

INCIDENTAL CATCH RECOMMENDATIONS: OPTIONS FOR THE SALMON TROLL AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FIXED GEAR SABLEFISH FISHERIES

Regulations governing incidental harvest of Pacific halibut (halibut) in the salmon troll fishery and primary fixed gear fishery for sablefish north of Point Chehalis require the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) to adopt halibut landing restrictions to allow incidental harvest while ensuring quotas are not exceeded.

National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has been issuing permits for Area 2A halibut fisheries since 2023. Application submission requirements and deadlines can be found on the NMFS webpage for [Pacific Halibut Permits](#).

Salmon Troll Fishery

The Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) for Area 2A allocates 15 percent of the non-tribal commercial halibut allocation to the salmon troll fishery as incidental catch. The primary management objective outlined in the CSP is to harvest the incidental quota during the April through June salmon troll fishery, with a secondary objective to harvest any remaining quota from July through the remainder of the salmon troll fishery. The Council has successfully used landing ratios and a total trip limit to ensure the manageable progression of the fishery in past years. A summary of management information for the incidental halibut fishery is provided under this agenda item as Attachment 1.

Unless revised, incidental halibut landing restrictions in the commercial salmon troll fishery adopted initially for the prior year (before any inseason action), will be in effect when incidental halibut retention opens in April of this year. The regulations adopted for 2023 are no more than one halibut per two Chinook, except one halibut may be possessed or landed without meeting the ratio requirement and no more than 35 halibut may be landed per trip. Under this agenda item, the Council should confirm or recommend inseason changes to these retention limits, which will remain in place until superseded with new limits adopted for the salmon management measures beginning May 16, 2024.

Also under this agenda item, the Council should adopt for public review, a range of incidental halibut landing restrictions for the commercial salmon troll fishery beginning May 16, 2024, and continuing April 1-May 15, 2025. Such restrictions should comport with the salmon management alternatives during the same timeframes. The Council is scheduled to take final action on these limits at the upcoming April Council meeting.

Primary Sablefish Fishery North of Point Chehalis

The total Area 2A halibut quota is large enough this year to provide for incidental halibut harvest in the primary fixed gear fishery for sablefish north of Point Chehalis. This incidental fishery is allocated that portion of the Washington sport allocation in excess of 214,110 pounds, provided a minimum of 10,000 pounds is available, up to 50,000 pounds of halibut, unless the Area 2A Fishery Catch Exploitable Yield (FCEY) is 1,500,000 pounds or more, then the maximum is

70,000 pounds. In 2024, the FCEY is 1,470,000 pounds, therefore the fishery is allocated 50,000 pounds. The objectives for the annual landing restrictions are to attain the halibut allocation at about the same time the primary sablefish season is scheduled to end, or when halibut retention closes under IPHC regulations, and to ensure an equitable sharing of the halibut landings among the fishers. In past years, the Council has successfully used landing restrictions to maintain the harvest within the allocation. A summary of management information for the incidental halibut catch in this fishery is provided under this agenda item as Attachment 1. Until revised, Pacific halibut may be retained when the sablefish fishery begins, scheduled for April 1, 2024. The incidental landing limits allowed would be consistent with those in place when the fishery last closed in 2023, which was a landing ratio of 150 pounds dressed weight of halibut for every 1,000 pounds dressed weight of sablefish landed, and up to two additional halibut in excess of the ratio requirement. Under this agenda item, the Council should confirm or make recommendations to modify the incidental landing limits for the primary sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis beginning in April 2024, noting that IPHC regulations prohibits all commercial halibut fishing after December 7, 2024.

Council Action:

- 1. Recommend inseason changes to halibut landing restrictions in the salmon troll fishery during April 1-May 15, 2024, as necessary.**
- 2. Adopt for public review a range of options for halibut landing restrictions in the salmon troll fishery beginning May 16, 2024, and for April 1-May 15, 2025.**
- 3. Adopt final halibut landing restrictions for the fixed gear sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis for the 2024 season beginning April 1.**

Reference Materials:

1. Agenda Item G.2, Attachment 1: Summary of Pacific Halibut Incidental Catch Management.
2. If received, Public Comments are electronic only ([see e-portal](#)).

Agenda Order:

- G.2 Incidental Catch Recommendations: Options for the Salmon Troll and Robin Ehlke
Final recommendations for Fixed Gear Sablefish Fisheries
- a. Reports and Comments of Management Entities and Advisory Bodies
 - b. Public Comment
 - c. **Council Action:** Recommend Inseason Changes to April/May 2024 Retention Limits in the Salmon Troll Fishery, as Necessary; Adopt Options for Public Review on Retention in 2024 and April/May 2025 Salmon Troll Fishery; Adopt Final Retention Limits for 2024 Fixed Gear Sablefish Fishery.

PFMC
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