

GROUND FISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON 2027 COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL CATCH SHARING PLAN AND ANNUAL REGULATIONS – PRELIMINARY

Non-Tribal Directed Commercial

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) recommends maintaining the same season structure as last year (two-week intervals) for the non-tribal directed commercial fishery. The GAP notes and appreciates the improvements in the notifications to participants and movement of the permit deadline to March 15.

2026 Inseason Management Discussion

Even though no action was needed, the GAP notes and appreciated the efforts made by the States, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) Staff to review catch updates in the recreational halibut fisheries and consider the need to transfer unused pounds from one state to another to maximize recreational opportunity.

Updates to the Catch Share Plan

The GAP supports amending the Catch Share Plan (CSP), consistent with Amendment 36 to the Groundfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP), by referencing the pot/longline gear types as “limited entry non-trawl” (LENT) thereby replacing the term “limited entry fixed-gear” (LEFG) throughout the document when used.

The GAP supports the removal and reference to the Stonewall Bank Expansion 1 and 2 of the Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Areas in the CSP.

Recreational CSP Changes

The GAP recommends the proposed changes to the CSP as outlined in [Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife \(WDFW\) Report 1](#) and [Supplemental Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife \(ODFW\) Report 1](#) be distributed for public review.

2026 Fishery Performance Observations

The GAP acknowledges the relatively low halibut utilization rates compared to the allowable allocations in a number of the sectors that are identified in the CSP. According to the NMFS Report 1 under this agenda item (as of August 20, 2026), the Treaty Indian fishery has caught 100 percent of its allocation and the non-treaty directed fishery is at ~ 61 percent of its allocation. The recreational fisheries by state range from approximately 17 percent in California, 33 percent in Oregon, 61 percent in the Columbia River, and 52 percent in Washington. The incidental catch of halibut in the salmon troll stands at 31 percent while the incidental catch in the sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis sits at 24 percent. More recent catch estimates through September 1, 2026, can be found online at <https://www.iphc.int/data/fishery-limits-2026/>.

A look back at some of the summary notes from the [2026 stock assessment](#) reminds us that:

- Reduced mortality limits appear to have reached levels consistent with surplus production created by the 2012, 2016 and 2017 year-classes;
- Fishery-Independent Setline Survey (FISS) and fishery indices remain at historically low levels;
- The stock remains at a low productivity level due to low average weight-at-age and recruitment; and
- Notably, that despite low absolute spawning biomass, the stock is estimated to be above $B_{30\%}$, estimated at 38 percent. Moreover, the fishing intensity is much lower than the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) harvest policy of $F_{43\%}$.

The IPHC has been conservative in recent years, setting harvest at the lowest levels seen in decades and, as noted above, the result has been to bring the allowable harvest levels in line or below the estimated surplus production of the 2012-, 2016-, and 2017-year classes on which the fishery is most dependent.

It is important to also consider environmental conditions, such as hypoxic events, influence the distribution of Pacific halibut when evaluating the low utilization rates. This factor was clearly noted in the 2024 FISS when the catches in Area 2A were exceptionally low. The GAP supports the precautionary approach to setting harvest limits and appreciates the recognition by the IPHC that we are on the southern end of the distribution of the biomass and that the total constant exploitation yield of 1.65 million pounds allotted to Area 2A is less than 6 percent of the total mortalities allocated to all management areas combined.

PFMC

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