

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 consistent 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 Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission is to adopt concurrent catch limits and regulations for the 2018 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 (http://www.iphc.int/meetings/2017am/IPHC-2017-AM093-AR06_Rev_1.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 2018, ODFW held meetings in late July and early August 2017 in Brookings, Newport, North Bend, and Salem, and in October in North Bend and 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 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 did not agree on Pacific Halibut catch limits for 2018; however, the United States and Canada each indicated their intent to pursue lower catch limits for 2018 via domestic regulatory processes. The U.S. Commissioners recommended a 2018 catch limit for all Area 2A Pacific Halibut fisheries of 1,190,000 pounds, and NMFS adopted this catch limit in U.S. federal rule. This amount is 10.5 percent less than the 2017 catch limit, based on indications of decreasing stock abundance and productivity in the most recent assessment of Pacific halibut by the IPHC.

As determined by the Council's Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP), 2018 catch limits for individual fisheries in Area 2A are as follows:

Tribal fisheries (WA): 416,500 lbs. (35% of Area 2A)
Commercial fishery (WA/OR/CA): 237,465 lbs. (20%)
WA sport fishery: 275,366 lbs. (23%)
OR sport fishery: 229,730 lbs. (19%)
CA sport fishery: 30,940 lbs. (3%)

There are no changes to the CSP that 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 into OAR by reference by the Commission.

There is one change to the CSP that will affect Oregon sport Pacific Halibut fisheries for 2018, 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 through Sunday to Thursday, Friday, and Sunday. Saturday is closed. This was proposed by anglers and adopted by the Council, and is intended to stretch the season out farther into May or even June.

The Pacific Fishery Management Council considered, but did not adopt, an alternative that would split the Oregon Central Coast Subarea into two new subareas at the north Florence jetty. After analysis and

consideration of public input, ODFW recommended against a split. Rationale and analysis are described in ODFW's November 2017 report to the Council (http://www.pcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/E1a_ODFW_Rpt1_NOV2017BB.pdf).

Central Coast Subarea 2018 Season Dates

ODFW recommends open "fixed" and "backup" dates for the 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, which were adopted by NMFS in federal rule, are:

- Spring fishery fixed open dates: May 10, 11, 12; 24, 25, 26; June 7, 8, 9; and 21, 22, 23.
- Spring fishery backup dates: July 5, 6, 7; and 19, 20, 21.

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 10-hour openings scheduled every other Wednesday beginning June 27, 2018, until the allocation is taken. 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. Possibilities are still being discussed by IPHC and PFMC, but **no** changes will occur in 2018.

The landing limits for halibut retention in the salmon troll fishery will be recommended at the March 2018 Council meeting and finalized at the April 2018 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 for Pacific Halibut fisheries consistent with federal regulations 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 2018 sport and commercial Pacific Halibut fisheries as shown in Attachment 3.
EFFECTIVE DATE	Upon filing.