projections with CRFS catch estimates as they become available approximately six weeks following the end of each month. Data are from CRFS and are considered preliminary and subject to change.

Month	CDFW Projection	Preliminary CRFS Estimate
May	2,099	2,116
June	15,594	15,660
July	15,894	22,137
August (1-7 only)	6,223	8,096
September	CLOSED	CLOSED
October	CLOSED	CLOSED
November	CLOSED	CLOSED
Total		48,009

In addition to daily fishery tracking in 2022, for the first time CDFW utilized weekly reports containing lengths of fish sampled. This information was used to determine if the average size of fish in 2022 showed a significant deviation from the multi-year average size, and if so, to consider that information in evaluating quota attainment. The monthly catch projection and CRFS estimates for May and June were in close agreement and indicated the adjustments to the catch projection procedures to incorporate size information from the 2021 fishery were suitable. July and August catch estimates and catch projections, however, were not as close. But rather than unusual fish size data being the primary reason for the discrepancy, in these cases the differences can be attributed to CRFS’ statistical expansion process that incorporates monthly effort information from various geographic areas and fishing modes. Variations in effort cannot

be captured in determining catch projections, and is a variable treated as a constant when the projections are made.

Since active quota management for this fishery began in 2015, California quota has lasted the entire season in only one year (2019) and has extended from May continuously through Labor Day weekend in only 2019 as well. Anecdotal information from anglers indicates very high catch rates in each of the last three years. The catch projection model used to determine fishery closure dates inseason suggests that if the fishery had not been closed in 2022 upon reaching the quota, between 54,000 and 92,000 net pounds could have been caught during a full season lasting from May 1 through November 15. When the four percent of the non-tribal Area 2A FCEY was allocated to the California recreational fishery in the Catch Sharing Plan beginning in 2015, there were concerns of stranding fish if the California fishery did not have the capacity to catch its allocation each year. Fishery performance from 2015 through present dispels this concern and suggests the opposite – that the allocation and resulting quota are perhaps constraining the fishery more than anticipated, and the California recreational fishery may have a greater capacity than assumed in 2015.

CDFW will again closely track the fishery in 2023 and will incorporate relevant updated size and catch information to refine the tracking process.