

Agenda Item Summary

BACKGROUND

Internationally and federally established catch limits and regulations (management measures) for sport and commercial Pacific Halibut fisheries are adopted by reference annually into state rule. The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (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 is located within IPHC regulatory 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 consideration by the Commission is to adopt concurrent catch limits and regulations for the 2019 commercial and sport Pacific Halibut fisheries.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

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

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 summary of the prior year's commercial and recreational halibut fisheries, and an economic analysis of a range of proposed catch limits for the upcoming year (<https://iphc.int/uploads/pdf/am/2019am/iphc-2019-am095-ar06.pdf>).

Changes to catch limits and regulations for Oregon-based recreational 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 2019, ODFW held meetings in early August 2018 in Brookings, Newport, North Bend, and Salem, and in October in Newport, supplemented with an online survey. The Newport meetings were also available for remote public participation via webcast.

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 online survey and a February 2019 public meeting in Newport) on sport seasons for the Central Coast subarea.

ISSUE 1

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

ANALYSIS

The IPHC Commissioners recommended a 2019 catch limit for all Area 2A Pacific Halibut fisheries of 1,500,000 pounds, and NMFS adopted this catch limit in federal rule. This amount is 25 percent greater than the 2018 catch limit. The increase is the result of Area 2A decreasing trawl bycatch to less than 100,000 pounds annually since the 2011 implementation of the trawl individual fishing quota program. Prior to that it had been 300,000-500,000 pounds annually. Additionally, commercial fishery trends, especially in the Tribal directed fishery, have been steady or slightly increasing.

The IPHC Commissioners also indicated that this catch limit would be in place for four years (2019-2022), unless a significant conservation concern arises. This will allow for some stability in the Area 2A fisheries.

As determined by the Council's Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP), 2019 catch limits for individual fisheries in Area 2A are as follows:

Tribal fisheries (WA): 525,000 lbs. (35% of Area 2A)
Commercial fishery (WA/OR/CA): 299,325 lbs. (20%)
WA sport fishery: 347,100 lbs. (23%)
OR sport fishery: 289,575 lbs. (19%)
CA sport fishery: 39,000 lbs. (3%)

There are no changes to the CSP which affect area 2A commercial fisheries. Area allocations and directed commercial fishery regulations in area 2A are set by the IPHC, promulgated by NMFS (Attachment 5), and adopted by reference into OAR by the Commission.

There is one change to the CSP that will affect Oregon sport Pacific Halibut fisheries for 2019, as described below (and in Attachment 6). For further detail on the proposed catch limits and seasons for all Oregon sport Pacific Halibut fisheries, please see Attachment 8.

1. For the Columbia River Subarea all-depth fishery, the days open each week will change from Thursday, Friday, and Sunday to specific days open: Thursday, May 2, Sunday, May 5; Thursday, May 9, Sunday, May 12; Friday, May 24, Sunday, May 26. If any quota remains after those dates, the fishery will

then be open every Thursday and Sunday. This was proposed by anglers and adopted by the Council, and has the Columbia River Subarea open at the same time as other subareas in Washington, to try to prevent effort shift as seen in 2018 when this subarea opened a week prior to any other subarea in Washington or Oregon.

Central Coast Subarea 2019 Season Dates

After considering public input, ODFW recommends to NMFS open “fixed” and “backup” dates for the Central Coast Subarea Spring All-Depth fishery.

Background information and a summary of public input are contained in a memo transmitting ODFW’s recommendation to NMFS (Attachment 7). The recommended dates, which were adopted by NMFS in federal rule, are:

- Spring fishery fixed open dates: May 9, 10, 11; May 16, 17, 18; May 23, 24, 25; May 30, 31, June 1; and June 6, 7, 8.
- Spring fishery backup dates: June 20, 21, 22; July 4, 5, 6; and July 18, 19, 20.

The summer all-depth season begins on the first weekend in August and is open every other Friday and Saturday until the quota is reached or October 31, whichever is earlier. The CSP has provisions to increase open days and bag limits inseason during the summer fishery if it appears the subarea catch limit will not be taken. As in past years, ODFW will coordinate with NMFS and the IPHC to make inseason adjustments as needed to ensure Oregon anglers have the opportunity to harvest the full allocations.

Commercial Pacific Halibut fisheries

The directed commercial fishery is set by the IPHC as pre-announced 10-hour openings mostly scheduled every other Wednesday beginning June 26, 2019, until the allocation is taken. An additional opening on Thursday, June 27 was announced as being available, however based on feedback from PFMC, harvesters, processors, and enforcement agencies about safety and other concerns, that date may not be opened by IPHC. Trip limits by vessel size are announced prior to each opening. During the last ten years there have been two or three openings per year.

The IPHC has asked the Council to explore potential ways to eliminate the current “derby” fishery. PFMC will be scheduling a workshop in June or July 2019 to begin investigating alternatives for the directed commercial fishery. Implementation would be in 2020 at the earliest.

The landing limits for halibut retention in the salmon troll fishery will be recommended at the March 2019 Council meeting and finalized at the April 2019 Council meeting. Landing limits are based on a ratio of halibut to landed salmon with an overall halibut trip limit.

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 amended rules consistent with federal Pacific Halibut fisheries rules 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 2019 sport and commercial Pacific Halibut fisheries as shown in Attachment 3.
EFFECTIVE DATE	Upon filing.