



**FISHERY REGULATION PROPOSAL 2021**

**TITLE: RECREATIONAL (SPORT) FISHING FOR PACIFIC HALIBUT—IPHC REGULATORY AREA 2B (SECT. 28)**

**SUBMITTED BY:**

**AFFILIATION: FISHERIES AND OCEANS CANADA (DFO)  
CANADA**

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All Regulatory Areas  All Alaska Regulatory Areas  All U.S.A. Regulatory Areas

2A  2B  2C  3A  3B  4A  4B  4C  4D  4E

**PURPOSE**

DFO is requesting that Section 28 of the IPHC Regulations be amended to increase the halibut daily limit from two (2) per day to three (3) per day in Area 2B. The current proposed management regime for the 2021 recreational fishery in 2B includes a daily limit of two halibut. The BC Sport Fishing Advisory Board (SFAB) has requested DFO to consider a condition of licence on the 2021-22 BC Tidal Waters Sport Fishing Licence (BCTWSFL) that would permit a daily and possession limit of up to three halibut if the daily limit (set in-season by Variation Order) is increased from two to three. An increase to the daily limit could be applied in-season if catch data indicates there is a high likelihood that the recreational TAC will not be caught under a daily limit of two. This approach would provide some additional flexibility to adjust harvest rates, given the possibility that Covid-19 restrictions will continue to affect travel and participation in recreational fishing in BC in 2021. Section 28 of the IPHC regulations states a maximum daily limit of two (2) halibut in the BC recreational fishery; therefore a change would be required. This regulatory change is proposed for the 2021 fishing season only, as an accommodation of uncertainties associated with Covid-19.

**BACKGROUND**

After the IPHC Annual Meeting, DFO meets with the Sport Fishing Advisory Board (SFAB) to develop a recreational halibut fishing plan designed to manage the sector within its total allowable catch (TAC), which is derived from the Annual Meeting outcome. In 2020, fishing plans were developed that projected the 877,750 pound TAC would be caught by December 2020. Due primarily to reduced effort and catch resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, the BC recreational sector only caught 518,974 pounds of the TAC in 2020. The ability to increase the daily limit could have provided opportunity to harvest more of the TAC later in the season when there were indications the TAC would likely not be caught. Given the possibility that Covid-19 restrictions will continue to affect travel and participation in recreational fishing in BC in 2021, an increase to the daily limit set in IPHC regulations is proposed as one tool that could provide more flexibility to adjust harvest opportunities in-season based on a review of in-season catch data.

## **DISCUSSION**

The 2021 BC recreational fishery TAC is 914,750 pounds. The SFAB has recommended a fishing plan for 2021 that would increase the probability of harvesting the 2021 recreational TAC., given the result in 2020. Their proposal seeks an increase in the maximum size to 133 cm (from 126 cm in 2020) and starting the season at two (2) per day for halibut under 90 cm (started at one (1) per day in 2020). The 2021 fishing plan also includes an increase to the annual halibut limit from six (6) per year to ten (10) per year. The SFAB is seeking additional regulatory tools to either ramp up or ramp down the harvest rate as in-season catch data becomes available to indicate progress towards the TAC. The SFAB has requested that DFO look at ways to increase the daily and possession limit as a means to achieve this. The Canadian regulatory framework allows DFO fishery managers to set conditions of licence on the BC Tidal Waters Sport Fishing Licence (BCTWSFL) prior to the beginning of the fishing season (typically used to set size limits and associated size limits) and to use Variation Orders to adjust daily limits in-season. Catch rates for the BC recreational fishery are monitored monthly using available catch monitoring data (creel survey, internet based surveys [iRec], and logbooks). Monthly catch estimates are combined with in-season forecasting models to project catches to the end of the fishing season (Dec 31). The BC recreational halibut fishery also has an overage carry-over provision, whereby if the catch exceeds the TAC in one season, the resulting overage is deducted from the following season's TAC.

BCTWSFL conditions of licence must be finalized by mid-February each year in order for licences to be available in the DFO licencing database for issuance at the beginning of the new recreational fishing season on April 1st. This regulatory request would be in place from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022 and a post-season assessment of the regulation change will be undertaken.

## **Appendices**

[Appendix A](#): Suggested IPHC Fishery Regulation Language

[Appendix B](#): Relevant Proposed BC Tidal Water Sport Fishing Licence Conditions of Licence for Halibut

## APPENDIX A

### *Suggested Regulatory Language*

#### 28. Recreational (Sport) Fishing for Pacific Halibut—IPHC Regulatory Area 2B

- (1) In all waters off British Columbia: <sup>6, 7</sup>
- (a) the recreational (sport) fishing season will open on 1 February unless more restrictive regulations are in place;
  - (b) the recreational (sport) fishing season will close when the recreational (sport) fishery limit allocated by DFO is taken, or 31 December, whichever is earlier; and
  - (c) the daily bag limit is **three (3) ~~two~~** Pacific halibut of any size per day per person.
- (2) In British Columbia, 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.
- (3) The possession limit for Pacific halibut in the waters off the coast of British Columbia is three Pacific halibut <sup>6, 7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> DFO could implement more restrictive regulations for the recreational (sport) fishery, therefore anglers are advised to check the current Federal or Provincial regulations prior to fishing.

<sup>7</sup> For regulations on the experimental recreational fishery implemented by DFO check the current Federal or Provincial regulations.

## APPENDIX B

### *Relevant Proposed BC Tidal Water Sport Fishing Licence Conditions of Licence for Halibut*

No person shall catch and retain more than ten (10) halibut in the aggregate from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022.

No person shall retain a halibut greater than 133 cm head-on length.

If the Daily Limit is one (1) or two (2), the Possession Limit is EITHER of: one (1) halibut measuring from 90 cm to 133 cm head-on length - OR - two (2) halibut measuring under 90 cm head-on length.

If the Daily Limit is three (3), the Possession Limit is EITHER of: one (1) halibut measuring from 90 cm to 133 cm head-on length – OR - three (3) halibut measuring under 90 cm head-on length.