

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON 2019 CATCH SHARING PLAN AND ANNUAL REGULATIONS

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) solicited public input via e-mail, phone, webinar, and public meetings to discuss proposed changes to the Pacific halibut (halibut in remainder of report) Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) for fisheries off of Oregon in 2019. Public meetings with recreational anglers occurred on August 6 in Salem, Aug. 7 in Newport, Aug. 8 in Brookings, and Aug. 9 in North Bend. The Newport meeting was webcast to allow remote participation. Based on public input, ODFW provides the following information for consideration by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) in determining which alternatives to adopt for further public review.

Columbia River Subarea

Revise the Start Date of the All-Depth Fishery

Revise the season opening date so that it more closely aligns with the opening dates in other Washington or Oregon Subareas.

Status quo: Opens the first Thursday in May

Alternative 1: Opens the second Thursday in May

Alternative 2: Opens the second Friday in May

Alternative 3: Consult with stakeholders and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) prior to the November Council meeting to determine the season opening date for the following year.

Rationale

In recent years there has been an increase in effort and catches in the Columbia River Subarea, causing the all-depth season to become shorter and shorter. To try to spread the fishery out more into the summer, beginning in 2018 the days open per week were changed from Thursday through Sunday to Thursday, Friday, and Sunday with Saturday closed. However, in 2018 due to a combination of being open prior to any other Subarea in Washington or Oregon (other than the Southern Oregon Subarea near the OR/CA border) and very good weather, there was a large effort shift into this fishery causing the quota to be taken in only five days.

Revising the season opening timing so that it opens on the same date as other subareas in Washington and/or Oregon should alleviate some of this effort shift, potentially allowing the Columbia River subarea's all-depth fishery to be open for a few additional days. Alternatives 1 and 2 reflect recent openings in other Washington or Oregon subareas; however, the Washington statewide season setting process allows for collaboration with stakeholders in different subareas, and the annual season dates reflect a significant amount of input and compromise to meet preferences that vary by subarea. The CSP provides the flexibility to open Washington season anytime in May, making it somewhat difficult to determine at this time what the best opening date

for the Columbia River might be. Alternative 3 would give ODFW and WDFW time to work with stakeholders and consult with each other prior to each November Council meeting to recommend a season opening date that would reduce the potential for effort shift to the Columbia River subarea.

Central Coast Subarea

No proposed changes

Southern Oregon Subarea

No proposed changes

Proposals Not Forwarded

As during the 2017 process, ODFW received a request from several angler organizations based in the south-central Oregon Coast to divide the Central Oregon Coast Subarea into two smaller subareas that would be managed independent of each other, with a split at the north Florence Jetty. In November, 2017 the Pacific Fishery Management Council considered, but did not approve, that proposal. A similar proposal was presented in April, 2018 to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission, who were not in favor of splitting the subarea. Based on that, ODFW is not recommending this change be forwarded for further consideration in the CSP development process.

ODFW also received a request to consider allowing longleader fishing for midwater rockfish on the same trip as all-depth halibut fishing. While this would allow some additional opportunity, it would mean adding significant complexity to the rules anglers must follow regarding retention of various groundfish species under different scenarios on all-depth halibut trips. In addition, it may weaken the regulations' enforceability. At this time, ODFW is not recommending this change be forwarded for further consideration for 2019.

Catch Sharing Plan Language

ODFW does not have proposed changes to the language in the Catch Sharing Plan for the above items at this time. As the alternatives are finalized, ODFW will draft the appropriate language revisions to the Catch Sharing Plan, in consultation with staff at the NMFS West Coast Region.