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CONTRACTING PARTY: United States of America

AGENCY:

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FISHERY SECTORS AND IPHC REGULATORY AREA

This report will provide a summary of commercial and recreational fisheries for Pacific halibut in the Washington portion of IPHC regulatory area 2A (Area 2A).

DISCUSSION

2018 Washington Recreational Fishery Overview

Management Areas

Washington's halibut fisheries are managed under the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (Council) Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) for Area 2A. The CSP specifies how the Area 2A total allowable catch (TAC), as defined by IPHC, is allocated or "shared" among various state commercial and recreational sectors. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) manages its recreational fisheries by subarea. These subareas (Figure 1) are, Puget Sound (Washington Marine Areas 5 - 10); North Coast (Washington Marine Areas 3 and 4); South Coast (Washington Marine Area 2), and Columbia River (Washington Marine Area 1 to Cape Falcon, Oregon).

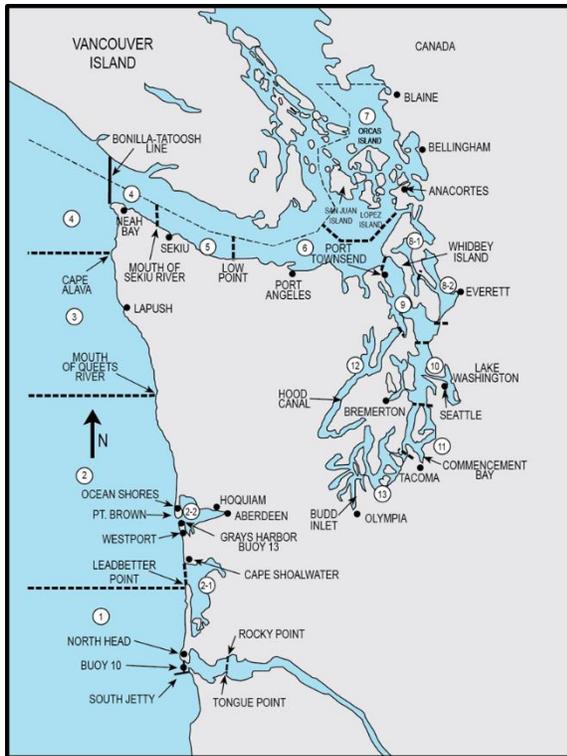


Figure 1. Washington recreational management areas

Allocation

As outlined in the CSP, the Washington recreational fishery receives 35.6 percent of the Area 2A allocation. The Washington recreational allocation is further divided into the subareas with Puget Sound getting 23.5 percent of the first 130,845 pounds, the north coast subarea getting 62.2 percent of the first 130,845 pounds, the south coast getting 12.3 percent of the first 130,845 pounds, and the Columbia River subarea getting 2 percent of the first 130,845 pounds. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) contributes 2.3 percent of the Oregon recreational allocation to the Columbia River subarea. Each subarea gets an additional 32 percent of the Washington sport allocation between 130,845 and 224,110 pounds. Based on an Area 2A total allowable catch of 1.19 million pounds, the 2018 Washington recreational allocation was 225,366 pounds; allocations to each subarea are shown in Table 1. Note that subarea allocations do not total the Washington recreational allocation because a portion of the Washington recreational allocation is used to allow incidental halibut retention in the primary sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis, Washington. More details on this allocation are provided in the commercial fishery section of the report.

Table 1. Washington recreational allocations by subarea

| Subarea | Allocation (lbs.) |
|----------------|-------------------|
| Puget Sound | 60,995 |
| North Coast | 111,632 |
| South Coast | 46,341 |
| Columbia River | 11,682 |

Recreational Catch Monitoring

WDFW port samplers meet recreational anglers as they return to the dock where they collect interview information on the number of Pacific halibut retained and released. Samplers also collect length data which is converted to weight using the IPHC conversion chart. Weekly estimates of catch and effort are produced to manage the fishery relative to available allocation. Managers track catch throughout the season and coordinate with IPHC, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and other state managers to close when catch is projected to reach the subarea allocation. Table 2 summarizes the sample rate in each Washington subarea.

Table 2. 2018 recreational sampling rate by subarea

| Subarea | Halibut Landed | Lengths Collected | Sample Rate |
|----------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Puget Sound | 1,828 | 896 | 49% |
| North Coast | 6,365 | 2,010 | 32% |
| South Coast | 3,258 | 1,294 | 40% |
| Columbia River | 931 | 408 | 44% |

Canadian Halibut Landed into Neah Bay

As part of WDFW's port sampling efforts for recreational halibut fisheries, we also sample halibut caught in Canadian waters and landed into Neah Bay from March through October. A summary of Canadian halibut landed into Neah Bay is provided in Appendix A.

Enforcement

WDFW enforcement officers conduct land-based and at-sea patrols to monitor compliance with federal halibut regulations. A complete summary WDFW's monitoring and enforcement for 2018 is included in the Appendix B.

2018 Pacific Halibut Recreational Seasons by Subarea

Statewide Season Overview

In 2017, the CSP was revised to establish a statewide season with concurrent season dates for the north coast, south coast and Puget Sound subareas. The Washington recreational halibut fishery has become increasingly popular with more fishing effort directed at a relatively stable allocation. The result has been recreational halibut seasons that last from three to five days in the north coast and south coast subareas. Seasons in the Puget Sound subarea have gone from several months to as few as eight days in 2016. In response, WDFW worked extensively to improve inseason sampling methods, consider stakeholder input, and construct seasons that provide meaningful recreational fishing opportunity and maximize the season length. Since 2016, WDFW has worked with stakeholders to create as much overlap in the season dates across these subareas. The overlap is intended to keep catch within the subarea allocation and spread out the season by limiting the overall number of fishing days. Developing a season structure that opens the halibut fishery in the Puget Sound, north coast, and south coast subareas on the same days requires significant input and compromise from stakeholders that participate in the different subareas. In 2018, all Washington subareas except the Columbia River had the same season dates. Those dates were May 11, May 13, May 25, May 27, June 7, June 9, June 16, June 21, June 23, and June 30. Although the same dates were approved for these subareas, the season length in each subarea was dependent on availability of allocation. A brief description of the 2018 season by subarea is provided below. See Table 3 for a complete summary of season and catch in all Washington subareas.

North Coast Subarea (Marine Areas 3 and 4)

The north coast subarea was open a total of ten days in 2018 beginning on Friday, May 11 and Sunday, May 13 and opened again for another Friday and Sunday opener on May 25 and 27. The Friday, Sunday structure for the first four days of the fishery represented a compromise that reflects the south coast subarea's preference for Sunday as their weekend day. Later in the season, the days of the week shifted to a Thursday, Saturday structure which follows the more traditional season structure for the north coast. The break between the opener and the next open days (May 25 and 27) also reflects a compromise, in this case with the Puget Sound subarea. For those stakeholders, it is important to ensure that sufficient allocation is available to allow for a long running and popular halibut derby over Memorial Day weekend. Ultimately, there was enough quota available to open on June 7, 9, 16, 21, 23 and a final day on Saturday, June 30. The total catch was 110,929 pounds out of the 111,632 pound allocation with 703 pounds remaining (Table 3).

South Coast Subarea (Marine Area 2)

The south coast subarea opened at all-depths on Friday May 11 under the same season structure as the north coast and Puget Sound subareas. The all-depth fishery was open May 11, 13, and 25 and closed on May 27 when the total catch reached 41,258 pounds out of the 44,341-pound all-depth allocation. The remaining 3,083 pounds was not sufficient to open the all-depth fishery for another day. Additionally, a

portion of the south coast subarea is reserved for a nearshore fishery, which opened on Saturday, June 2. The nearshore fishery closed on June 6, which allowed an opening in all Washington subareas on June 21, including an all-depth opening in the south coast subarea, with the additional remaining quota. Sufficient allocation was remaining in the north coast and Puget Sound subareas to cover potential overage of the south coast allocation. The south coast subarea closed on June 21 after five all-depth and five nearshore open days (Table 3).

Puget Sound Subarea (Marine Areas 5 – 10)

The Puget Sound subarea opened on Friday, May 11 and was open a total of ten days under the same season structure and dates as the north coast and south coast subareas. The total catch for the Puget Sound subarea after the June 30 closure was 42,093 pounds out of the 60,995 pound allocation, leaving 18,902 pounds of allocation remaining. The remaining allocation in this subarea was used to offset overages in other subareas resulting from the statewide all-depth fishery on June 21 (Table 3).

Columbia River Subarea (Washington Marine Area 1 to Cape Falcon, OR)

The Columbia River subarea is not part of the statewide season setting approach used for the other Washington subareas and is co-managed with the ODFW. The Columbia River season is structured to open at all-depths the first Thursday in May and continue three days per week (Thursday, Friday, and Sunday) until the all-depth allocation is projected to be taken. Five hundred pounds of the Columbia River allocation is set aside to allow halibut retention in the nearshore area when bottomfish are on board Monday through Wednesday.

In 2018, the all-depth fishery opened on Thursday, May 3 and continued for a total of five days before the all-depth allocation was projected to be attained. After the fifth all-depth fishing day, total catch (including Oregon) was 10,465 pounds out of the 11,182 pound all-depth allocation, leaving 717 pounds remaining. The remaining all-depth allocation was shifted to the nearshore fishery, which opened on Monday, May 7 and continued through June 20, resulting in 173 pounds taken. Washington and Oregon managers discussed the idea of allowing statewide all-depth opening, including the Columbia River subarea using the remaining Columbia River allocation and some from the Puget Sound and north coast subareas if the Columbia River allocation was exceeded. With agreement, the all-depth fishery re-opened June 21 for a final day (Table 3).

2018 Washington Statewide Recreational Summary

In 2018, Washington recreational subareas fished under their specified subarea allocation during May and most of June. In mid-June, WDFW worked with stakeholder representatives from the north coast and Puget Sound subarea to evaluate their interest in shifting unharvested allocation in their subareas to allow one additional all-depth fishing day in all Washington subareas. With stakeholder agreement, WDFW met with

ODFW managers, IPHC and NMFS to review catch to date and recommend that sufficient allocation remained to allow another all-depth day on Saturday, June 21.

Shifting allocation between subareas is allowed through the CSP and provides an opportunity to recognize differences in catch per unit effort in each of the subareas, and adjust remaining allocations later in the season to provide some increased opportunity to recreational anglers in all subareas. After the statewide all-depth fishing day on June 21, there was sufficient allocation remaining to open the north coast and Puget Sound on June 23 and 30 (Table 3).

Table 3: Washington Statewide Season Summary

| Subarea | Open dates | Allocation | Catch | Difference |
|-------------------------|---|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| North Coast | May 11, 13, 25, 27, June 7, 9, 16, 21, 23, 30 | 111,632 | 110,929 | 703 |
| South Coast | All-depth: May 11, 13, 25, 27, June 21 | 44,341 | 54,149 | -9,808 |
| | Nearshore: June 2 – 6 | 2,000 | 614 | 1,386 |
| | South Coast Total | 46,341 | 54,763 | -8,422 |
| Puget Sound | May 11, 13, 25, 27, June 7, 9, 16, 21, 23, 30 | 60,995 | 42,093 | 18,902 |
| Columbia River | All-depth: May 3, 4, 6, 10, June 21 | 11,182 | 15,661 | -4,479 |
| | Nearshore: M-W, May 7 – June 20 | 500 | 173 | 327 |
| | CR Total | 11,682 | 15,834 | -4,152 |
| Washington Total | | 230,650 | 223,619 | 7,031 |

2018 Washington Commercial Fisheries

Incidental Halibut Retention in the Primary Sablefish Fishery North of Point Chehalis, Washington

The CSP provides for incidental landings of halibut in the primary sablefish fishery, which lasts from April 1 until October 31, north of Pt. Chehalis, Washington. The allocation to the primary fishery comes from the Washington recreational allocation and is only allowed when the 2A TAC is sufficient to provide meaningful opportunity for both sectors. In 2018, WDFW explored potential changes to the CSP that would shift allocation from the incidental sablefish fishery to the recreational fishery. The CSP was revised to reduce the maximum amount that goes to incidental halibut retention in the primary sablefish fishery from 70,000 pounds to 50,000 pounds when the 2A TAC is less than 1.5 million pounds. When the 2A TAC is 1.5 million pounds or more, the maximum allocation is 70,000 pounds. The intent was to provide some additional flexibility to recreational fisheries that are highly constrained by their allocations while not significantly impacting the primary sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis. The change shifts some halibut to recreational fisheries in years when the 2A TAC is sufficient (e.g., 2018). This change is expected to have minimal, if any, impact on the sablefish fishery as the revised lower cap is should continue to provide sufficient

allocation to the primary sablefish fishery based on historical landing reports which show that incidental halibut catch has not reached 50,000 pounds since 2006.¹

With the 2018 area 2A TAC at 1,190,000 the maximum 50,000 pounds of halibut was allocated for incidental retention in the sablefish fishery. The Council adopted a 140 pounds of halibut per 1,000 pounds of sablefish limit per landing with up to two additional halibut in excess of the 140 pounds per 1,000 pounds landing ratio allowed per landing (both dressed weight, halibut with head-on) beginning on April 1, 2018. Effective April 13, the landing limit was changed to 160 pounds dressed weight of halibut for every 1,000 pounds dressed weight of sablefish landed and up to two halibut in excess of the landing ratio. Based on inseason estimates, the Council recommend increasing the ratio in September 2018. Effective October 9 through the end of the fishery on October 31, the landing limit was revised to 200 pounds dressed weight of halibut for every 1,000 pounds of sablefish and up to two halibut in excess of the landing ratio.

In 2018, 17 vessels made 72 landings that included 43,716 pounds of halibut in the primary sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis at the conclusion of the fishery. The total catch of dressed, head-on halibut in the directed sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis at the conclusion of the fishery was 43,716 pounds, which is 87 percent of the established quota. Incidental halibut landings in the sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis from 2014-2018 are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Incidental Halibut Retention in the Primary Sablefish Fishery North of Point Chehalis

| Year | Vessels | Landings | Quota | Catch | % of Quota |
|------|---------|----------|--------|--------|------------|
| 2018 | 17 | 72 | 50,000 | 43,716 | 87.4 |
| 2017 | 15 | 67 | 70,000 | 35,866 | 51.8 |
| 2016 | 16 | 64 | 49,686 | 39,376 | 79.2 |
| 2015 | 8 | 37 | 10,348 | 9,797 | 94.7 |
| 2014 | 12 | 42 | 14,274 | 12,224 | 85.6 |

Directed Commercial Fishery South of Point Chehalis, Washington

The CSP apportions 85 percent of the 2A commercial allocation to allow for a directed commercial fishery south of Point Chehalis, Washington, which was 201,845 pounds in 2018. The Directed fishery is a small but important fishing opportunity for commercial fishery participants in Washington. In 2018, fifteen vessels made 35 landings into Washington ports totaling 61,177 pounds. Landings from the Directed fishery into Washington ports has increased since 2014. In 2018, total pounds landed into Washington represented 30 percent of the allocation compared to 16 percent in 2014.

¹ [Summary of Pacific Halibut Incidental Catch Management](#)

Table 5. Directed Pacific halibut landings into Washington ports 2014-2018

| Year | Net wt. lbs. | Fish Tickets | Vessels |
|-------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| 2018 | 61,177 | 35 | 15 |
| 2017 | 59,949 | 43 | 18 |
| 2016 | 55,055 | 45 | 21 |
| 2015 | 33,448 | 21 | 12 |
| 2014 | 26,812 | 22 | 13 |

RECOMMENDATIONS

WDFW worked with stakeholders to evaluate the results of the 2018 Pacific Halibut fisheries in Washington and propose changes to the CSP including season dates for recreational fisheries. WDFW recommends that the IPHC approve the changes to the CSP as described in the WDFW report submitted to the Council. (Appendix C)

REFERENCES

N/A

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Canadian Halibut Landed into Neah Bay

Appendix B. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Police 2018 Report

Appendix C. WDFW November 2018 Report to the Pacific Fishery Management Council

Appendix A. Canadian Halibut Landed into Neah Bay, Washington

The number of Canadian halibut landed into Neah Bay in 2018 was 343 fish, slightly higher than observed in 2016 and 2017. Table A1 summarizes the Canadian halibut catch landed into Neah Bay for 2014-2018.

There could be additional halibut caught in Canada and landed into Washington ports other than Neah Bay that are not currently being accounted for. For example, WDFW's Puget Sound port sampling program does not collect recreational halibut catch data for Canadian halibut that may be landed into other ports adjacent to Canada such as Sekiu, Port Angeles or Bellingham.

Table A1. Canadian halibut landings into Neah Bay, Washington, 2014-2018.

| Year | # Boats | # Anglers | # Halibut |
|------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| 2018 | 233 | 653 | 343 |
| 2017 | 169 | 419 | 245 |
| 2016 | 230 | 608 | 304 |
| 2015 | 254 | 648 | 434 |
| 2014 | 295 | 797 | 629 |

Appendix B. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Police 2018 Report

Overview

Halibut is shared among four user groups in Washington State: recreational, directed non-Indian commercial, non-Indian incidental, and Tribal fishermen. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) police developed a patrol plan for 2018 that provides comprehensive protection throughout the entire year.

As halibut seasons and habitats overlap with other fisheries, directed halibut patrols often revealed federal and state violations related to other species. Common halibut violations included mutilation of fish so that size or species could not be determined, failure to account for catch, fishing for and possession of rockfish or halibut in closed areas, closed-season fishing, exceeding limits, failing to submit catch for inspection and fishing with no license.



Lacey Act Compliance:

- Sub-Categories: Northern Pacific Halibut Act & Collaborative Operations, Fisheries Resources in Commerce with a Border Nexus Inclusive of False Labeling, Misbranding, and Seafood Safety, Including Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) International Seafood Products
- National Priority: Strengthen & Maintain Sustainable Fisheries
- Division Priority: Protection of halibut stocks through maintaining compliance with the regulations established by the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC), Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC), and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

Description of Activity:

- WDFW will emphasize compliance with federal Halibut regulations, including size restrictions and season dates/times, monitor, and detect smuggling and trans-shipments of IUU international seafood products crossing the United States-Canadian border through at-sea vessel patrols
- Land-based patrols will monitor non-tribal commercial halibut offloads at the dock to enforce catch limits, size, and catch accounting regulations, including logbook verification checks to ensure regulatory compliance. Officers will inspect recreational landings of halibut at coastal ports, to include, but not limited to Westport, Ilwaco, La Push, and Neah Bay. Frazier River Sockeye Fishery will also be monitored to enforce possession regulations (Chinook possession prohibited in non-tribal fishery).
- Officers will monitor complete vessel offloads for overages and prohibited overfished species and enforce regulations pertaining to catch limits, size, species, and gear restrictions with a special emphasis on halibut.
- Officers will conduct inspections on fisheries products by checking the contents and ensuring that the product is properly labeled. There is a focused concentration on IUU International Seafood Products with the primary mission to detect undocumented foreign marine products.
- Officers will inspect trans-border shipments of marine products at the United States-Canadian Border, and the Washington-Oregon State Border. WDFW will work directly with NOAA, ICE, USFWS, OSP, CDFW, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada to coordinate efforts to detect both inbound and outbound fisheries products taken contrary to law.

Halibut Season: WDFW Officers continue to focus their efforts on the highly participated in Northern Olympic Peninsula recreational halibut fishery. Officers provided an increased presence performing “off peak” patrol hours and provided increased public safety on the water. WDFW Officers teamed up with County deputies, USCG personnel, and Border Patrol to conduct patrols increasing our programs relevance within the local law enforcement community.

Public Safety Response: During the halibut focused patrols, WDFW officers performed vessel safety checks at several ramps. Officers in the Neah Bay area responded to assist two vessel incidents that reported they were taking on water. One of the distressed vessels had caught fire and required assistance back to port. The other vessel discovered that they were taking on water after arriving on their fishing grounds ~9 miles off the coast and began heading to shore. The WDFW vessel located them about half-way back and escorted them until the Coast Guard arrived and assumed the escort. Once back in port it was discovered that they had failed to install the plug in their 26’ boat when launching that morning.



Incidental Halibut Fishery: Patrol efforts covered a variety of simultaneous fisheries being worked and numerous cases generated. In addition to coastal halibut and groundfish, officers worked rivers in the Forks to address snagging complaints of Spring Chinook, as well as marine fisheries including commercial salmon trollers, coastal commercial crab, wholesale fish dealer offload checks at boat ramps, and recreational shellfish. Violations addressed ranged from barbed hooks and fail to record, no descending device gear violations, possessing fish in unlawful condition, fishing closed area, possession of prohibited species, over limit rockfish, unlawful purchase of resident license, no fishing license, recreational shellfish violations, and commercial crabbing without a license.



Commercial Crab Violation: Officers conducted a boat patrol out of La Push to monitor the halibut fishery on a busy three day weekend. The patrol was interrupted when they did a quick check of a commercial crabber on the fishing grounds. The vessel was found to have no licensed commercial fishermen aboard. The vessel was escorted back to port where the catch of Dungeness crab was seized and sold by the state. Charges will be referred for the violation. In addition, the licensed operator of this commercial crab vessel was absent because he decided to schedule and run a (legal) halibut trip in a different vessel at the same time for his outdoor recreational business.



Pacific Salmon Charters Halibut Case: In May 2017, WDFW Officers learned that a charter vessel operating out of Pacific Salmon Charters and based out of Ilwaco was suspected of high grading halibut. The skipper was reportedly keeping fish in a “live Box” and, at the end of the trip, would sort through the fish and trade out the smaller fish for bigger ones. Three halibut reportedly had their gills cut but were still thrown over so they could retain larger halibut for their limit on the original complaint.

WDFW officers had arranged an undercover trip and observed similar fishing practices on a different vessel than originally reported but fishing with the same company. In July 2017 a search warrant was served on Pacific Salmon Charters. Passenger manifests, schedules, financial information, and client contact lists were obtained and a month’s long investigation ensued.

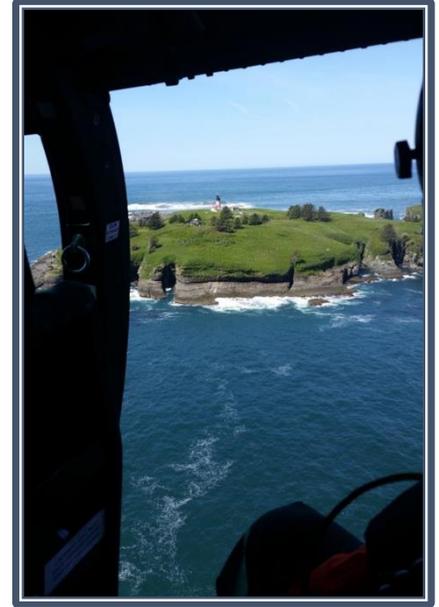
Over 100 customers were contacted and interviewed by telephone. A subsequent written statement form was mailed to 125 potential witnesses who reportedly fished on the suspect vessels. As a result of the interviews with these customers and other evidence gathered, probable cause was developed on 28 misdemeanors and 1 gross misdemeanor for violations of exceeding the daily possession limit, failing to immediately return halibut and wasting food fish. It was further determined that the crews of all the vessels used livewells in order to high-grade their halibut. Some days, passengers reported up to 12 fish were possessed on the vessel over the daily limit.



The case was filed with the Pacific County Prosecutor who subsequently charged it in early spring of 2018. The case is set for trial later this year.

Commercial Halibut Fishery: Officers once again monitored the directed commercial halibut fishery South of Point Chehalis in area 2A. The fishery was patrolled multiple days both on land and offshore. Officers worked with Oregon State Police and NOAA uniformed officers for these patrols. Numerous contacts were made with no violations found.

Officer Davidson flew with the USCG to monitor halibut fishermen, ensuring no anglers were fishing in the closure off of Lapush and Neah Bay. No boats were observed actively fishing inside the closure. Commercial salmon trollers were observed actively fishing west of the closure and many recreational boats were fishing just outside the closure borders. Compliance with the closed fishing area was good.



| WDFW Police | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Participating WDFW Officers | | 18 | |
| 2018 Halibut Patrol | JEA Funded | State Funded | Total Commitment |
| Dockside Personnel Hours | 64 | 45.5 | 109.5 |
| At-Sea Personnel Hours | 216 | 135 | 351 |
| Mid-Range Vessel Hours | 72 | 45 | 117 |
| Contacts Made | 923 | 521 | 1,444 |
| Recreational | 911 | 452 | 1,363 |
| Commercial | 12 | 69 | 81 |
| Enforcement Actions | 103 | 25 | 128 |
| Warnings | 64 | 19 | 83 |
| Citations | 39 | 6 | 45 |

Appendix C. WDFW November 2018 Report to the Pacific Fishery Management Council

Agenda Item F.1.a
WDFW Report
November 2018

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE REPORT ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE CATCH SHARING PLAN AND 2019 ANNUAL REGULATIONS

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) held a meeting with recreational halibut anglers on October 9, 2018. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss proposed changes to the Pacific Fishery Management Council's (PFMC) Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) for 2019, and refine the proposals adopted for public review at the September PFMC meeting. Based on those discussions, we recommend the following 2019 season structure and changes to the Pacific halibut CSP, section (f) SPORT FISHERIES. These changes are consistent with those adopted by the Council for public review.

Columbia River:

1. Revise the CSP to describe that the Columbia River season opening date would be determined through consultation with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) in time for Council final action at the November meeting. This is Option 3 as described in the September WDFW report ([Agenda Item, J.1.b, September 2018](#)).

Rationale: Participation in the recreational halibut fishery in the Washington portion of the Columbia River subarea increased significantly in 2018 as anglers shifted effort into this subarea when it opened a week before any other Washington subarea. This effort shift resulted in a halibut season that lasted only five days in 2018.

In 2017, WDFW implemented a statewide season where all Washington subareas except the Columbia River subarea are open on the same date. The statewide season setting process allows for collaboration with stakeholders in different subareas, and the annual season dates can vary from year to year based on a significant amount of input and compromise to meet preferences that vary by subarea. While this process has been effective, it is somewhat difficult to determine a set opening date for the Columbia River that is in line with the opening date for the other subareas unless the Columbia River opening date was also set during the statewide season setting process. As a result, Washington stakeholders preferred the option that would provide the most flexibility to adjust the season opening date and would allow for consultation with ODFW to determine a season opening date that reflected input from stakeholders in both Oregon and Washington.

2. Revise the CSP so that the season is open two days per week based on a combination of Thursday, Friday, or Sunday.

Rationale: Washington stakeholders were supportive of reducing the days for the week that the halibut fishery is open in the Columbia River subarea from three to two. In general, the preference is to open on Thursdays and Sundays until the quota is reached. However, stakeholders preferred an approach that would align the days of the week that are open in the Columbia River subarea with the days open in the South Coast subarea. The intent of the reduced number of days is to extend the season over a longer period but the preferred approach would also reduce effort shift between the South Coast and Columbia River subareas, which, if not addressed, could minimize the effectiveness of reducing the number of days per week the Columbia River subarea is open.

South Coast:

1. Revise the CSP language to remove the set aside of 10 percent or 2,000 pounds for the nearshore fishery and allow the nearshore fishery to be open after the primary (all-depth) fishery closes, if sufficient quota remains.

Rationale: Stakeholders supported this change to the CSP to clarify that a nearshore fishing opportunity is contingent upon having sufficient quota after the primary fishery has closed.

Statewide Season Dates:

Based on the input we received, WDFW recommends the Council adopt the following season dates for the South Coast, North Coast and Puget Sound subareas for 2019:

North Coast and Puget Sound: Thursday, May 2; Saturday, May 4; Thursday, May 9; Saturday, May 11; Saturday, May 18; Friday, May 24; Sunday, May 26; Thursday, June 6; Saturday, June 8; Thursday, June 20; Saturday, June 22

South Coast: Thursday, May 2; Sunday May 5; Thursday, May 9; Sunday, May 12; Friday, May 24

If sufficient quota remains for the North Coast, Puget Sound, or South Coast, additional dates may be scheduled in coordination with the International Pacific Halibut Commission and National Marine Fisheries Service.

Based on input from stakeholders from the Washington portion of the Columbia River subarea, WDFW recommends consideration for the following dates for the Columbia River subarea:

Columbia River: Thursday, May 2; Sunday May 5; Thursday, May 9; Sunday, May 12; Friday, May 24; Sunday, May 26. If sufficient quota remains after May 26, the Columbia River subarea would be open two days per week (Thursday and Sunday) until the remaining quota is achieved.

Rationale: The statewide season approach has been in place since 2017 in the Puget Sound, North Coast and South Coast subareas and is generally viewed as a success with the majority of stakeholders continuing to support the concept of consistent season dates. However, the final season date recommendations for 2019 also includes input from stakeholders from the Washington portion of the Columbia River subarea who were negatively impacted in 2018 when this subarea opened earlier than all other Washington subareas. For 2019, the recommended season dates include bringing the Columbia River subarea into the statewide season setting process as much as possible acknowledging that this subarea is co-managed with ODFW and these proposed dates may be adjusted based on input from managers and stakeholders in Oregon. The recommended season dates are the result of significant compromises and reflect a variety of opinions and issues of importance, from different operations (private versus charter) and areas (coast versus Puget Sound).

Washington stakeholders continue to support allocation management where each subarea receives and is managed to achieve, but not exceed, its own separate allocation. However, Washington stakeholders also support the flexibility currently provided for in the CSP that that would allow stakeholder and WDFW consultation after the first few days of the season to discuss and assess any remaining quota and the flexibility to transfer fish between areas when there is general consensus of the areas impacted in an open transparent manner.