



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**

Summary of Washington Pacific Halibut Fisheries Management in 2006

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**WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
SUMMARY OF PACIFIC HALIBUT FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN 2006**

The purpose of this report is to summarize the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) management and enforcement activities in 2006 Pacific halibut fisheries. It includes a synopsis of Washington's recreational catch and a description of the results of the 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 contained in Appendix A.

Washington's Recreational Halibut Fisheries in 2006

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 2006 is described in Table 1.

Table 1.

| Sub-Area | Quota (lbs) | Catch (lbs) | Avg Wt (lbs) | Season Dates |
|----------------|-------------|----------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Puget Sound | 68,607 | 63,375 | 23.2 | East: April 9-June 18 West: May 25-Aug 5 |
| North Coast | 119,244 | 105,805 | 23.4 (May) 22.6 (June) | May 9, 11, 13, 16, 18 June 22, 24 |
| South Coast | 53,952 | 58,484 | 24.6 | May 1-May 17 |
| Columbia River | 21,170 | 11,005 ^{1/} | 15.9 | May 1-May 27 Aug. 4-6, 11-13, 18-20, 25-27 Sept. 1-3 |

^{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.

Coastal Recreational Fisheries

One of the primary coastal recreational fishery management challenges WDFW is facing is with regard to the North Coast (Neah Bay and La Push) subarea and its short halibut season. There has been a significant increase in fishing effort in this area over the past few years, resulting in earlier quota attainment. In 2001, the North Coast halibut season lasted a total of 29 days, and in 2006, it was less than one quarter of that amount at 7 days long. The Department sponsored a series of recreational halibut meetings to develop and discuss management tools for the North Coast halibut fishery. Through these meetings, the group collectively decided to reduce the number of days per week in May from five consecutive days (Tue-Sat) to three staggered days (Tue, Thur, and Sat), and in June to two staggered days (Thur and Sat), beginning in 2006.

Other changes implemented in 2006 for Washington sport fisheries include modifying the definition of the northern nearshore area in the south coast—the outer boundary was moved closer to shore and the southern boundary was extended slightly—and using a two-season approach in the Columbia River subarea (a primary season beginning May 1, open 7 days per week, and a secondary season beginning on the first Friday in August, open Friday-Sunday only).

Even with the staggered season structure in the north coast this year, the amount of effort has increased to the point that it takes a considerable amount of halibut quota to get through another fishing day in the north coast. As such, there were over 13,000 lbs of halibut remaining in the subquota when the north coast fishery closed this year. To better achieve the north coast subarea quota in 2007, recreational constituents proposed having a nearshore-area only fishery, which would close the offshore halibut areas, where most of the fish are caught. For the south coast, there was a similar proposal for 2007 to provide a dedicated set aside (5% of the subarea quota) for a nearshore fishing opportunity, which would occur once the offshore area has closed. Both of these changes were incorporated into the Catch Sharing Plan. No changes were made to the Puget Sound and Columbia River subareas.

Puget Sound Halibut Catch Estimate

The Department manages the Puget Sound halibut fishery based on “fishing equivalent days” (FEDs). We apply the highest catch per FED for the previous five years (which, for the 2006 calculation, occurred in 2003) to determine the total amount of FEDs that will be available in the following season. In projecting the season length, a weekday is equivalent to one FED, while weekends and holidays are 2.5 FEDs. Using this method, the amount of FEDs available for the 2006 fishery was 87.

WDFW produces a post-season catch estimate using a telephone survey of the marine anglers who obtained saltwater fishing licenses to estimate effort, and creel surveys of anglers returning to port to estimate the catch per angler-trip. WDFW samplers measure halibut intercepted at the docks to determine the average weight.

This method produced a catch estimate of 2,727 halibut; multiplied by the average weight (23.24 lbs) results in a total estimated catch of 63,375 lbs. The division of this catch between the two regions for 2006, and a comparison to 2004 and 2005, is described in Table 2.

Table 2. Puget Sound catch estimates, by region, for 2004-06.

| Area | 2006 | | 2005 | | 2004 | |
|----------------|-----------|--------|-----------|--------|-----------|--------|
| | # Halibut | lbs | # Halibut | lbs | # Halibut | lbs |
| Eastern Region | 2,480 | 57,635 | 1,990 | 45,969 | 1,269 | 28,806 |
| Western Region | 247 | 5,740 | 710 | 16,401 | 916 | 20,793 |

Anecdotal information from anglers indicated that the earlier season opening was successful, and creel data for the month of April supports this. A detailed description of the Puget Sound catch by area and month is contained in Appendix B.

Following the annual meeting of the International Pacific Halibut Commission and the adoption of the Area 2A total allowable catch (TAC), WDFW will have a public meeting to develop proposed season dates for Puget Sound for 2007, which will be forwarded to the National Marine Fisheries Service for approval.

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. Using the average weight from the U.S. fish landed into the North Coast subarea in 2006 (23.15 lbs) and applying it to the Canadian catch landed into Neah Bay, produces a catch estimate of 301,992 lbs.

Table 3. is a comparison of the Canadian halibut catch landed into Neah Bay in 2000-2006. The total catch in pounds is calculated using the average weight for the U.S. fish landed into the North Coast subarea for each respective year. A weekly catch summary of Canadian halibut brought into Neah Bay by charter and private vessels (in numbers of fish) is described in Appendix C.

Table 3. Canadian halibut landings into Neah Bay, Washington, in 2000-2006.

| Year | # Boats | # Anglers | # Halibut | Avg Wt (lbs) | Total lbs |
|-------------|---------|-----------|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| 2006 | 1,863 | 8,223 | 13,045 | 23.15 | 301,992 |
| 2005 | 1,446 | 5,515 | 8,816 | 24.60 | 216,874 |
| 2004 | 1,468 | 5,941 | 9,693 | 21.63 | 209,660 |
| 2003 | 1,555 | 6,089 | 10,805 | 20.03 | 216,424 |
| 2002 | 1,328 | 5,361 | 9,027 | 19.47 | 175,756 |
| 2001 | 1,594 | 6,202 | 9,716 | 19.24 | 186,936 |
| 2000 | 2,007 | 6,857 | 10,088 | 20.80 | 209,830 |

Incidental Halibut Catch in the 2006 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 amount of halibut allowed in the directed sablefish fishery is capped at 70,000 lbs, and the remaining allocation is transferred back to the Washington recreational fishery and divided among the subareas according to the methodology described in the Plan. For the 2006 season, the Council adopted the same landing ratio that was in place in 2005, that is, 100 lbs. of halibut for every 1,000 lbs. of sablefish (both dressed weight, halibut with head-on). The sablefish fishery extends from April 1 through October 31 with associated halibut landings allowed beginning in May. Fishers were also allowed up to two additional halibut per fishing trip to provide some flexibility in complying with the regulation.

Twenty-seven individual vessels made a total of 130 landings containing halibut in the directed tier-limit sablefish fishery. Of the 130 landings, 50 contained the full amount of halibut provided for in regulation, while the other 80 landings averaged 71% per landing of the potential amount of halibut allowed.

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 64,624 lbs. which is 92.3% of the established quota.

Summary

For 2006, WDFW required anglers to record their halibut catch on the Department's Catch Record Card; this requirement previously applied to Puget Sound (Marine Areas 5-13) only. There is about a one-year time lag in catch record card data availability for management use; therefore, catch record card data from 2006 will likely be available in spring 2008.

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; 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 trawl fisheries and recommend appropriate action through the Pacific Fishery Management Council.

**WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM**

Statewide Marine Patrol Division

The following is a summary of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Enforcement Program efforts relative to patrolling the North Coast recreational halibut fisheries. Protection responsibilities for all living resources in marine environments are assigned to the Statewide Marine Patrol Division.

While halibut directed patrols are outlined below, additional uniformed officer presence occurred on halibut grounds and in associated ports during the coastal recreational salmon season (June through late September).

During all of their patrol activities, enforcement officers did not witness any incidents of claims of fishing in Canadian waters without being able to produce a Canadian recreational fishing license, and those who possessed halibut in excess of the Washington daily bag limit reported catching those halibut in U.S. waters. However, in late June, several anglers were observed fishing inside the Canadian Conservation Closure, and this information was provided to Canada Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Summary of Directed Halibut Patrols

In 2006, WDFW Officers made 1,169 enforcement contacts relative to recreational groundfish and halibut fisheries in May and an additional 250 contacts in June.

Aside from routine patrol, WDFW Marine Division Officers embarked on a two multi-day emphasis patrols (May 9-14 and June 22-24) along the North Coast. The primary goal was to ensure compliance with halibut regulations, enforce yelloweye and canary rockfish closures, and to monitor bycatch of these species. Four WDFW patrol vessels, one NOAA patrol vessel, the WDFW aircraft, and the U.S. Coast Guard helicopter participated, and two dockside patrols covered the primary terminal ports of Neah Bay and La Push.

In May, there were 153 violations witnessed, most (120) of which were failure to record catch. There were 30 citations issued, including 6 violations for exceeding the halibut daily bag limit, and 10 violations for fishing when the season was closed. There were no observations of anyone fishing within the "C-shaped" yelloweye rockfish conservation area.

During the June emphasis patrol, 31 sport violations were detected; again, failure to record catch accounted for one-third of these violations. Other violations included fishing in the Canadian Conservation Closure and not complying with the 20-fm rockfish depth restriction when halibut fishing was closed.

Appendix B.

Table 1. Puget Sound halibut catch estimates, by area and month.

| Area | Month | # Halibut | Total # of Angler Trips | CPUE |
|-------|-------|-----------|-------------------------|------|
| 5 | May | 23 | 226 | 0.10 |
| | June | 58 | 1,882 | 0.03 |
| | July | 153 | 53,355 | 0.00 |
| | Aug | 13 | 7,872 | 0.00 |
| 6 | Apr | 1,231 | 15,839 | 0.08 |
| | May | 406 | 8,244 | 0.05 |
| | June | 737 | 2,903 | 0.25 |
| 7 | Apr | 97 | 3,513 | 0.03 |
| | May | 2 | 879 | 0.00 |
| | June | 2 | 364 | 0.01 |
| 9 | Apr | 3 | 986 | 0.00 |
| | May | 2 | 928 | 0.00 |
| Total | | 2,727 | 96,991 | |

Table 2. Puget Sound halibut catches (numbers of fish), by month, for 2005 and 2006.

| | 2006 | 2005 |
|-------|-------|-------|
| April | 1,331 | 1,247 |
| May | 433 | 436 |
| June | 797 | 848 |
| July | 153 | 169 |
| Aug | 13 | 50 |
| Total | 2,727 | 2,750 |

Appendix C.

Table 1. Canadian halibut landed into Neah Bay, by week and fishing mode.

| Week | Charter | | | Private | | | Total | | |
|--------------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| | # Boats | # Anglers | # Halibut | # Boats | # Anglers | # Halibut | # Boats | # Anglers | # Halibut |
| 4/17-4/23 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 12 | 1 | 6 | 12 |
| 4/24-4/30 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 5 |
| 5/1-5/7 | 23 | 262 | 507 | 15 | 43 | 32 | 38 | 305 | 538 |
| 5/8-5/14 | 21 | 214 | 404 | 162 | 535 | 437 | 183 | 749 | 841 |
| 5/15-5/21 | 33 | 337 | 663 | 57 | 157 | 267 | 90 | 494 | 930 |
| 5/22-5/28 | 35 | 387 | 651 | 42 | 140 | 175 | 77 | 527 | 826 |
| 5/29-6/4 | 43 | 495 | 962 | 49 | 157 | 222 | 92 | 652 | 1,184 |
| 6/5-6/11 | 35 | 445 | 886 | 66 | 223 | 388 | 101 | 668 | 1,274 |
| 6/12-6/18 | 43 | 420 | 896 | 35 | 129 | 128 | 78 | 579 | 1,024 |
| 6/19-6/25 | 23 | 256 | 504 | 102 | 343 | 565 | 125 | 599 | 1,069 |
| 6/26-7/2 | 16 | 168 | 335 | 83 | 273 | 306 | 99 | 441 | 640 |
| 7/3-7/9 | 15 | 123 | 243 | 145 | 410 | 574 | 160 | 533 | 817 |
| 7/10-7/16 | 17 | 108 | 193 | 106 | 280 | 311 | 123 | 388 | 504 |
| 7/17-7/23 | 17 | 131 | 229 | 158 | 530 | 797 | 174 | 661 | 1,026 |
| 7/24-7/30 | 11 | 74 | 143 | 39 | 127 | 212 | 50 | 202 | 355 |
| 7/31-8/6 | 3 | 22 | 44 | 110 | 302 | 407 | 113 | 324 | 451 |
| 8/7-8/13 | 5 | 47 | 95 | 107 | 288 | 394 | 111 | 336 | 488 |
| 8/14-8/20 | 14 | 89 | 157 | 71 | 239 | 298 | 85 | 329 | 456 |
| 8/21-8/27 | 3 | 29 | 59 | 43 | 101 | 141 | 47 | 130 | 200 |
| 8/28-9/3 | 3 | 24 | 48 | 52 | 134 | 130 | 55 | 158 | 178 |
| 9/4-9/10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 47 | 79 | 16 | 47 | 79 |
| 9/11-9/17 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 21 | 48 | 77 | 21 | 48 | 77 |
| 9/18-9/24 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 9/25-10/1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 10 | 16 | 3 | 10 | 16 |
| 10/2-10/8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 11 | 23 | 6 | 11 | 23 |
| 10/9-10/15 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 18 | 28 | 10 | 18 | 28 |
| 10/16-10/22 | | | | No | Sample | | | | |
| 10/23-10/29 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| TOTAL | 361 | 3,634 | 7,019 | 1,503 | 4,556 | 6,028 | 1,863 | 8,223 | 13,045 |

Using the average weight for the U.S. fish landed into the North Coast sub-area (23.15 pounds), the total Canadian halibut landed into Neah Bay is 301,992 pounds.