

## OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE PACIFIC HALIBUT CATCH SHARING PLAN FOR THE 2024 FISHERY

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) solicited public input via e-mail, phone, and three public meetings in Oregon coastal ports<sup>1</sup>, one of which was webcast, to discuss proposed changes to the Pacific halibut (halibut in remainder of report) Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) for fisheries off Oregon in 2024. Fifty-six members of the public attended meetings in person, six participated in the webinar, and others reach out via phone, email and office visits throughout the year to provide feedback regarding sport halibut fisheries. ODFW considered the public input and provides the following information for consideration by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) in determining which alternatives to adopt for further public review for the 2024 fishery.

### **Proposed Changes for the 2024 Catch Sharing Plan**

#### **Oregon Anglers Oppose any Allocation Shift of the Oregon Quota to California**

During the August public meetings, the most popular topic of discussion brought forth by Oregon sport anglers was to voice their disapproval of any halibut quota allocation shift from the Oregon sport fisheries to the California sport fisheries. The Oregon Central Coast subarea (which accounts for 93.79% of the Oregon sport allocation) has been split between a spring and summer fishery to extend the fishery into summer and potentially fall months. Historically, this fishery has been limited to two or three-days of fishing per week, prior to the higher quotas that began in 2019. Furthermore, Oregon anglers are limited to six-halibut per year. For more history on Oregon sport halibut fishing, please see Agenda Item D.1.a, ODFW Report 1.

#### **Central Oregon Coast All-Depth Open Days**

For the last several years anglers expressed a desire to have the Central Oregon Coast Spring and Summer All-depth seasons open seven days per week. The longer opening is desired to spread angling effort throughout the week and allow opportunity that better accommodates a variety of work schedules, reduces crowding at boat ramps, and the ability to take advantage of optimal weather windows. ODFW received a lot of positive feedback about the fishery being open seven days per week in 2023 instead of the long running three-day openers and expressed a desire for it to continue and expand to every week instead of skipping weeks during the Spring All-depth season back-up dates.

The Spring All-depth season (CSP section 6.11.1.d.ii) is broken down into two potential openings “Fixed” and “Back-up”. Fixed dates will be established preseason prior to the first Spring opening and will not be modified inseason except if the combined Oregon all-depth Spring and Summer quotas are estimated to be achieved. Currently, back-up dates may be established every other week, except week(s) may be skipped to avoid adverse tidal conditions. The potential back-up dates will be identified preseason.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2023/07\\_Jul/072023.asp](https://www.dfw.state.or.us/news/2023/07_Jul/072023.asp)

Status quo: Oregon Central Coast Spring All-depth Back-up dates may be established every other week, except week(s) may be skipped to avoid adverse tidal conditions. The potential Back-up dates will be identified preseason.

Alternative 1: Oregon Central Coast Spring All-depth Back-up dates may be established every week, except week(s) may be skipped to avoid adverse tidal conditions. The potential Back-up dates will be identified preseason.

### **Rationale**

During years with high quotas (2019-2023), skipping weeks during the month(s) of June and/or July might lead to the stranding of halibut quota. The Spring All-depth season was open seven days per week beginning May 1 through June 30 in 2023, with back-up dates set for July 10-16 and July 24-30. The other 17 days in July were not accessible to all-depth halibut anglers per the language in the current CSP. Removing the term “other” and allowing back-up dates to be every week enables more flexibility and opportunity to reach the quota allocated to the Central Oregon Coast Subarea.

### **No Proposed Changes to Other Subareas or Seasons**

ODFW is not proposing any changes to the Columbia River or Southern Oregon Subarea, nor the Central Oregon Coast Nearshore fishery.

### **Draft Catch Sharing Plan Language**

In section 6.11.1.d.ii of the CSP, ODFW proposes to remove the word “other” from the eighth paragraph (specifying Back-up dates). The paragraph should read as: Back-up dates may be established every week, except week(s) may be skipped to avoid adverse tidal conditions. The potential Back-up dates will be identified preseason.

ODFW staff would also like to work with NMFS and Council staff to ensure the language in the Catch Sharing Plan continues to allow for flexible inseason management of the recreational halibut fisheries in a responsive and timely manner. As CSP language is developed, we support the development of provisions that can streamline the process and reduce delays or other challenges in the federal rulemaking process and timeline.