



IPHC Fishery Regulations proposal:

**Recreational (Sport) Fishing for Pacific Halibut - IPHC Regulatory Area 2A (Sect. 26) –
Season opening dates for recreational fishery subareas within IPHC Regulatory Area 2A**

SUBMITTED BY: USA (NOAA FISHERIES) (19 DECEMBER 2025)

Directed Commercial Recreational Subsistence Non-directed commercial All
All Regulatory Areas All Alaska Regulatory Areas All U.S. Regulatory Areas
2A 2B 2C 3A 3B 4A 4B 4C 4D 4E

PURPOSE

To propose opening the 2026 Regulatory Area 2A recreational fishery in the Convention waters of the Washington Puget Sound and the U.S. Convention waters in the Strait of Juan de Fuca subarea and in the Convention Waters off the California subareas on April 2 and on April 1, respectively.

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

NOAA Fisheries implements annual adjustments to the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) Catch Sharing Plan for Regulatory Area 2A, based on Council recommendations, to address the changing needs of the fisheries. In addition, the Council makes recommendations for recreational fishing annual domestic management measures, including season structure, through its Catch Sharing Plan. Each year, NOAA Fisheries implements those domestic management measures, developed consistent with the Catch Sharing Plan, to govern the recreational fishery (50 CFR 300.63(c)). Included in those management measures are the season start dates for different regions within Regulatory Area 2A.

The Council's recommendations for annual adjustments to the Catch Sharing Plan and recreational fishing domestic management measures for Regulatory Area 2A generally occur in November of each year, with NOAA Fisheries implementing those adjustments in regulation following approval of the International Pacific Halibut Commission's (IPHC) annual regulations in early spring. In recent years, changes in fishery dynamics have led to a desire to open Regulatory Area 2A recreational fisheries in some subareas in early April, which is earlier than domestic management measures adopted through the typical annual rulemaking process can be implemented. For 2026, NOAA Fisheries is proposing to implement Regulatory Area 2A recreational fisheries annual domestic management measures for April in IPHC regulations. All other regulations would still be implemented by NOAA Fisheries using the typical annual rulemaking.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Commission:

- 1) **NOTE** IPHC Fishery Regulation proposal IPHC-2026-AM102-PropB3, which proposes opening the 2026 Regulatory Area 2A recreational fishery in the Convention waters of the Washington Puget Sound and the U.S. Convention waters in the Strait of Juan de Fuca subarea and in the Convention Waters off the California subareas on April 2 and on April 1, respectively.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Suggested Regulatory Language.

APPENDIX A

SUGGESTED REGULATORY LANGUAGE

26. Recreational (Sport) Fishing for Pacific Halibut—IPHC Regulatory Area 2A

- (1) The Commission shall determine and announce closing dates to the public for any area in which the fishery limits promulgated by NOAA Fisheries are estimated to have been taken.
- (2) When the Commission has determined that a subquota under paragraph (8) of this Section is estimated to have been taken, and has announced a date on which the season will close, no person shall recreational (sport) fish for Pacific halibut in that area after that date for the rest of the year, unless a reopening of that area for recreational (sport) Pacific halibut fishing is scheduled in accordance with the Catch Sharing Plan for IPHC Regulatory Area 2A, or announced by the Commission.
- (3) No person shall fish for Pacific halibut from a vessel, nor land or retain Pacific halibut on board a vessel, used as a charter vessel in IPHC Regulatory Area 2A, unless issued a permit valid for fishing in IPHC Regulatory Area 2A by NOAA Fisheries according to 50 CFR 300 Subpart E.
- (4) In California, Oregon, or Washington, no person shall fillet, mutilate, or otherwise disfigure a Pacific halibut in any manner that prevents the determination of minimum size or the number of fish caught, possessed, or landed.
- (5) The possession limit on a vessel for Pacific halibut in the waters off the coast of Washington is the same as the daily bag limit. The possession limit for Pacific halibut on land in Washington is two daily bag limits.
- (6) The possession limit on a vessel for Pacific halibut caught in the waters off the coast of Oregon is the same as the daily bag limit. The possession limit for Pacific halibut on land in Oregon is three daily bag limits.
- (7) The possession limit on a vessel for Pacific halibut caught in the waters off the coast of California is one daily bag limit. The possession limit for Pacific halibut on land in California is one daily bag limit.
- (8) In Convention waters of the Washington Puget Sound and the U.S. Convention waters in the Strait of Juan de Fuca subarea, the recreational (sport) fishing season opens on the first Thursday in April and runs through 30 June, seven days per week. NOAA Fisheries may modify these dates in-season. The daily bag limit is one Pacific halibut of any size per person. The Washington Puget Sound and the U.S. Convention waters in the Strait of Juan de Fuca subarea is defined in 50 CFR 300.63(c)(5)(i)(A).
- (9) In Convention waters off California the recreational (sport) fishing season is from 1 April through 15 November, seven days per week, in the Northern California Coast subarea and from 1 April to 31 December, seven days per week, in the South of Point Arena subarea. NOAA Fisheries may modify these dates in-season. The daily bag limit is one Pacific halibut of any size per person. The California subareas are defined in 50 CFR 300.63(c)(5)(iii).
- (8) ~~Specific~~—Additional regulations describing fishing periods, fishery limits, fishing dates, and daily bag limits are promulgated by NOAA Fisheries and published in the Federal Register.⁶

⁶ NOAA Fisheries could implement more restrictive regulations for the recreational (sport) fishery or components of it, therefore, anglers are advised to check the current Federal or State regulations prior to fishing.

