

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON ANNUAL
REGULATIONS AND 2A CATCH SHARING PLAN CHANGES – FINAL ACTION

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) held a meeting with recreational halibut anglers on October 9, 2018. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss proposed changes to the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (PFMC) Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) for 2019, and refine the proposals adopted for public review at the September PFMC meeting. Based on those discussions, we recommend the following 2019 season structure and changes to the Pacific halibut CSP, section (f) SPORT FISHERIES. These changes are consistent with those adopted by the Council for public review.

Columbia River:

1. Revise the CSP to describe that the Columbia River season opening date would be determined through consultation with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) in time for Council final action at the November meeting. This is Option 3 as described in the September WDFW report ([Agenda Item, J.1.b, September 2018](#)).

Rationale: Participation in the recreational halibut fishery in the Washington portion of the Columbia River subarea increased significantly in 2018 as anglers shifted effort into this subarea when it opened a week before any other Washington subarea. This effort shift resulted in a halibut season that lasted only five days in 2018.

In 2017, WDFW implemented a statewide season where all Washington subareas except the Columbia River subarea are open on the same date. The statewide season setting process allows for collaboration with stakeholders in different subareas, and the annual season dates can vary from year to year based on a significant amount of input and compromise to meet preferences that vary by subarea. While this process has been effective, it is somewhat difficult to determine a set opening date for the Columbia River that is in line with the opening date for the other subareas unless the Columbia River opening date was also set during the statewide season setting process. As a result, Washington stakeholders preferred the option that would provide the most flexibility to adjust the season opening date and would allow for consultation with ODFW to determine a season opening date that reflected input from stakeholders in both Oregon and Washington.

2. Revise the CSP so that the season is open two days per week based on a combination of Thursday, Friday, or Sunday.

Rationale: Washington stakeholders were supportive of reducing the days for the week that the halibut fishery is open in the Columbia River subarea from three to two. In general, the preference is to open on Thursdays and Sundays until the quota is reached. However, stakeholders preferred an approach that would align the days of the week that are open in the Columbia River subarea with the days open in the South Coast subarea. The intent of the reduced number of days is to extend the season over a longer period but the preferred approach

would also reduce effort shift between the South Coast and Columbia River subareas, which, if not addressed, could minimize the effectiveness of reducing the number of days per week the Columbia River subarea is open.

South Coast:

1. Revise the CSP language to remove the set aside of 10 percent or 2,000 pounds for the nearshore fishery and allow the nearshore fishery to be open after the primary (all-depth) fishery closes, if sufficient quota remains.

Rationale: Stakeholders supported this change to the CSP to clarify that a nearshore fishing opportunity is contingent upon having sufficient quota after the primary fishery has closed.

Statewide Season Dates:

Based on the input we received, WDFW recommends the Council adopt the following season dates for the South Coast, North Coast and Puget Sound subareas for 2019:

North Coast and Puget Sound: Thursday, May 2; Saturday, May 4; Thursday, May 9; Saturday, May 11; Saturday, May 18; Friday, May 24; Sunday, May 26; Thursday, June 6; Saturday, June 8; Thursday, June 20; Saturday, June 22

South Coast: Thursday, May 2; Sunday May 5; Thursday, May 9; Sunday, May 12; Friday, May 24

If sufficient quota remains for the North Coast, Puget Sound, or South Coast, additional dates may be scheduled in coordination with the International Pacific Halibut Commission and National Marine Fisheries Service.

Based on input from stakeholders from the Washington portion of the Columbia River subarea, WDFW recommends consideration for the following dates for the Columbia River subarea:

Columbia River: Thursday, May 2; Sunday May 5; Thursday, May 9; Sunday, May 12; Friday, May 24; Sunday, May 26. If sufficient quota remains after May 26, the Columbia River subarea would be open two days per week (Thursday and Sunday) until the remaining quota is achieved.

Rationale: The statewide season approach has been in place since 2017 in the Puget Sound, North Coast and South Coast subareas and is generally viewed as a success with the majority of stakeholders continuing to support the concept of consistent season dates. However, the final season date recommendations for 2019 also includes input from stakeholders from the Washington portion of the Columbia River subarea who were negatively impacted in 2018 when this subarea opened earlier than all other Washington subareas. For 2019, the recommended season dates include bringing the Columbia River subarea into the statewide season setting process as much as possible acknowledging that this subarea is co-managed with ODFW and these proposed dates may be adjusted based on input from managers and stakeholders in Oregon. The recommended season dates are the result of significant compromises and reflect a variety of opinions and issues of importance, from different operations (private versus charter) and areas (coast versus Puget Sound).

Washington stakeholders continue to support allocation management where each subarea receives and is managed to achieve, but not exceed, its own separate allocation. However, Washington stakeholders also support the flexibility currently provided for in the CSP that that would allow stakeholder and WDFW consultation after the first few days of the season to discuss and assess any remaining quota and the flexibility to transfer fish between areas when there is general consensus of the areas impacted in an open transparent manner.