

**NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES REPORT**  
**2024 AREA 2A PACIFIC HALIBUT FISHERIES AND INSEASON UPDATE**  
 (as of October 27, 2024)

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**SUMMARY**

The 2024 Area 2A Pacific halibut (halibut) catch limit of 1,470,000 pounds is divided among sectors according to the 2024 Catch Sharing Plan (CSP, Table 1). The Area 2A preliminary harvest estimate to date is 1,294,230 pounds. The non-Tribal harvest estimate to date is 808,676 pounds and the Tribal harvest estimate to date is 485,554 pounds (not including the Tribal customary and subsistence (C&S) fishery). All weights in this report are net weight (gutted, head-off, and without ice and slime), unless otherwise noted.

**Table 1.** Area 2A allocations and inseason preliminary harvest estimates by sector, 2024.

|                              |                                                   | Allocation                          | Catch          | Percent Caught |               |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| <b>Tribal</b> <sup>(1)</sup> | Ceremonial & Subsistence                          | 20,220                              | N/A            | N/A            |               |
|                              | Commercial                                        | 494,280                             | 485,554        | 98.2%          |               |
|                              | <b>Tribal Total</b>                               | <b>514,500</b>                      | <b>485,554</b> | <b>-</b>       |               |
| <b>Non-Tribal</b>            | <b>Commercial</b>                                 | Directed                            | 249,338        | 237,164        | 95.1%         |
|                              |                                                   | Incidental salmon troll             | 44,001         | 30,363         | 69.0%         |
|                              |                                                   | <b>Total</b>                        | <b>293,339</b> | <b>267,527</b> | <b>91.2%</b>  |
|                              | <b>Washington Recreational</b> <sup>(2,3,4)</sup> | Incidental sablefish <sup>(2)</sup> | 50,000         | 28,685         | 57.4%         |
|                              |                                                   | Puget Sound                         | 81,729         | 65,016         | 79.6%         |
|                              |                                                   | North Coast                         | 132,366        | 139,855        | 105.7%        |
|                              |                                                   | Primary                             | 65,074         | 70,905         | 109.0%        |
|                              |                                                   |                                     | South Coast    | 2,000          | 0             |
|                              |                                                   | <b>Total</b>                        | <b>67,074</b>  | <b>70,905</b>  | <b>105.7%</b> |
|                              |                                                   | <b>Total</b>                        | <b>281,169</b> | <b>275,776</b> | <b>98.1%</b>  |

|                                             |                           | Allocation       | Catch            | Percent Caught |              |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|--------------|
| <b>Columbia River</b>                       | All-depth                 | 18,112           | 17,504           | 96.6%          |              |
|                                             | Nearshore                 | 500              | 0                | 0.0%           |              |
|                                             | <b>Total</b>              | <b>18,612</b>    | <b>17,504</b>    | <b>94.0%</b>   |              |
| <b>Oregon Recreational</b> <sup>(3,4)</sup> | Central Coast             | Spring all-depth | 167,681          | 151,116        | 90.1%        |
|                                             |                           | Summer all-depth | 66,540           | 39,194         | 58.9%        |
|                                             | Nearshore                 |                  | 31,939           | 0              | 0.0%         |
|                                             |                           | <b>Total</b>     | <b>266,161</b>   | <b>190,310</b> | <b>71.5%</b> |
|                                             | Southern Oregon           | 8,000            | 8,413            | 105.2%         |              |
| <b>Total</b>                                |                           | <b>274,161</b>   | <b>198,722</b>   | <b>72.5%</b>   |              |
| <b>California Recreational</b>              | Northern California Coast | 37,720           | 20,461           | 54.2%          |              |
|                                             | South of Point Arena      | 500              | 148              | 29.6%          |              |
|                                             | <b>Total</b>              | <b>38,220</b>    | <b>20,609</b>    | <b>53.9%</b>   |              |
| <b>Non-Tribal Total</b>                     |                           | <b>955,500</b>   | <b>808,676</b>   | <b>84.6%</b>   |              |
| <b>Total</b>                                |                           | <b>1,470,000</b> | <b>1,294,230</b> | <b>88.0%</b>   |              |

<sup>(1)</sup> The Ceremonial & Subsistence (C&S) projected harvest, based on the 2023 C&S harvest, was adjusted after allocations were adopted by the International Pacific Halibut Commission. The adjusted C&S projection is 21,305 pounds, leaving 493,196 pounds for the tribal commercial fishery.

<sup>(2)</sup> The incidental commercial sablefish allocation is derived from the Washington recreational fishery allocation. In this table, the incidental sablefish allocation is not included in the Washington recreational total and is shown in a separate line for the commercial fisheries.

<sup>(3)</sup> The Columbia River subarea allocation is derived from both the Washington and Oregon allocations. Totals for Washington and Oregon do not include the Columbia River.

<sup>(4)</sup> On September 20, 2024, 12,000 lb were reallocated from Oregon to Washington.

## TRIBAL FISHERIES

### Regulatory framework

The Tribal allocation was set at 35% of the Area 2A FCEY. There are two components of the Tribal fishery:

- 1) a commercial fishery managed as: an unrestricted fishery, a restricted fishery, and a late season fishery; and
- 2) a ceremonial and subsistence (C&S) fishery

The Tribal commercial fishery allocation was set by subtracting the projected C&S fishery projection, which was based on the prior year C&S harvest, from the total Tribal allocation.

## **Fishery statistics**

The Tribal allocation was 514,500 pounds. The preseason projected C&S harvest was 20,220<sup>1</sup> pounds with the remaining 494,280 pounds available to the commercial fishery.

- The unrestricted fishery was open 55 hours for all Tribes between March 15 and June 19. Inside Tribes could choose to convert some or all of their hours to restricted fishing (24 hours unrestricted and 52.7 hours with a 500-pound daily limit, or 93.5 hours with a 500-pound daily limit). The unrestricted fishery landed 222,216 pounds.
- The restricted fishery was open between March 15 and June 19 for 122 hours (not to exceed 6 days), with a 500-pound daily limit. The restricted fishery landed 96,414 pounds.
- The first late fishery was open between June 24 and July 31, and Tribes could choose to fish 24 hours unrestricted or 41 hours (not to exceed 2 days) with a 500-pound daily limit. The first late fishery landed 105,794 pounds.
- The second late fishery was open between August 9 and September 30 and 61,130 pounds were landed. Tribes could choose between three options:
  - One 24 hour opener with a 2,000-pound limit
  - Three 24 hour openers with a 1,000-pound daily limit
  - Six 24 hour openers with a 5,00-pound daily limit
- The total landings for all Tribal fisheries was 485,554 pounds, or 98 percent of the Tribal commercial allocation.
- The C&S fishery will continue through December 31 and the Tribes will report catch estimates in January 2025.

## **NON-TRIBAL COMMERCIAL FISHERIES**

### **Regulatory framework**

There were three components of the non-Tribal commercial fishery:

- 1) a directed fishery targeting halibut south of Point Chehalis, Washington (46°53.30' N. lat.);
- 2) an incidental catch fishery during the salmon troll fisheries off Washington, Oregon, and California; and
- 3) an incidental catch fishery during the primary sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, Washington.

The allocations for the directed commercial fishery and the incidental catch fishery during salmon troll fisheries are set at 85 percent and 15 percent, respectively, of the non-Tribal commercial fishery allocation (30.7% of the non-Tribal share). The allocation for the incidental catch fishery during the primary sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, WA comes from the portion of the Washington recreational allocation over 214,110 pounds, with a 10,000-pound minimum and 70,000-pound maximum allocation.

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<sup>1</sup> The C&S projected harvest, based on the 2023 C&S harvest, was adjusted after allocations were adopted by the International Pacific Halibut Commission. The adjusted C&S projection is 21,305 pounds, leaving 493,196 pounds for the Tribal commercial fishery.

Vessels permitted in the directed commercial fishery were prohibited from landing halibut as incidental catch in the salmon troll fishery and from participating as a charter vessel in the recreational fishery.

### *Closed Areas*

Vessels in the directed fishery were prohibited from fishing within closed areas as defined in [50 CFR 300.63\(f\)](#), including the non-trawl Rockfish Conservation Areas (RCAs). RCAs are depth-based areas closed to fishing with certain gear types. The RCA boundaries are lines that connect a series of latitude and longitude coordinates and are intended to approximate particular depth contours. Coordinates that define the RCA boundary lines are listed at [50 CFR 660.71\(e\)](#), [50 CFR 660.73\(a\)](#), and [50 CFR 660.72\(j\)](#). All vessels were required to comply with Pacific halibut RCA regulations regardless of groundfish retention. Vessels retaining groundfish in state waters of California were also subject to [California RCA regulations](#).

Vessels that incidentally caught halibut while fishing in the salmon troll fishery were prohibited from fishing within a closed area known as the Salmon Troll YRCA, defined in the groundfish regulations at [50 CFR 660.70](#) and in the salmon regulations at [50 CFR 660.405\(c\)](#). Vessels that incidentally catch halibut while fishing in the primary sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, Washington must comply with groundfish closed area regulations.

See [Pacific halibut regulations](#) and the [NOAA Fisheries West Coast Groundfish Closed Areas](#) page for more information on closed areas, including Essential Fish Habitat Conservation areas and Yelloweye RCAs.

### *Changes for 2024*

Recognizing that announcing additional fishing periods can take NMFS longer than it took under International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) management, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) recommended that the third fishing period occur no sooner than three weeks after the second fishing period in order to provide sufficient advance notice.

The California recreational fishery was split into two subareas, divided at Point Arena (38°57.5' N lat.).

## **Fishery statistics**

### *Directed Fishery Targeting Halibut*

- The allocation was 249,338 pounds.
- The estimated harvest was 237,164 pounds.
- The fishery was open for five, 58-hour fishing periods: June 25-27, July 9-11, August 6-8, August 27-29, and September 24-26.
- Catch limits by fishing period, based on vessel length / size class are in Table 2.

Table 2. 2024 fishing period limits (dressed weight, head-on with ice and slime, in pounds per vessel) by vessel size class.

| Vessel Length | Size Class | Jun 25–27 | Jul 9–11 | Aug 6–8 | Aug 27-29 | Sept 24-26 |
|---------------|------------|-----------|----------|---------|-----------|------------|
| 0–25          | A          | 1,800     | 1,800    | 1,000   | 1,400     | 1,800      |
| 26–30         | B          | 1,800     | 1,800    | 1,000   | 1,400     | 1,800      |
| 31–35         | C          | 1,800     | 1,800    | 1,000   | 1,400     | 1,800      |
| 36–40         | D          | 3,000     | 3,000    | 1,000   | 1,400     | 1,800      |
| 41–45         | E          | 3,000     | 3,000    | 1,000   | 1,400     | 1,800      |
| 46–50         | F          | 3,800     | 3,800    | 1,000   | 1,400     | 1,800      |
| 51–55         | G          | 3,800     | 3,800    | 1,000   | 1,400     | 1,800      |
| 56+           | H          | 4,500     | 4,500    | 1,000   | 1,400     | 1,800      |

*Incidental Catch during the Salmon Troll Fishery*

- The allocation was set at 44,001 pounds.
- The estimated harvest was 30,363 pounds.
- Halibut retention during salmon troll fisheries was allowed beginning in April until the end of the salmon season on September 30.
- The landing limit was one halibut per two Chinook salmon, except that one halibut could be possessed or landed without meeting the ratio requirement, and no more than 35 halibut could be possessed or landed per trip.

*Incidental Catch during the Primary Sablefish Fishery*

- The allocation is set at 40,000 pounds.
- The estimated harvest to date is 28,685 pounds.
- Halibut retention is allowed during the primary sablefish fishery, from the primary sablefish season opening date of April 1 and until the commercial halibut season closure on December 7, or until the allocation is reached, whichever occurs first.
- The landing limit was 130 pounds of halibut (in dressed weight, meaning eviscerated, head on) for every 1,000 pounds of sablefish (dressed weight), plus up to 2 additional halibut. At the September 2024 Council meeting, the Council increased the landing limit to 150 pounds of halibut for every 1,000 pounds of sablefish, plus up to 2 additional halibut.

**RECREATIONAL FISHERIES**

**Regulatory framework**

The recreational fishery allocation was divided among the three states, Washington, Oregon, and California.

- 1) Washington received 35.6 percent of the non-Tribal allocation, minus the allocation made available for incidental harvest in the primary sablefish fishery;
- 2) Oregon received 29.7 percent of the non-Tribal allocation;
- 3) and California received 4 percent of the non-Tribal allocation.

State allocations were further divided into subareas and season dates were established preseason for each subarea, with additional dates added inseason for some subareas. Oregon and Washington allocations both contributed to the Columbia River subarea allocation.

### *Closed Areas*

The "C-shaped" North Coast Recreational YRCA, southwest of Cape Flattery, was closed to recreational halibut fishing.

## **Fishery statistics**

### *Washington*

- The allocation was 281,169 pounds (not including the allocation for the commercial fishery incidental to the primary sablefish fishery or Columbia River recreational fishery).
- This fishery concluded on September 30. The estimated harvest was 275,776 pounds.
- The bag limit was 1 halibut per person per day.
- Season dates varied by subarea. The earliest open date was April 4 and the last open date was September 30.

### *Columbia River*

- The allocation was 18,612 pounds.
- This fishery concluded on September 30. The estimated harvest was 17,504 pounds.
- The bag limit was 1 halibut per person per day.
- Season dates varied by subarea fishery: Nearshore and All-depth. The earliest open date was May 2 and the last open date was September 30.

### *Oregon*

- The allocation was 274,161 pounds (not including the allocation for the Columbia River recreational fishery).
- This fishery concluded on October 31; estimated harvest to date is 198,722 pounds, not including the final week of the fishery.
- The bag limit was 2 halibut per person per day.
- Season dates varied by subarea. The earliest open date was May 1 and the last open date was October 31.

### *California*

- The allocation is 38,220 pounds.
- The estimated harvest to-date is 20,609 pounds.
- The bag limit is 1 halibut per person per day.
- Season dates vary by subarea. The earliest open date was May 1 and the last open day is scheduled for December 31, or when the allocation is reached, whichever occurs first.

## FEDERAL REGISTER NOTICES

### Annual Management Measures Adopting IPHC Regulations

- [Final Rule: 2024 Annual Management Measures \(89 FR 19275, March 18, 2024\)](#)

### Catch Sharing Plan and Recreational Fishery

- [Proposed Rule \(89 FR 9105, February 9, 2024\)](#)
- [Final Rule \(89 FR 22966, April 3, 2024\)](#)
- [Final rule; correction \(89 FR 46824, May 30, 2024\)](#)
- [Inseason adjustment: request for comments \(89 FR 53361, June 26, 2024\)](#)
- [Inseason adjustment; request for comments \(89 FR 59673, July 23, 2024\)](#)
- [Inseason adjustment; request for comments \(89 FR 77033, September 20, 2024\)](#)

### Non-Tribal Directed Commercial Fishery

- [Proposed rule; request for comments \(89 FR 18368, March 13, 2024\)](#)
- [Final rule \(89 FR 40417, May 10, 2024\)](#)
- [Inseason adjustment \(89 FR 60833, July 29, 2024\)](#)
- [Inseason adjustment \(89 FR 67887, August 22, 2024\)](#)
- [Inseason adjustment \(89 FR 73602, September 11, 2024\)](#)

### Non-Tribal Incidental Commercial Fisheries

- [Final rule \(89 FR 22342, April 1, 2024\)](#)
- [Final rule \(89 FR 44553, May 21, 2024\)](#)
- [Final rule \(89 FR 84296, October 22, 2024\)](#)

**RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS REGARDING THE MANAGEMENT OF THE DIRECTED COMMERCIAL FISHERY, AS REQUESTED BY THE COUNCIL IN SEPTEMBER 2024**

**1. Increasing the landing limits for the first two or three periods of the directed commercial halibut fishery.**

To date, NMFS has set fishing period limits (also called catch or landing limits) for the first two fishing periods preseason as a way to ensure that at least the first two periods are two weeks apart. These fishing period limits have been based on anticipated participation and catch rates and have been set with the intent to achieve the Area 2A Pacific halibut directed commercial allocation but not exceed it, with the understanding that subsequent periods and limits can be set inseason if necessary. In 2023, fishing period limits during the first two fishing periods ranged from 2,716 pounds to 6,136 pounds (dressed weight, based on vessel size class). The 2023 allocation was reached in the second fishing period (*note*: a third fishing period was added inseason based on initial reports, which underestimated catches). For 2024, fishing period limits ranged from 1,800 pounds to 4,500 pounds (dressed weight, based on vessel size class), resulting in 73 percent of the allocation being reached by the end of the second fishing period. Therefore, it is unlikely that NMFS could greatly increase landing limits over recent years, without an increased risk of exceeding the allocation. NMFS appreciates this discussion point however, and would welcome perspectives on whether NMFS should try to maximize catch limits during the first two fishing periods, leaving the third fishing period for clean-up only; or if three, more equal fishing periods are preferred.

**2. Announce the potential first three fishing periods prior to the start of the directed halibut fishery.**

In 2023 and 2024, NMFS announced dates and fishing period limits for the first two fishing periods as part of our annual rulemaking. There is the potential for NMFS to also announce a schedule for any subsequent fishing period(s). However, to prevent exceeding the allocation, limits for any subsequent fishing periods would still need to be announced inseason.

**3. Structure the first three fishing periods preferably with two weeks in between each opener.**

Due to the time it takes to finalize catch estimates following the last day of a fishing period (typically by the following Monday/Tuesday) and subsequently implement an inseason rule, recent third fishing periods have occurred no less than three weeks after the second fishing period. NMFS is investigating if it will be possible to allow for inseason actions to be announced via email to permit holders, which could allow for setting all fishing periods at 2-week intervals and increase flexibility for the fishery overall. This would likely not be in effect until after the 2025 season.

**4. Move the permit deadlines later in the year per the recommendation in the [SAS report](#).**

The SAS recommended a permit deadline of April 30 for the directed commercial fishery; however, this timeline would not allow sufficient time for developing and implementing the annual directed fishery season dates and catch limits by the fourth week in June, as has been current practice. NMFS may have some flexibility to change the permit deadline for all commercial fisheries to March 15, and is actively investigating this possibility. A new permit deadline would not be in effect until after the 2025 season.

**5. Consideration for a longer fishing period adding up to 24 hours.**

Consideration of longer periods is an option. Such a consideration would benefit from a discussion of the various objectives proposed, such as increased period limits and increased certainty in the number and timing of fishing periods. Although longer fishing periods could allow more flexibility within a fishing period, it would also likely result in lower catch limits, as occurred when the fishery was increased from 10 hours to 58 hours. The 2019 fishing period limits ranged from 3,982 to 8,998 pounds (dressed weight, based on vessel size class) during the first and second fishing periods. Fishing period limits since then have averaged 2,260 to 5,250 pounds (dressed weight, based on vessel size class). A similar decrease in limits would be expected. In addition, an increase in fishing days per week decreases non-fishing days, which could result in more difficulty in maintaining 2- to 3-week fishing period intervals.