

Overview of the 2010 Oregon Sport Pacific Halibut Fishery



Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Marine Resources Program

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2010 Oregon Sport Pacific Halibut Fishery

Introduction

Allocation

Since 1995, the Oregon-California sport Pacific halibut fishery has received 20.6 percent of the Area 2A catch limit as indicated in the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) “Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan” (CSP). Beginning in 2005, five percent of the Oregon-California sport allowable catch was allocated to the Columbia River subarea (Leadbetter Point, Washington to Cape Falcon, Oregon), 92.0 percent to the Oregon Central Coast subarea (Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain), and three percent to the South of Humbug Mt. subarea (Figure 1).

Sport Catch Survey

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife estimates the sport catch of Pacific halibut through a port-based sampling survey where boats are counted as they exit each port. Dockside sampling of returning boats is used to determine the average number of anglers fishing and halibut caught per boat. This information, stratified by private and charter boats, is combined to estimate the number of Pacific halibut landed by port. In 2010, samplers in each port were instructed to measure the length of all halibut from every other boat sampled, for both the private and charter fleets. This information was used to estimate total weight of fish landed. In 2010, coastwide samplers collectively sampled 3,837 halibut or 41.6 percent of the estimated 9,232 fish that were landed into Oregon (Table 1).

Groundfish Retention

Since 2005, retention of all groundfish except sablefish has been prohibited in the Columbia River and Oregon Central Coast subareas if Pacific halibut were aboard the vessel. For 2006-10, retention of both sablefish and Pacific cod was allowed in the Columbia River subarea. For the Oregon Central Coast subarea this provision only applied on days when the halibut fishery was open in all-depths. Groundfish retention was allowed in the nearshore fishery when the all-depth fishery was closed because many halibut caught in the nearshore area are taken incidentally in the directed groundfish fishery. The intent of prohibiting groundfish retention was to prevent targeting of groundfish species in the directed halibut fishery and subsequent incidental take of yelloweye rockfish and canary rockfish, both species are considered overfished. Sablefish and Pacific cod were allowed as they are rarely targeted and are often taken incidentally in the directed halibut fishery. Retention of groundfish species with Pacific halibut aboard the vessel was allowed in the South of Humbug Mt. subarea because halibut are generally not targeted in this area and are incidentally encountered by other directed fisheries.

Since 2005, the high relief area of Stonewall Bank, located approximately 15 miles off Newport, has been closed to halibut fishing (Figure 2). The intent of this provision was to reduce the incidental take of yelloweye rockfish and canary rockfish.

Discussion

Columbia River Subarea (Leadbetter Point, Washington to Cape Falcon, Oregon)

Since 2006, the fishery had two openings, spring and summer. Between 2006 and 2008, the spring fishery was open May 1 through June 1 seven days per week. Beginning in 2009, the spring fishery was open 3 days per week (Thursday, Friday and Saturday) and was allocated 70 percent of the subarea catch limit. The summer fishery received the remaining allocation and was open Friday, Saturday and Sundays starting August 6 and continuing through the regulatory closure of September 26. A total of 10,811 lbs were harvested in 2010, which was 80 percent of the catch limit of 13,436 lbs. An estimated 2,568 lbs (24 percent of the total subarea catch) were landed into Oregon ports; 1,665 lbs in the spring fishery and 903 lbs in the summer fishery (Table 1). The total Oregon-California contribution to the subarea catch limit was 8,345 lbs, or 62 percent of the subarea's allocation; the Washington contribution was 38 percent.

Oregon Central Coast Subarea (Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain)

The fishery in this subarea has two components, a shallow nearshore fishery and a directed all-depth fishery.

Nearshore fishery

The nearshore halibut fishery was designed with the intent of allowing anglers targeting groundfish to keep incidentally caught halibut. Prior to 2004, the nearshore halibut fishery (< 30 fathoms) and the groundfish fishery (< 40 fathoms) had different depth restrictions, which complicated angler compliance and enforcement. Since 2004, the same depth restriction (< 40 fathoms) has been applied to both fisheries to eliminate this complication.

The nearshore halibut fishery has been shifting in recent years from an incidental to groundfish fishery to a targeted halibut. There were 13% more anglers targeting halibut in the nearshore fishery in 2010 than 2009 from May 1-July 7. Halibut anglers generally use larger gear (heavier weights, larger hooks) than groundfish anglers, which could help explain why the average weight of halibut harvested in the nearshore fishery was approximately four lbs greater in 2010 than in 2009.

The 2010 nearshore halibut fishery was allocated 12,284 lbs, or eight percent of the Central Oregon subarea catch limit. The nearshore fishery was scheduled to be open seven days per week from May 1 through October 31. However, the nearshore fishery allocation was reached in mid-July, causing the fishery to close on July 17. Total halibut harvest was 12,927 lbs, five percent (643 lbs) over the allocation.

Similar to 2009, many nearshore anglers were unhappy with the early closure and provided feedback on inseason management of the halibut fisheries and suggestions for the 2011 catch sharing plan.

All-depth fishery

The directed all-depth fishery is allocated 92 percent of the Oregon Central Coast subarea catch limit and is split into a spring season from May-June (75% of the all-depth quota, 105,948 lbs in 2010) and a summer season from August-October (25% of the all-depth quota, 35,316 lbs in 2010).

The 2010 spring fishery was managed with two open periods, each with fishing allowed Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The first open period was managed under the fixed-day approach in use since 1995: a number of fixed dates are set preseason so anglers can plan their fishing in advance and not be surprised by an inseason closure. The intent is to not exceed the spring catch limit. Any remaining poundage is available for a second open period in the spring; these “make-up” dates are also set preseason. The first period (fixed-day season) was open for nine days on May 13-15, 20-22, and June 3-5. The second period (make-up dates) was open for five days on June 17-19 and July 1-2 (every other weekend). The combined catch from both periods in the spring fishery was 112,500 lbs (Table 1), 106 percent of the catch limit. The overage of 6,552 lbs was subtracted from the summer all-depth fishery allocation for a revised catch limit of 28,765 lbs.

The 2010 summer fishery was set preseason to open every other Friday and Saturday (prior to 2010 every other Friday through Sunday) from August 6 through October 31. The fishery opened August 6 and closed August 7, at which time the entire remaining Central Oregon subarea quota had been attained. The total summer fishery catch was 30,140 lbs (Table 1), exceeding the revised summer fishery catch limit by 1,375 lbs.

The 2010 catch rate of halibut (approximately 15,000 lbs per day) for the opening weekend of the summer fishery was the second highest since 2002 and only trailed the opening weekend of 2009 by approximately 2,000 lbs per day. Similar to 2009, factors that influenced the harvest rate were: exceptionally good weather; tuna fishing opportunities relatively close to shore (25-fish bag limit); coho and Chinook salmon opportunities; and Dungeness crab fishing (10-crab bag limit). The opportunity to catch and retain a variety of species on a single trip enticed many more anglers out on the water than would have been anticipated, prior to 2009.

Post season, anglers expressed concerns about how quickly the summer all-depth quota was attained and provided feedback and suggestions for the catch sharing plan to slow down the summer all-depth fishery, as well as preventing the all-depth fishery from impacting the nearshore fishery, as it did in 2009.

Combined Nearshore and All-Depth Fisheries

The combined catch from the nearshore and all-depth fisheries was 155,567 lbs or 101 percent of the 153,548-pound total allocation for the Central Oregon subarea.

South of Humbug Mountain Subarea

Pacific halibut are rarely targeted off of Oregon in this subarea as this area is located in the southern edge of the species' range. The estimated catch into Oregon from this subarea was 187 lbs. The catch limit for the subarea was 5,007 lbs.

Summary

The combined catch of Pacific halibut in the 2010 Oregon sport fishery is estimated at 163,142 lbs. The catch was comprised of an estimated 9,232 fish averaging 17 lbs net weight (Table 1).

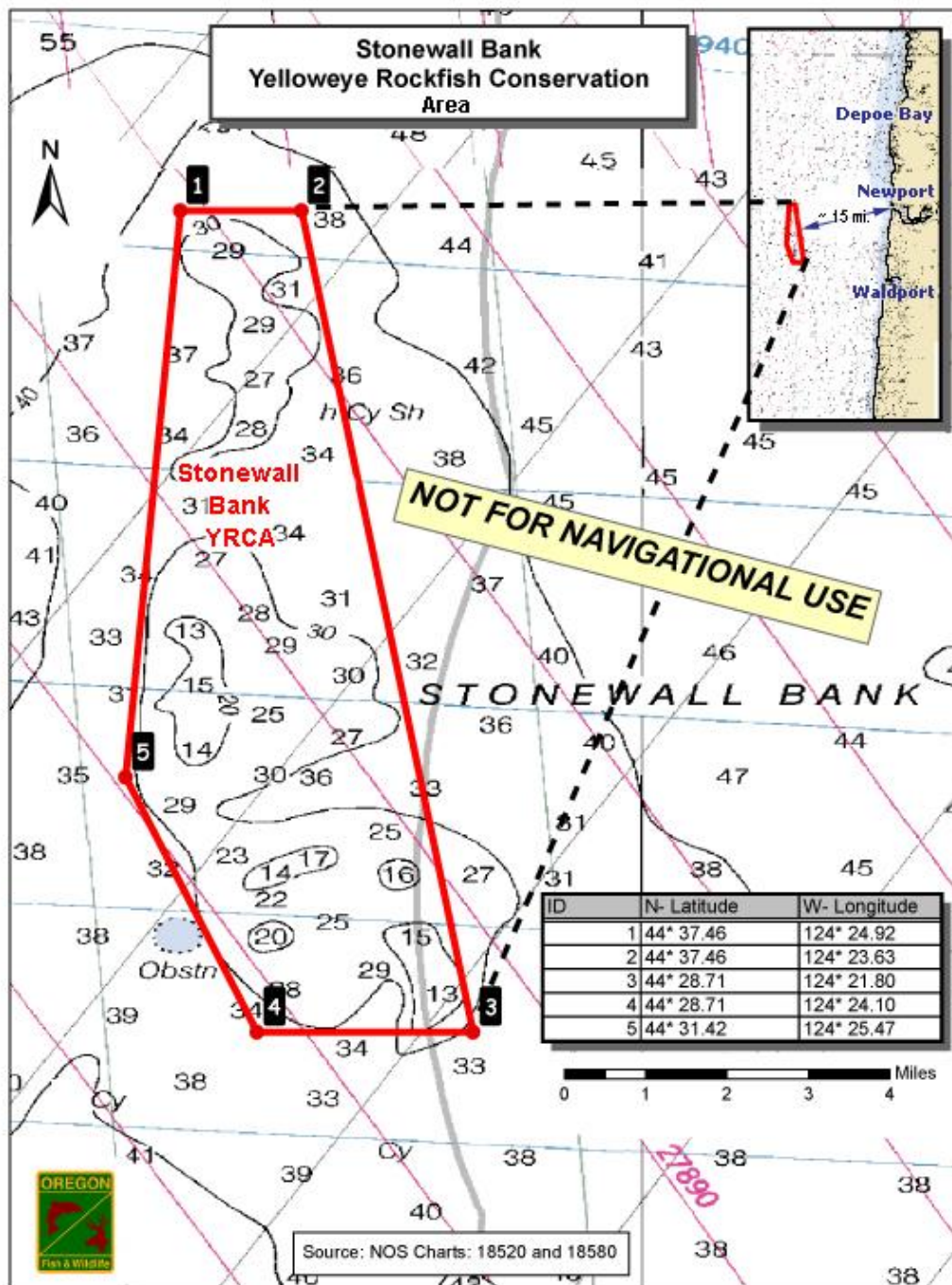
Table 1. 2010 Oregon Sport Fishery Catch Data

Subarea	Wk	Season	No. of Halibut Sampled	Average Weight (net lbs)	No. of Halibut Harvested	Total Pounds (net weight)
Columbia River						
Spring Ore. Side	18	1-May	0	0.0	0	0
	19	May 6-8	21	13.5	50	676
	20	May 13-15	18	16.9	25	423
	21	May 20-22	6	27.7	12	332
	22	May 27-29	5	21.6	5	108
	23	June 3-5	1	20.5	2	41
	24	June 10-12	4	21.3	4	85
	25	June 17-19	0	0.0	0	0
	26	June 24-25	0	0.0	0	0
		Total	55	17.0	98	1,665
Summer Ore. Side						
	32	Aug 6-8	13	9.1	22	201
	33	Aug 13-15	0	0	0	0
	34	Aug 20-22	9	15	32	469
	35	Aug 27-29	0	0	0	0
	36	Sept 3-5	1	27	4	107
	37	Sept 10-12	4	16	8	126
	38	Sept 17-19	0	0	0	0
	39	Sept 24-26	0	0	0	0
		Total	27	14	66	903
Central Coast						
Spring All Depths	20	May 13-15	1,101	14.8	2,705	39,973
	21	May 20-22	269	15.1	380	5,738
	23	June 3-5	579	17.9	995	17,843
	25	June 17-19	606	17.5	1,519	26,611
	27	July 1-2	453	19.4	1,150	22,335
		CLOSED				
		Total	3,008	16.7	6,749	112,500
Central Coast						
Summer All Depths	32	Aug. 6-7	513	17.5	1,727	30,140
		CLOSED				
		Total	513	17	1,727	30,140
Central Coast						
<40 Fathoms		May 1-July 17	234	21.8	592	12,927
South Coast (South of Humbug Mt.)						
All Depths		May 1-Oct. 31	n/a	n/a	n/a	5,007
Total Harvest			3,837	17	9,232	163,142

Figure 1. Map with Oregon Pacific halibut sport regulation locations



Figure 2. Area closed to Pacific halibut angling on Stone wall Bank.



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