



## AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

### BACKGROUND

Pacific halibut science and management begin with the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC), an international organization established by a Convention between Canada and the United States in 1923. The IPHC conducts annual Pacific halibut surveys and stock assessment as well as other halibut-related research, and sets annual fishery catch limits for each of 10 areas across the stock’s range in U.S. and Canadian waters (Figure 1). Oregon is located within IPHC regulatory Area 2A, which also encompasses Washington and California.

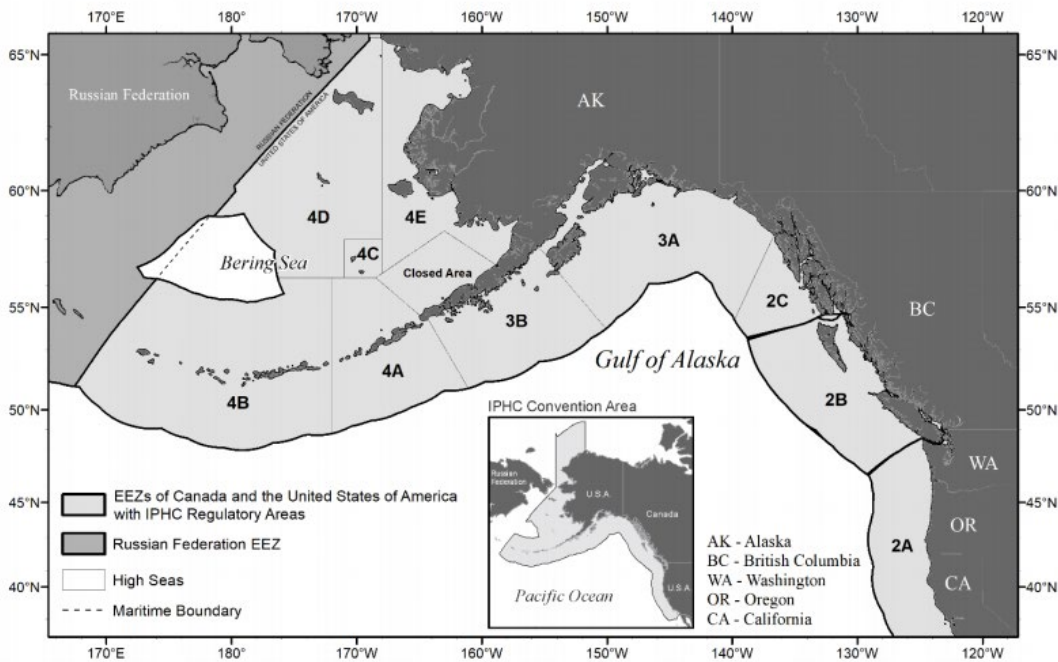


Figure 1. Map of the IPHC Convention Area (inset) and IPHC Regulatory Areas

Within Area 2A, fishery allocations, catch limits, and management measures are determined annually by the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), documented in the Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP), and adopted into federal rules. The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (Commission) can adopt concurrent or more conservative regulations, but not more liberal.

The Commission usually adopts Pacific halibut fishery regulations by reference to federal rules published by NMFS. In addition, the Commission adopts open dates for the spring halibut fishery on Oregon’s central coast. This agenda item presents the 2022 sport and commercial Pacific halibut fishery regulations for the Commission’s consideration.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

The IPHC considers public input as well as advice from two industry advisory groups to balance trade-offs between stock productivity and economic impacts to fishermen and communities as they determine catch limits each year.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and the PFMC use a multi-step process to gather public input on potential changes to sport Pacific halibut fisheries in Oregon.

- ODFW holds public meetings to discuss the sport fishery and develop proposals for the upcoming year. In 2021, 25 people participated in the virtual meeting.
- The PFMC reviews proposals in September and adopts a range for additional public review and comment. ODFW develops final recommendations to the PFMC based on stakeholder input solicited with a virtual public meeting, which was held on October 27 in 2021, accompanied with an online survey.
- The PFMC adopts final changes at its November meeting.
- Following the IPHC's determination of quotas in late January or early February each year, ODFW seeks input on the number and timing of open days in the Central Coast subarea's spring all-depth season. This meeting was held virtually on Feb 8, 2022 supplemented with an online survey. ODFW develops recommendations based on this input and conveys them directly to NMFS.
- NMFS publishes proposed halibut fishery regulations in the Federal Register, considers public comment received (if any), then publishes a final rule.
- The Commission considers adopting federal halibut fishery regulations into OAR at its April meeting, which includes opportunity for public testimony.

## **ISSUE 1**

Annual catch limits and management measures for sport and commercial Pacific halibut fisheries.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **2022 Catch Sharing Plan**

The IPHC considered updated information on Pacific halibut stock status and trends at its annual meeting in January, 2022 and adopted a fishery catch limit of 1,490,000 pounds of Pacific halibut for Area 2A in 2022. This amount is 20,000 pounds lower than in 2021, though similar to the past three years as we enter into the final year of a four-year agreement structured to bring stability to the Pacific halibut fishing communities of Washington, Oregon, and California.

- 2019: 1.50 million pounds
- 2020: 1.50 million pounds
- 2021: 1.51 million pounds
- 2022: 1.49 million pounds

As determined by the sharing arrangements in the PFMC's CSP, 2022 catch limits for individual fisheries in Area 2A are:

- Tribal fisheries (WA): 521,500 lbs. (35% of Area 2A)
- Commercial fishery (WA/OR/CA): 297,330 lbs. (20%)
- WA sport fishery: 294,786 lbs. (23%)
- OR sport fishery: 287,645 lbs. (19%)
- CA sport fishery: 38,740 lbs. (3%)

The Oregon sport fishery is broken out further into three different subareas with seasonal and/or depth-dependent allocations:

- Columbia River Subarea (Leadbetter Pt. WA, to Cape Falcon OR): 19,037 lbs. (2.3% of OR sport + 8,560 lbs. WA sport + remaining Southern OR Subarea quota)
  - All-depth: 18,537 lbs.
  - Nearshore: 500 lbs.
- Central Coast Subarea (Cape Falcon to Humbug Mt.): 269,782 lbs. (93.79% of OR sport)
  - Spring all-depth: 169,963 lbs.
  - Summer all-depth: 67,445 lbs.
  - Nearshore: 32,374 lbs.
- Southern Oregon Subarea (Humbug Mt. to OR/CA border): 8,000 lbs. (3.91% of OR sport, capped at 8,000 lbs.)
  - No seasonal or depth restriction

There are two changes to the CSP that will affect Oregon sport Pacific halibut fisheries for 2022 (described below). For further detail on the proposed catch limits and seasons, please see Attachment 8.

- Anglers have expressed a desire to have more halibut fishing opportunities in the Central Coast Subarea, when quotas are at the current high levels.
  - If the Central Oregon Coast Subarea Spring All-Depth allocation is greater than 100,000 pounds, the season may open up to seven days per week starting the second Thursday in May through June 30; then open every Thursday through Saturday, except weeks can be skipped to avoid adverse tides.
  - If after the first summer all-depth opening (first Thurs-Sat in August), it is estimated that there will be 60,000 pounds or more remaining on the Central Oregon Coast combined nearshore and all-depth quotas remaining, the all-depth fishery may open up to seven days per week beginning September 1.
- Anglers have also expressed a desire for more inseason flexibility to increase the daily bag limit for halibut prior to Labor Day weekend.
  - At the conclusion of the spring all-depth season, IPHC, NMFS, PFMC, and ODFW will consult to determine whether increasing the bag limit to two fish is warranted with the intent of taking the subarea quota by September 30.

## **Recreational Fishery - Central Coast Subarea 2022 Season Dates**

ODFW recommends open "fixed" and "backup" dates for each year's Central Coast Subarea spring all-depth fishery to NMFS after considering public input.

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

- Spring fishery fixed open dates: May 12 through June 30, seven days per week.
- Spring fishery backup dates: July 7, 8, 9 and July 21, 22, 23.

The CSP has provisions to adjust open days and bag limits inseason if it appears that a subarea’s 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 allocation.

## **Commercial Fisheries**

As in 2020 and 2021, the directed commercial fishery will occur in 3-day (58-hour) open fishing periods. The first opening will start at 0800 on the fourth Tuesday in June and end at 1800 on the subsequent Thursday. Additional openings (up to 58 hours each) may be announced by IPHC if enough quota remains and will occur every other week after the previous opening. Vessel-size based limits will be determined and announced by IPHC prior to the first opening and are expected to be similar to 2021 levels.

Landing limit options for halibut retention in the commercial salmon troll fishery were developed by the PFMC in March and will be finalized at its April meeting. These limits are based on a ratio of halibut to salmon with an overall halibut trip limit.

Staff recommend that the Commission adopt, by reference, federal catch limits and regulations for all Pacific halibut fisheries without modification.

### **OPTIONS**

1. Staff recommendations (adopt federal rules by reference), as reflected in Attachment 3.
2. Modify staff proposal for one or more items.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

1. Option 1

### **DRAFT MOTION**

I move to adopt the staff recommendations for the 2022 sport and commercial Pacific halibut fisheries as shown in Attachment 3.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon filing.