

Pacific Halibut Bycatch in U.S. West Coast Groundfish Fisheries, 2002-2024

Kate E. Richerson¹, Kayleigh A. Somers¹, Vanessa J. Tuttle¹, Christa Colway¹, Jon T. McVeigh¹

This report provides estimates of Pacific halibut (*Hippoglossus stenolepis*) bycatch in the U.S. West Coast groundfish fisheries monitored by the West Coast Groundfish Observer Program (WCGOP), the At-Sea Hake Observer Program (A-SHOP), and the Electronic Monitoring (EM) Program. The former two programs comprise the Fisheries Observation Science Program (FOS) at the NOAA Fisheries Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC). The EM program is jointly administered by FOS and NOAA Fisheries West Coast Regional Office Sustainable Fisheries Division. Bycatch² is estimated from data collected by fisheries observers, fish sales information (fish tickets), vessel logbooks, and review of EM video. For more detailed background and methods, see Jannot et al. (2022).

Discard estimates can be found in the accompanying spreadsheet (Agenda Item F.1.b, NWFSC Report 2, November 2025). Table 1 shows estimated discard mortality in 2024 by sector, accounting for at-sea discard mortality rates (DMRs) where appropriate. Tables 2 and 3 summarize annual estimates by sector for 2002 to 2024; Table 2 shows gross discard, while Table 3 shows estimated discard mortality, accounting for at-sea DMRs. All tables include any dockside discards in IFQ bottom trawl, midwater rockfish, and midwater hake sectors.

The estimates in this report reflect the most recent available data and data processing methods (Somers et al. 2025). Starting in 2024, the level of review of EM video on trips operating under optimized retention was reduced to a minimum of 10% of hauls on every trip, while the level of review for trips operating under maximized retention remained at 100%. Therefore, to estimate total discards in the partially-reviewed optimized retention sub-sector of the EM fleet, we used a ratio estimator, similar to other partial coverage sectors as described in Somers et al. (2025).

References

Jannot, J. E., K. E. Richerson, K. A. Somers, V. J. Tuttle, C. M. Colway, and J. T. McVeigh. 2022. Pacific Halibut Bycatch in U.S. West Coast Groundfish Fisheries, 2002–20. U.S. Department of Commerce, NOAA Technical Memorandum NMFS-NWFSC-173.

Somers, K.A., K.E. Richerson, V.J. Tuttle, N.B. Riley, and J.T. McVeigh. 2025. Estimated discard and catch of groundfish species in the 2024 U.S. west coast fisheries. Available at

¹ Fishery Resource Analysis Monitoring Division, Northwest Fisheries Science Center, NOAA Fisheries, 2725 Montlake Blvd. E. Seattle, WA 98112

² Bycatch includes at-sea discards in all sectors and the small amount discarded at the dock in IFQ bottom trawl, midwater rockfish, and midwater hake fisheries.

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<https://www.pcouncil.org/documents/2025/08/g-1-b-nwfsc-report-1-estimated-discard-and-catch-of-groundfish-species-in-the-2024-u-s-west-coast-fisheries.pdf/>

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