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CONTRACTING PARTY: UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AGENCY:

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FISHERY SECTOR/S

Recreational / Commercial

IPHC REGULATORY AREA/S

IPHC Regulatory Area 2A (USA: Washington, Oregon, California)

DISCUSSION

Topic 1. 2018 Recreational Fishery

Allocation

Beginning in 2014, the Oregon recreational Pacific halibut fishery has received 20.0 percent of the Area 2A Total Allowable Catch (TAC), or catch limit as indicated in the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) "Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan" (CSP). Previously, the Oregon and California recreational fisheries had been combined and received 20.6 percent of the Area 2A TAC. Beginning 2016, 2.3 percent of the Oregon recreational allocation was allocated to the Columbia River subarea (Leadbetter Point, Washington to Cape Falcon, Oregon; Figure 1). The Central Oregon Coast Subarea (Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain) was allocated 93.79 percent and the Southern Oregon Subarea (Humbug Mountain to the OR/CA Border) received 3.91 percent of the Oregon recreational allocation.

Recreational Catch Monitoring

Catch estimates were derived using data obtained from the Oregon Recreational Boat Survey (ORBS). Catches, by port and boat type (charter or private), were calculated by applying trip level data obtained from dockside sampling (mean anglers per boat, mean fish weight, mean fish per angler, proportion of trips targeting Pacific halibut, proportion of non-targeted trips with incidental catch of Pacific halibut) to total effort counts (boats). Samplers were instructed to measure the lengths of all Pacific halibut from every other boat sampled, for both the private and charter fleets. This information was used to estimate total weight of fish landed. In 2018, statewide, 4,092 Pacific halibut were sampled, which was 39.4 percent of the estimated 10,395 Pacific halibut landed into Oregon (Table 1).

Groundfish Retention

For 2018, retention of all groundfish except other flatfish species (new in 2015), sablefish and Pacific cod were once again prohibited in the Columbia River and Oregon Central

Coast all-depth fisheries if Pacific halibut were aboard the vessel. This provision is to reduce incidental take of yelloweye rockfish, federally classified as an overfished species. Sablefish and Pacific cod were allowed to be retained as they are rarely targeted; rather, take in the directed halibut fishery is often incidental. Groundfish retention was allowed in the nearshore halibut fishery (in areas open for groundfish fishing) when the all-depth fishery was closed and in the Southern Oregon subarea because the majority of halibut fishing occurs inside of 40 fathoms, where yelloweye rockfish are less abundant and have higher survival after release.

Since 2005, the high relief area of Stonewall Bank, located approximately 15 miles off Newport, has been closed to halibut fishing (Figure 1). The intent of this provision is also to reduce the incidental take of yelloweye rockfish.

Columbia River Subarea (Leadbetter Point, Washington to Cape Falcon, Oregon)

In 2018, the Columbia River fishery was scheduled to have two openings, an all-depth season beginning the 1st Thursday of May, continuing 3 days per week (Thurs. Fri, and Sun) until the quota was attained or September 30, and a nearshore fishery opening the Monday after the first all-depth opening, continuing 3 days per week (Mon-Wed) until the quota was attained or September 30. On May 25, 2017 the all-depth season closed with a total of 10,465 pounds caught, which was 717 pounds under the 11,182 pound allocation. In mid-June, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) determined that there was enough allocation remaining to open all Washington subareas, including the Columbia River Subarea, for one more day of all-depth fishing. ODFW agreed to reopen the Columbia River Subarea on June 21, 2018 for one additional day. Effort and landings on that additional open day were much higher than anticipated, with 5,196 pounds landed, bringing total landings to 15,661 pounds, 4,479 pounds over the allocation. The overage in the all-depth season was greater than what was set aside for the nearshore season. Therefore, the nearshore season closed on June 23. There had been minimal effort and 173 pounds landed in the nearshore fishery at that time. An estimated 1,359 pounds (8.6 percent of the total subarea catch) were landed into Oregon ports, all from the all-depth season (Table 1). The total Oregon contribution to the subarea catch limit was 5,591 pounds, 2.3 percent of the Oregon recreational allocation.

Oregon Central Coast Subarea (Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain)

The fishery in this subarea has two components: a shallow nearshore fishery and a directed all-depth fishery (spring and summer seasons).

Nearshore fishery (inside 40 fathoms)

Beginning in 2010, anglers began targeting halibut inside 40 fathoms rather than just catching incidentally on bottomfish or other trips, resulting in earlier than anticipated closures. To extend the season, in 2013 the nearshore fishery was changed from seven days per week to three days per week (Thursday, Friday, and Saturday). However, the nearshore season closed within one calendar day of when it had in 2012, even with the three day per week openings. Many anglers were unhappy with the three day per week openings, and requested going back to seven day per week, but opening later in the year. The intention was to allow halibut opportunities later into the summer months. Therefore, beginning in 2014 the nearshore fishery opened on July 1, seven days per week and remained open through October 31, or until allocation attainment. Due to leaving some

allocation unharvested in 2014, anglers requested that the fishery opening date be moved to June 1, beginning in 2016, and continuing in 2018.

In 2018, the initial allocation to the central coast nearshore fishery was 25,856 pounds. On September 6, the 10,647 pounds remaining from the all-depth seasons were moved to the nearshore fishery as it was the only fishery remaining open that could use additional allocation, and not encounter enough yelloweye rockfish to impact the sport bottomfish fishery. Total catch was 25,087 pounds, which was 499 pounds (2 percent) under the original allocation and 11,416 pounds under the adjusted allocation of 36,503 pounds.

All-depth fishery

The directed all-depth fishery, split into spring (May-July) and summer (August-October) seasons, is allocated 88 percent of the Oregon Central Coast subarea catch limit. In 2018, 71.6 percent of that amount (135,742 pounds) was allocated to the spring fishery and the remainder to the summer fishery (53,866 pounds).

The 2018 spring season was managed in two periods, each with fishing allowed Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The first period was managed under the fixed-day approach in use since 1995: a number of fixed dates are set preseason so anglers can plan their fishing in advance, with the intent to not exceed the spring catch limit. Any remaining poundage is available for a second open period in the spring; these “make-up” dates are also set preseason. The first period (fixed-day season) was open for 12 days on May 10-12; May 24-26; June 7-9; and June 21-23. During the four sets of fixed openings, there was only one that had low effort and landings due to weather and ocean conditions, the other three had good weather allowing for high effort. After the fixed dates, enough quota remained for only two back-up days of fishing (July 6-7). The total catch from the spring season was 127,775 pounds (Table 1), or 94 percent of the spring all-depth catch limit. The remaining 7,967 pounds was then available to be shifted to another Oregon fishery inseason.

The 2018 summer fishery was set preseason to open every other Friday and Saturday from August 3 through October 31. Two of the first three openings had decent weather, effort and landings were about average for the previous couple of years. Weather for the middle opening was not great, limiting effort and landings. After the third opening, due to approaching the yelloweye rockfish harvest guideline for all Oregon recreational fisheries, ODFW examined the impacts to yelloweye rockfish from the all-depth fishery. At that time, it was determined that the threshold level of 23 percent of total allowable yelloweye rockfish impacts had been reached. To prevent additional yelloweye rockfish impacts from the all-depth fishery, and potentially causing severe restrictions or closure of the sport bottomfish fishery, the all-depth fishery was closed at that time. The remaining 2,679 pounds from the summer all-depth fishery (along with the 7,967 pounds from the spring fishery) were transferred to the nearshore fishery. The total catch in the summer fishery was 51,187 pounds (Table 1), under the summer fishery catch limit of 66,281 pounds by 2,679 pounds (5 percent).

Combined Nearshore and All-Depth Fisheries

The combined catch from the nearshore and all-depth fisheries was 204,408 pounds, or 101 percent of the 215,463 pound initial total allocation (95 percent allocation) for the Oregon Central Coast subarea.

Southern Oregon Subarea

Until 2011, Pacific halibut were rarely targeted off Oregon in the former South of Humbug subarea as this area is located in what was thought to be the southern edge of the species' range. Beginning in 2014, a new Southern Oregon Subarea was created from Humbug Mountain to the Oregon/California Border. The Southern Oregon subarea received 3.91 percent of the Oregon recreational allocation (8,982 pounds). During 2018, unlike 2015-2017, there was some early season success. As in previous years, effort and catch picked up in late July when other opportunities began to decrease and the weather and ocean became more favorable. Unlike the previous three years, there was some effort or catch from this subarea after Labor Day weekend. The catch estimate for the Southern Oregon subarea was 6,043 pounds (the highest since 2014), under the allocation by 2,939 pounds, 33 percent. This area had the highest average weight of any Oregon subareas, by approximately five pounds net weight.

Summary

The combined catch of Pacific halibut in the 2018 Oregon recreational fisheries is estimated at 211,450 pounds. The catch was comprised of an estimated 10,395 fish averaging 20.3 pounds net weight (Table 1). An estimated 19,000 halibut targeted angler trips contributed \$2.5 million, via spending on trip- and fishing-related expenses such as hotels, lodging, tackle, and other items.

Topic 2. 2018 Commercial Fishery

The Oregon commercial halibut fishery provides a relatively small amount of opportunity and revenue to a relatively large number of participants. A few vessels are dependent on the fishery for a majority of their annual revenue. The explanation for the large number of participants includes the low gear-up costs for participation, and open access licensing. In addition to directed fishery participation, there are many participants in the incidental halibut salmon troll fishery. Oregon-registered vessels with an IPHC license for commercial halibut in Area 2A are shown in Table 2. Approximately 40 percent of those vessels that had directed commercial licenses made deliveries of Pacific halibut in 2018; as did approximately 23 percent of those with incidental troll salmon licenses. There may be some participation motivated by wanting to continue a landings history if this currently open-access, derby style fishery were to become an individual fishing quota fishery in the future. Additionally, with limited opportunities in other fisheries, such as salmon, some vessels may be expanding their annual portfolio of fisheries they participate in to keep the vessel fishing and earning income.

Harvesting and Processing

During the directed fishery, there were approximately 196,000 round weight pounds landed into Oregon at an ex-vessel value of \$1.21 million in 2018 (Table 3). During the incidental to salmon troll fishery, there were 3,053 pounds round weight landed into Oregon, for an ex-vessel value of \$20,000 in 2018. Halibut ex-vessel prices averaged \$6.19 per round weight pound in 2018. There were a total of 97 unique vessels that had shoreside halibut landings in Oregon in 2018. Of the 97 vessels, 27 vessels landed halibut with troll gear (i.e., the incidental salmon fishery), and 51 landed halibut with longline or hook and line gears (i.e., the directed fishery). There were also 19 vessels that landed halibut in the shoreside Pacific whiting fishery in 2018. There were 107 deliveries in the directed fishery, 59 deliveries in the incidental salmon troll fishery, and

64 deliveries in the shoreside whiting fishery in 2018 (Table 3). Forty-three percent of the vessels in the directed fishery had less than \$10,000 in ex-vessel revenue in 2018, while only 14 percent had over \$50,000 in ex-vessel revenue. The average ex-vessel revenue in 2017 was \$23,700, while the median was approximately \$15,700.

Fourteen processors or buyers purchased over \$10,000 of landed halibut each in 2018, and this comprised over 98 percent of all halibut landings in Oregon. The top three processors or buyers purchased about 50 percent of all Oregon halibut landings.

RECOMMENDATION/S

Directed Commercial Fishery Start Date

If the start date of the directed commercial fishery is modified from the current last Wednesday in June, there should consideration for time and gear conflicts with the Oregon recreational all-depth fishery. The all-depth recreational fishery for the majority of Oregon opens the second Thursday in May, every Thursday-Saturday until the quota is taken. Weeks can be avoided due to adverse tides. The dates open for the 2019 all-depth fishery are determined by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission and will not be decided until after the 2019 IPHC Annual Meeting; however, the most likely open dates will be May 9-11, May 23-25, May 30-June1, and June 13-15, depending on quota. Therefore, to prevent gear and area conflicts, **ODFW recommends that if the date(s) of the directed commercial fishery are changed, the commercial fishing periods not be open for at least seven days prior to a recreational all-depth opening.**

Length of Directed Commercial Fishing Periods

ODFW concurs with the letter from the Pacific Fishery Management Council (November 16, 2018) recommending that outstanding questions such as potential changes in yelloweye rockfish bycatch, halibut discard, observer coverage, biological sampling, enforcement, etc., be addressed prior to considering a change to the directed fishing period duration. We believe that this could provide the Commission with information that would best ensure that unintended consequences to directed halibut fishery participants, other fisheries, or the quality of data obtained from the directed fishery are avoided or minimized. Therefore, **ODFW recommends delaying consideration of the directed commercial fishery period duration at this time.**

REFERENCES

None

APPENDICES

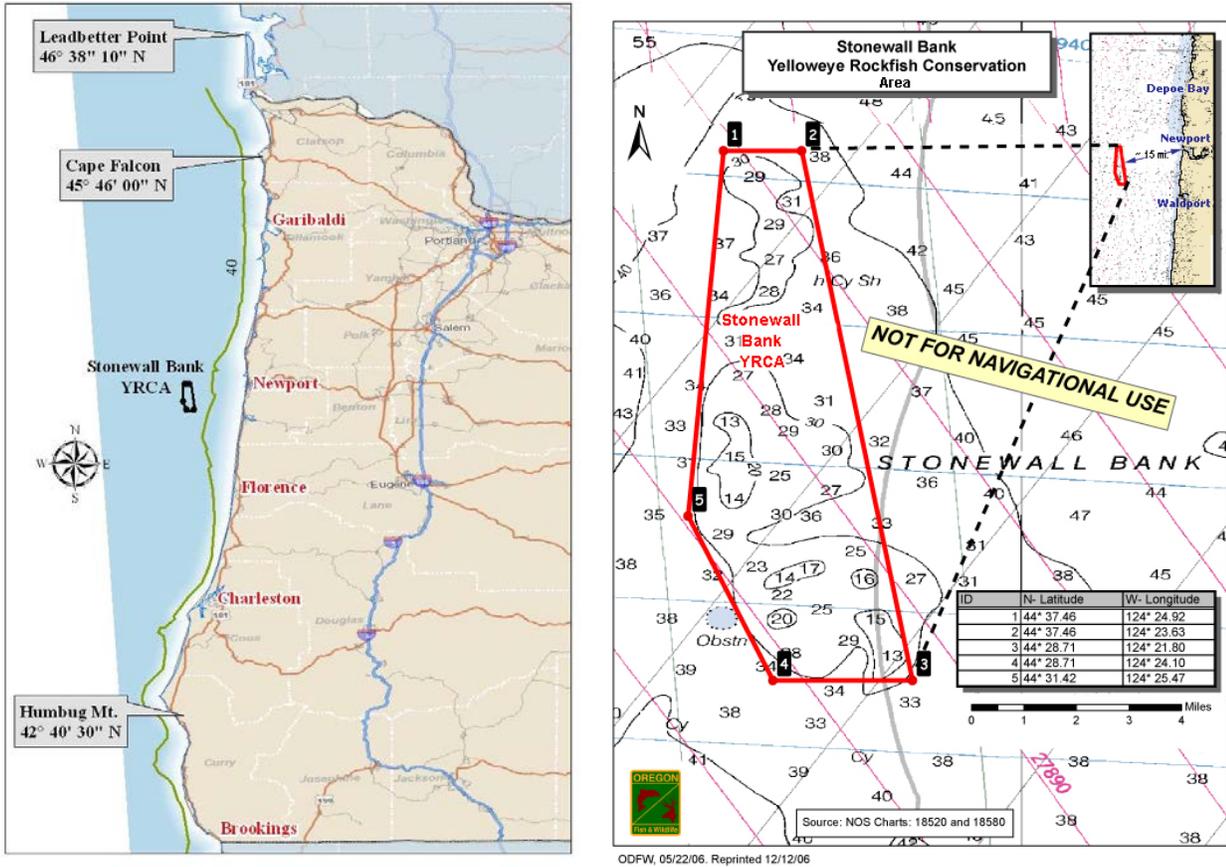


Figure 1. Maps with Oregon Pacific halibut recreational regulation locations, including Stonewall Bank Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Area.

Table 1. 2017 Oregon Pacific halibut recreational fishery catch data.

Subarea	Season	No. of Halibut Sampled	Average Weight (net lbs.)	No. of Halibut Harvested	Total Pounds (Net Weight)
Columbia River	All-Depth	63	15.3	89	1,359
	Nearshore	0	N/A	0	0
Central Oregon Coast	Spring All-Depth	2,594	20.0	6,378	127,775
	Summer All-Depth	800	21.2	2,409	51,187
	Nearshore	531	19.5	1,287	25,087
Southern Oregon Subarea		104	26.0	232	6,043
Total		4,092	20.3	10,395	211,450

Table 2. Number of Oregon-registered vessels with an IPHC license for commercial halibut fisheries in Area 2A, 2012-2018

Oregon Registered Vessels	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Directed Commercial	115	88	99	92	109	135	128
Incidental Sablefish (N of Pt. Chehalis)	1	0	2	0	1	1	3
Directed and Incidental Sablefish	4	8	5	5	1	3	6
Incidental Troll Salmon	173	192	239	230	193	116	116

Table 3. Summary of commercial Pacific halibut fisheries information.

Sector	# of Vessels	# deliveries	Pounds Landed	Avg. Ex-vessel price per pound	Total Ex-Vessel Price
Incidental with Salmon	27	59	3,053	\$6.83	\$20,839
Directed fishery	51	107	196,160	\$6.18	\$1,211,784
Shoreside whiting	19	64	1,567	\$0.00	\$0
Total	97	230	200,780	\$6.19	\$1,232,623