

News Release

P.O. Box 95009, SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98145-2009

July 15, 2003

2003 Halibut Landing Report No. 7**Area 2A Non-treaty Directed Commercial Fishery to Reopen on July 23**

The July 9 non-treaty commercial fishing period in Area 2A resulted in a catch of about 85,000 pounds, leaving 57,700 pounds in the directed commercial catch limit.

Area 2A will reopen on July 23 for 10 hours from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. local time. The fishery is restricted to waters that are south of Point Chehalis, Washington (46°53'18" N. latitude) under regulations promulgated by National Marine Fisheries Service. Fishing period limits as indicated in the following table will be in effect for this opening.

Vessel Class		Fishing Period Limit (pounds)	
Length	Letter	Dressed, head-on	Dressed, head-off*
0-25	A	335	295
26-30	B	420	370
31-35	C	670	590
36-40	D	1,840	1,620
41-45	E	1,985	1,745
46-50	F	2,370	2,085
51-55	G	2,650	2,330
56+	H	3,975	3,500

*Weights are after 2% has been deducted for ice and slime if fish are not washed prior to weighing.

The appropriate vessel length class and letter are printed on each vessel license.

The fishing period limit is shown in terms of dressed, head-off weight as well as dressed, head-on weight, although fishers are reminded that regulations require that all halibut from Area 2A be landed with the head on.

The fishing period limit applies to the vessel, not the individual fisher, and any landings over the vessel limit will be subject to forfeiture and fine.

In 2003, NMFS implemented mandatory depth-based area closures that are in effect for the directed halibut fishery to protect specific rockfish species. NMFS has mailed information on the closures to license holders. For further information, call the NMFS hotline at 1-800-662-9825, then press "5" for the halibut fisheries.

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Area 2A Incidental Commercial Halibut Fishery during the Salmon Troll Season

The total allowable incidental commercial catch of halibut allocated to the Area 2A salmon troll fishery is 39,300 pounds. The estimate of halibut landed through July 6 in Oregon is 3,080 pounds and in Washington is 17,600 pounds (net weight). Therefore, 18,620 pounds remain in the catch limit. The incidental halibut catch fishery during the salmon troll season remains open until further notice.

Incidental Commercial Halibut Catch in the Area 2A Fixed Gear Sablefish Fishery

The total allowable incidental commercial catch of halibut allocated to the limited entry, fixed gear sablefish fishery which operates in Area 2A north of Point Chehalis, Washington is 70,000 pounds. It is estimated that 16,755 pounds have been landed through July 10. This incidental halibut catch fishery remains open until further notice.

Puget Sound and Strait of Juan de Fuca (east of the Sekiu River) Sport Halibut Fishery to Close as Scheduled

The Puget Sound and Strait of Juan de Fuca sport halibut fishery east of Low Point closes on July 18. Sport halibut fishing west of Low Point to the Sekiu River closes on August 1. The combined projected harvest for the season is 63,278 pounds.

North Washington Coast Sport Halibut Fishery to Re-Open August 9 for One Day

Preliminary estimates through June 21 for the north Washington coast sport halibut fishery (Sekiu River to the Queets River) indicate that the harvest is 102,261 pounds, or 11,654 pounds short of the 113,915 pound catch limit. Therefore, the north Washington coast sport halibut sport fishery will re-open for one day on Saturday, August 9, 2003. The daily bag and possession limit is one fish. There is no size limit for this area.

South Washington Coast Sport Halibut Season Now Open Seven Days a Week

Preliminary estimates through July 6 for the south Washington coast sport halibut fishery (Queets River to Leadbetter Point) indicate that 9,753 pounds remain to be harvested from the quota of 48,623 pounds. As of June 27, the open fishing days were increased to seven days a week for all depths. This was done in response to declining effort on halibut and a corresponding increase in effort on salmon. The daily bag and possession limit is one fish, with no size limit.

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Columbia River Remains Open

The preliminary catch estimate for the Columbia River sport halibut fishery (Leadbetter Point to Cape Falcon) through July 6 is 8,767 pounds, leaving 3,156 pounds to be caught. Fishing effort on halibut in this area has also dropped off in deference to salmon. The bag limit is the first halibut landed at 32 inches or longer.

All-Depth Sport Halibut Fishing from Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain Open for August 1, 2, 8 and 9

The August-September all-depth season in the Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain area will be open on Fridays and Saturdays, August 1, 2, 8, and 9. The revised quota for the fishery is 114,814 pounds and includes poundage remaining from the spring fishery. The first halibut taken with a length of 32 inches or greater must be kept. The daily bag limit is one fish and the possession limit is one fish at sea and two fish on land. Halibut sport fishing continues to be open inside the 30-fathom curve from Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain. This fishery is open seven days a week and the same length, bag and possession limits as in the all-depth fishery apply. Details on catch and regulations for all Oregon sub-areas can be found at www.hmsc.orst.edu/odfw/regs/halibut.html.

Southern Oregon – California Open through September 30, 2003

The sport halibut fishery south of Humbug Mountain opened on May 1 and will remain open through September 30, 2003. This fishery is open seven days a week with a one halibut bag and possession limit. The first halibut taken with a length of 32 inches or greater must be kept. The projected catch at season's end is 7,860 pounds.

For further information on Area 2A halibut fishing call the NMFS hotline (1-800-662-9825).

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Quota Share Commercial Fishery Update

It is estimated that the following catches and numbers of landings were made in the British Columbia IVQ fishery and in the Alaskan IFQ and CDQ fisheries through July 14, 2003.

Area	Catch Limit (000's pounds)	Catch (000's pounds)	Number of Landings
2C	8,500	5,509	1,472
3A	22,630	15,205	1,456
3B	17,130	9,882	501
4A	4,970	1,551	106
4B	4,180	1,489	95
4C	2,030	389	219
4D/4E	2,420	657	1,009
Alaska total	61,860	34,682	4,858
2B	11,750	5,909	503
Grand Total	73,610	40,591	5,361

The Alaskan catch represents 56% of the 2003 catch limit. From March 15 to July 15, 2002, 36.2 million pounds, or 59% of the 2002 catch limit, were landed in the Alaskan fishery. When comparing the actual length of the fishing period, 40.9 million pounds, or 66% of the 2002 catch limit, were landed after eighteen weeks (July 31) in 2002.

The British Columbia catch represents 50% of the 2003 catch limit. From March 15 to July 15, 2002, 6.7 million pounds, or 58% of the 2002 catch limit, were landed from Area 2B (British Columbia). Comparing the length of the fishing period, 7.5 million pounds, or 64% of the area allocation, were landed from Area 2B after eighteen weeks (July 31) in 2002.

Annette Islands Reserve Fishery in Area 2C

The Metlakatla Indian community has been authorized by the United States Government to conduct a commercial halibut fishery within the Annette Islands Reserve. The third 48-hour fishing period this year occurred between June 22 and June 24, with a total catch of 8,372 pounds. A fourth opening occurred between July 4 and July 6, resulting in a total catch of 4,899 pounds. After four openings, a grand total of 19,571 pounds have been landed. The Metlakatla Indian Community and the Bureau of Indian Affairs will announce future halibut openings.

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