GROUNDFISH ADVISORY SUBPANEL REPORT ON 2027 COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL CATCH SHARING PLAN AND ANNUAL REGULATIONS – FINAL ACTION

Recreational Fisheries

The Groundfish Advisory Subpanel (GAP) supports the recommended changes to the Pacific halibut sport regulations included in both the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Report 1 and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) Report 1 under this agenda item. Regarding the Columbia River subarea, the GAP supports the proposal in the WDFW Report 1.

Regarding the Washington South Coast subarea, the GAP supports WDFW's proposal to move the nearshore boundary from 30 to 50 fathoms and recommends that additional nearshore weekend halibut fishing opportunities in July and August remain an option to be considered through inseason management, rather than predetermined openings, based on available quota and fishery conditions.

The GAP recommends the status quo for California recreational halibut.

The GAP is grateful for the work done by the state agencies in communicating with recreational fishery constituents.

Non-Tribal Directed Commercial Fishery

The GAP recommends the *status quo* season structure for the directed commercial fishery in 2027, as described in Section 5.6.4 of the current catch sharing plan (Attachment 1). Participants reported the changes made by the Council for the 2026 fishery worked well and support the same management regime for 2027.

While the GAP supports maintaining the current season structure for 2027, we recommend exploring potential changes for implementation in 2028 and/or beyond. The GAP is interested in evaluating adjustments to vessel limits or moving to a trip limit system (similar to groundfish) that could improve fishing opportunities and economic viability while allowing the fishery to more efficiently attain its allocation. The GAP recognizes the effectiveness of any of these changes would depend on available quota, stock abundance, fishing conditions, participation levels, and other factors. For example, higher limits may be beneficial in some years but would not necessarily improve fishery performance under all circumstances.

Before considering specific changes, the GAP recommends an analysis of historical participation and fishery performance, including the number of permit holders and active vessels, participation trends across successive openers, catch rates, attainment of allocations, and the relationship between vessel limits and the number of fishing periods required to complete the fishery. The analysis should also consider the economic viability of different management structures, As the

GAP has stated in prior statements, halibut fishermen and processors are interested in identifying adjustments that provide greater operational flexibility and economic benefits without unnecessarily disrupting a season structure that has generally worked well.

PFMC
11/14/26