



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**

Summary of Washington Pacific Halibut Fisheries Management in 2013

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**WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
SUMMARY OF PACIFIC HALIBUT FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN 2013**

The purpose of this report is to summarize the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife’s (WDFW) management and enforcement activities for the 2013 Pacific halibut fisheries. It includes a synopsis of Washington’s recreational catch and incidental halibut catch in the sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis. A summary of WDFW’s enforcement efforts relative to patrolling the North Coast (Neah Bay and La Push) recreational halibut fisheries is attached.

Washington’s Recreational Halibut Fisheries in 2013

Washington’s halibut fisheries are managed under the Pacific Fishery Management Council’s Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan for Area 2A. The catch sharing plan specifies how the Area 2A total allowable catch (TAC) as defined by IPHC is allocated or “shared” among various state commercial and recreational sectors. For Washington, WDFW manages its recreational fisheries by subarea. These subareas are:

1. Puget Sound (inside waters east of the Sekiu River, including Puget Sound)
 - Eastern Region (inner Sound waters east of Low Point)
 - Western Region (Strait waters west of Low Point)
2. North Coast (waters in the Strait of Juan de Fuca west of the Sekiu River and Pacific Ocean waters south to the Queets River)
3. South Coast (Pacific Ocean waters south of the Queets River to Leadbetter Point)
4. Columbia River (Pacific Ocean waters south of Leadbetter Point to Cape Falcon, Oregon)

A summary of Washington’s recreational halibut seasons for 2013 is described in Table 1.

Table 1.

Subarea	Quota (lbs)	Catch (lbs)	Avg Wt (lbs)	Season Dates
Puget Sound	57,393	95,351	N/A	West: May 23–26, May 30–June 1, June 8 East: May 2–4, May 16-18, May 23-26, May 30, 31
North Coast	108,030	107,856	20.02	May 9, 11, 16, 18
South Coast	42,739	42,086	15.80	Primary: May 5, 7, 12, 14, 19, 21
Columbia River ^{1/}	11,895	4,677	16.01	Early: May 3 – July 28 Fri-Sun; Late: Aug 3 – Sept 29 Fri-Sun

^{1/} Columbia River harvest is Washington catch only.

Halibut are measured at the dock and the lengths of the samples are then converted to weights. On the coast, lengths are taken throughout the season on a weekly basis and applied to the number of halibut caught to project the total catch in pounds. The catches are then monitored and the fisheries are closed when they are projected to attain their respective subarea quota.

North Coast Subarea

The general management structure for the north coast subarea has remained unchanged since 2009 when revisions were made to provide better notification of fishery closures and re-openings resulting from in-season quota management. The fishery in this area is structured to be open on Thursdays and Saturdays and is scheduled to be open for the first two weeks. A management closure is in place during the third week to tally the early season catch and provide sufficient notice to anglers if additional fishing days are available. The 2013 season lasted only four days with no additional fishing days allowed after the management closure.

South Coast Subarea

The South Coast subarea is structured to open on the first Sunday in May and continue two days per week (Sunday and Tuesday) for three consecutive weeks before a management closure the following week. Similar to the north coast subarea, the management closure provides adequate time to monitor quota attainment and provide advance notice of a potential closure. Two thousand pounds or 10 percent of the subarea quota is reserved for incidental catch in the nearshore area which is open seven days per week. In 2013, the primary season was only open for three weeks and as a result the management closure was not needed. Catch during the primary season left 653 pounds of quota remaining which was not enough to open the nearshore area in 2013.

Columbia River Subarea

The season structure for the Columbia River subarea was revised in 2013 to remove the provision that would close the early season on the third Sunday in July if the early season quota had not been attained and to revise the days of the week that the fishery was open from Thursday through Saturday to Friday to Sunday. Both of these changes were intended to preserve the intent of having a portion of the subarea quota reserved for a late season while maximizing fishing opportunity. In 2013, the early season opened on May 3 and continued three days per week, Friday through Sunday through September 30.

Puget Sound Subarea

Inseason catch estimates are not available for the Puget Sound fishery so fishing seasons are set after the quota is announced using historical catch data to project quota attainment. Fishing effort and catch rates have increased in this area over the past several years and has resulted in fewer open days per week and shorter seasons overall.

WDFW held a public meeting in early February, following the IPHC Annual Meeting, to gather public input prior to setting the 2013 seasons. The 2013 season opening dates were similar to 2012 with the eastern region opening on the first Thursday in May and the western region opening on the Thursday before Memorial Day. However, a couple of adjustments were made in setting the Puget Sound seasons for 2013 to keep catch within the subarea allocation. In recent years the number of days available was calculated using recent catch and average weight information and the number of days was applied equally to each Puget Sound region resulting in an overall Puget Sound season that was too long. In setting 2013 season, the number of days available was applied to the entire Puget Sound region with an additional focus on setting the seasons in the two regions so they overlapped as much as possible to reduce the overall length of

the Puget Sound. In 2013 the Puget Sound season was open a total of 14 days compared to 26 days in 2012.

WDFW is in the process of producing a final post-season catch estimate for 2013. The final catch estimate will be available in early 2013 and will be added to this report as soon as it is available.

Canadian Halibut Landed Into Neah Bay

As part of WDFW’s port sampling efforts for recreational halibut fisheries, we also sample the halibut caught in Canadian waters and landed into Neah Bay from March through October. The number of Canadian halibut landed into Neah Bay totaled 642 in 2013 which is only slightly higher than in 2012. The amount of Canadian halibut landed into Neah Bay has decreased significantly since 2009 likely due to increasing restrictions implemented by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada on recreational halibut regulations and licensing requirements for the waters adjacent to Neah Bay. Table 2 summarizes the Canadian halibut catch landed into Neah Bay for 2009-2013.

Table 2. Canadian halibut landings into Neah Bay, Washington, 2009-2013.

Year	# Boats	# Anglers	# Halibut
2013	368	1,055	642
2012	335	833	595
2011	425	1,253	880
2010	539	1,629	1,245
2009	624	1,956	1,609

Incidental Halibut Catch in the 2013 Sablefish Fishery North of Point Chehalis, WA

The 2A Halibut Catch Sharing Plan provides for incidental landings of halibut in the primary longline sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis, Washington, in years when the Area 2A TAC is greater than 900,000 lbs. The primary directed sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis will be allocated the Washington sport allocation that is in excess of 214,110 lb, provided a minimum of 10,000 pounds is available. The amount of halibut allowed in the directed sablefish fishery is capped at 70,000 lbs; any remaining allocation is transferred back to the Washington recreational fishery and divided among the subareas according to the methodology described in the Plan. The 2012 area 2A TAC was 989,000 pounds and the Washington sport allocation was 235,283 leaving 21,173 for incidental halibut landings in the longline sablefish fishery. The Pacific Fishery Management Council adopted a 75 pound halibut per 1,000 pound sablefish limit per landing with up to two additional halibut in excess of the 75 pounds per 1,000 pound landing ratio allowed per landing (both dressed weight, halibut with head-on). The sablefish fishery extends from April 1 through October 31 with associated halibut landings allowed beginning May 1.

Fourteen vessels made a total of 53 landings containing halibut in the directed tier-limit sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis. The total catch of dressed, head-off halibut in the directed

sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis at the conclusion of the fishery on October 31 was 14,151 pounds which is 67 percent of the established quota. The incidental halibut landings in the sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis from 2009-2013 are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Incidental Halibut in the Sablefish Fishery North of Pt. Chehalis

Year	Vessels	Landings	Quota	Catch	% of Quota
2013	14	53	21,173	14,151	66.8%
2012	11	32	21,173	5,010	23.7%
2011	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
2010	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
2009	17	79	11,895	6,154	51.7%

Summary

WDFW plans to continue to monitor and sample our recreational and commercial fisheries, including the amount of halibut caught in Canadian waters and landed into Neah Bay; continue to take a precautionary approach when setting our Puget Sound season; maintain our enforcement efforts during the halibut recreational fisheries; and monitor the efforts to document halibut bycatch in the West Coast commercial fisheries and recommend appropriate action through the Pacific Fishery Management Council.