

Agenda Item Summary

BACKGROUND

Internationally and federally established catch limits and regulations (management measures) for sport and commercial Pacific Halibut fisheries are adopted annually into state rule, by reference. The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission has the latitude to adopt concurrent or more conservative regulations, but not more liberal.

The catch limit for the entire Pacific Halibut stock (i.e., from Alaska to California) and regional catch limits are determined by the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC). Oregon occurs within IPHC region Area 2A, which also encompasses Washington and California.

Allocation rules, catch limits, and regulations for Area 2A fisheries are determined by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and documented in the Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP).

The major issue set forth here for the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission to consider is to adopt concurrent catch limits and regulations for the 2015 commercial and sport Pacific Halibut fisheries and set open dates for the sport fishery.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Significant public process is conducted prior to establishment of catch limits and regulations for Pacific Halibut fisheries.

Prior to establishing regional catch limits, the IPHC utilizes public input to balance the trade-offs between productivity of the stock and economic impacts to communities and fisheries for several catch limit alternatives. To inform the IPHC of potential impacts to Oregon communities, ODFW submits an annual economic analysis of the commercial and recreational Pacific Halibut fisheries.

Changes to catch limits and regulations for Oregon based Pacific Halibut fisheries are considered by ODFW (in conjunction with the Council) using a three-step public input process.

First, the public proposes changes to any of the federal regulations during an open public comment period. To discuss potential changes for 2015, ODFW held meetings in August 2014 in Newport, North Bend, and Brookings.

Second, public proposals are reviewed by ODFW and the Council and provided for public comment (solicited via on-line survey and additional public meetings). Successful proposals are adopted into federal rule for the upcoming year.

Third, ODFW seeks public input (solicited via on-line survey and public meeting in Newport) on seasons for the sport Central Coast

subarea.

ISSUE 1

ANNUAL CATCH LIMITS AND MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR SPORT AND COMMERCIAL PACIFIC HALIBUT FISHERIES

ANALYSIS

The 2015 catch limit for all Area 2A Pacific Halibut fisheries is 970,000 pounds, as established by the IPHC (Attachment 4). This is one percent greater than the 2014 catch limit. As per the Council's Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP; Attachment 3), catch limits for individual fisheries in Area 2A are as follows:

Tribal fisheries (WA): 339,500 lbs. (35% of Area 2A)
Commercial fishery (WA/OR/CA): 193,564 lbs. (20%)
WA sport fishery: 224,459 lbs. (23%)
OR sport fishery: 187,259 lbs. (19%)
CA sport fishery: 25,200 lbs. (3%)

There are five changes to the CSP that will affect Oregon sport based Pacific Halibut fisheries for 2015, as described below (and in Attachments 4 and 5). For further detail on the proposed catch limits and seasons for all Oregon sport Pacific Halibut fisheries, please see Attachment 6.

First, the Oregon sport, Washington sport, and commercial allocations were all reduced by 1% of the Area 2A non-tribal allocation. The California sport allocation was then increased by 3%, from 1% to 4% of the non-tribal allocation. This was the last step in the multi-year process to increase the allocation to the California sport fishery, and included a commitment by California to manage inseason to that allocation. The allocation shift from the three other non-tribal sectors was intended to spread out the impacts, such that no one sector was responsible for the entire allocation shift.

Second, the Oregon contribution to the Columbia River Subarea was reduced to 2.3% of the Oregon sport allocation and the Southern Oregon Subarea allocation was increased to 4% of the Oregon sport allocation minus the Oregon contribution to the Columbia River Subarea. The shift in allocations is intended to better match allocations with recent effort and catches.

Two other changes pertain to the Columbia River Subarea (north of Cape Falcon) with the objective of better utilizing the catch limit for the subarea: (1) the all-depth fishery was combined into one season that opens the first Thursday in May and runs four days per week until the allocation is attained or September 30; (2) the nearshore fishery allocation was reduced to 500 pounds.

Lastly, retention of other species of flatfish was allowed on days open to all-depth halibut, when Pacific Halibut are onboard, north of Humbug

Mountain. This will allow anglers to retain some additional species while fishing for Pacific Halibut, while not increasing impacts to overfished species.

Staff recommends that the Commission adopt, by reference, federal catch limits and regulations for all Pacific Halibut fisheries into Oregon Administrative Rule without modification.

OPTIONS

1. Adopt concurrent rules for Pacific Halibut fisheries as shown in Attachment 3.
2. Adopt more conservative measures.

**STAFF
RECOMMENDATION**

Option 1

DRAFT MOTION	I move to adopt the staff recommendations for the 2015 sport and commercial Pacific Halibut fisheries as shown in Attachment 3.
EFFECTIVE DATE	Upon filing.