



Marine Resources

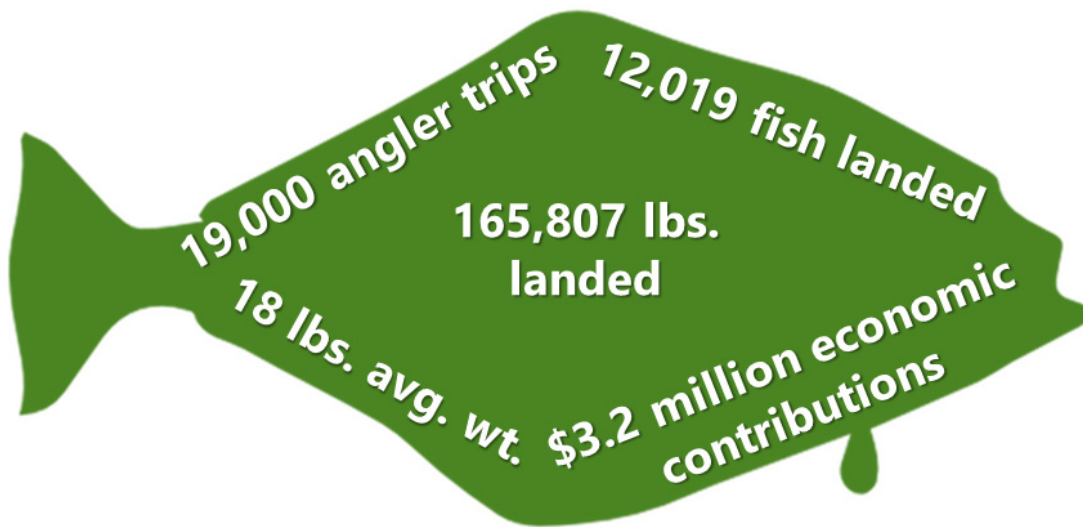
2nd Annual Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife Marine Resources Program 2020 Sport Pacific Halibut Review



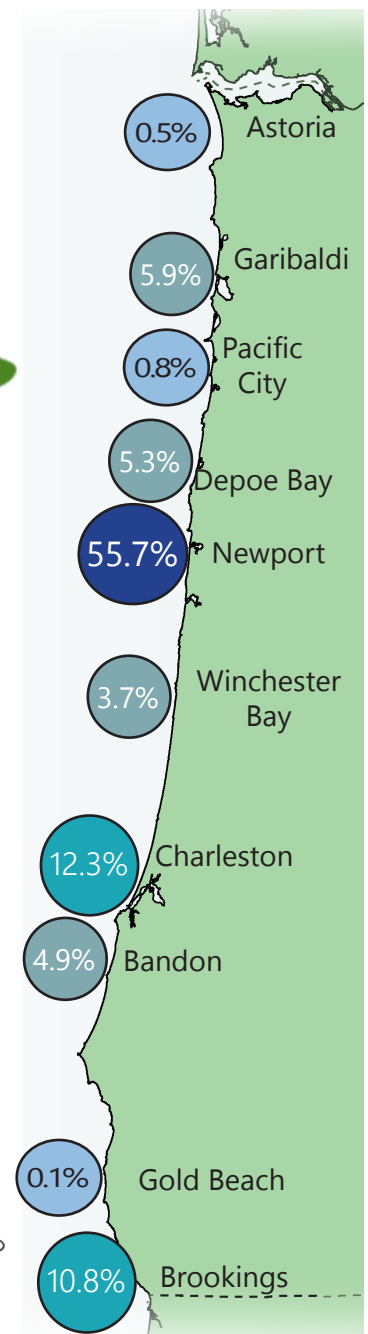
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Since the early 2000s, fishing for Pacific halibut off of the Oregon Coast has been very popular. Here's a summary of Oregon's 2020 sport halibut fishery, a season like no other with delays and restrictions due to COVID-19.

2020 season highlights



Percentage of halibut angler trips by port in 2020



Annual US West Coast Allocation, 2010-2022

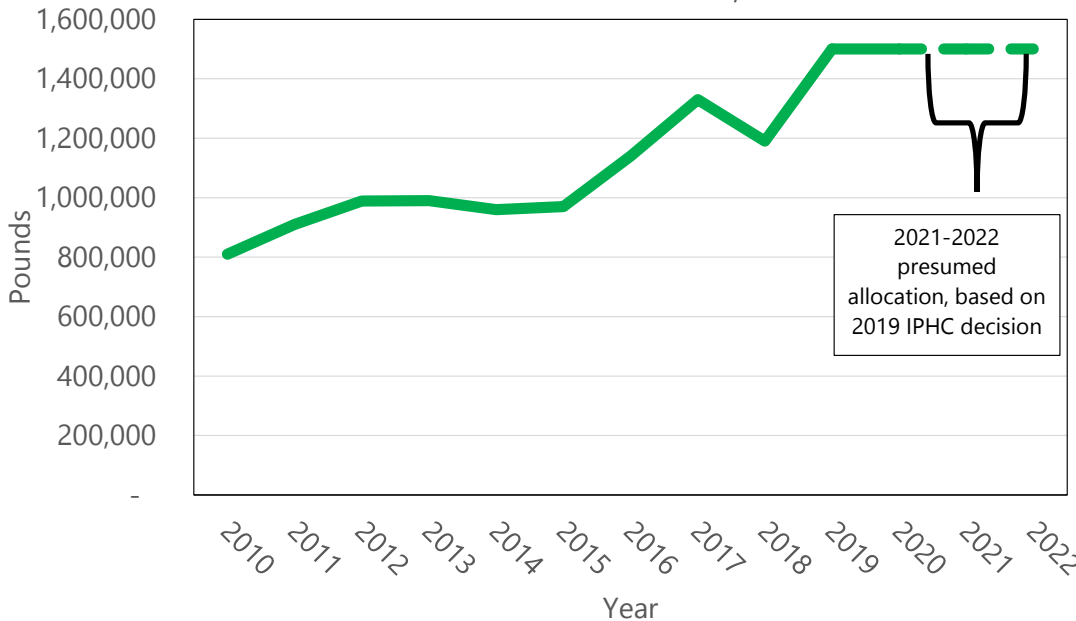
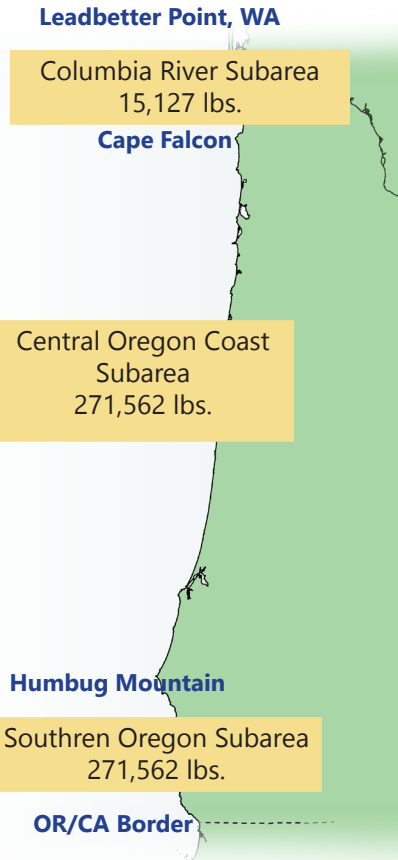


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Oregon Subareas and Allocations

Oregon recreational fisheries receive 29.7 percent of the Area 2A non-tribal allocation, as specified in the Catch Sharing Plan (CSP). In 2020 that equated to 289,575 pounds. The Oregon recreational Pacific halibut fishery is divided into three subareas, each with its own allocation, and managed independently.

Oregon sport halibut subareas and allocations



2020 Oregon Recreational Summary

As with most things in 2020, COVID impacted the recreational halibut fisheries. There were delays in season starts from a week to three months. Some public facilities were closed or access was greatly reduced. Many businesses had to adjust how they operated, including charter fishing vessels.

However, as summer progressed many people turned to outdoor recreation activities such as hiking, bird watching, and fishing, some for the first time. Even with the slow start, 2020 had higher halibut effort with over 19,000 trips compared to approximately 15,000 in 2019. More fish were landed in 2020 (12,019) than in 2019 (8,652), although the average weight of fish landed was notably lower.

Summary of 2020 Oregon Sport Halibut Effort and Landings by Subarea and Season.

Subarea	Season	No. Angler Trips	No. Halibut Harvested	Average Weight (pounds, net weight)*	Approximate Average Weight (pounds, round weight)	Total Pounds (net weight)*
Columbia River Subarea (Oregon only)	Nearshore	0	0	N/A	N/A	0
	All-Depth	105	40	13.5	18	540
Central Oregon Coast Subarea	Nearshore	3,919	1,510	15.6	21	23,491
	Spring All-Depth	10,334	7,889	14.5	19	114,235
	Summer All-Depth	2,701	1,927	10.5	14	20,161
Southern Oregon		2,180	653	11.3	15	7,381
Oregon Total		19,239	12,019	13.8	18	165,808

* Net weight is dressed, head-on. It is the "currency" of halibut, how the quota is allocated and tracked. 2

Columbia River Subarea

Nearshore

In the Columbia River Subarea, 500 pounds of the allocation (quota) was set aside for the nearshore fishery to allow for any incidentally caught halibut when the all-depth fishery is not open. In 2020, as in the previous three years, there were no landings into Oregon ports, and minimal landings into Washington ports. The maximum amount landed into this fishery has been around 250 pounds in a year. The quota is low, so as to not strand pounds that could be used elsewhere. If effort and landings increase, the pounds set aside for this fishery can be adjusted through the annual Catch Sharing Plan process.

All-Depth

The Columbia River Subarea all-depth season had an initial allocation of 17,950 pounds, which included over 3,000 pounds moved from the Southern Oregon Subarea. The season was set to open in early May. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions in both Oregon and Washington, it was delayed until early August. The start was in line with the opening of most other coastal areas in Washington.

The fishery opened on Aug. 6, then was open every Thursday and Sunday through September. Total landings were 5,619 pounds, with just 540 pounds of that into Oregon ports. This left 12,331 pounds (69 percent) of the quota unharvested. The under harvest was due to a combination of unfavorable weather, anglers taking advantage of other fishing opportunities, smaller average fish size, and this time period not having been open in several years.



Sign near fish cleaning tables

Central Oregon Coast Subarea

Nearshore

The 2020 Central Oregon Coast Subarea nearshore fishery was able to open as scheduled on May 1. The nearshore fishery doesn't draw the large crowds that the all-depth fishery does, resulting in fewer COVID-19 related concerns from coastal county and port officials. Even though the fishery opened as scheduled, many public facilities remained closed or severely restricted until late May, particularly in the ports from Florence north to Garibaldi. There were fewer closures and restrictions in the Charleston and Bandon areas.



Depoe Bay ramp closure sign

The nearshore fishery harvested 23,941 pounds out of the quota of 32,591 pounds (72 percent). Other than the initial three open days (58 pound average, round weight), the first week in Aug. (37 pound average, round weight), and the second week in Sep. (34 pound average, round weight), the average weight of landed fish was 21 pounds (round weight) compared to 28 pounds in 2019.

Most years, the majority of the landings from the nearshore fishery occur into Pacific City, Depoe Bay, and Newport. In 2020, Charleston and Newport were the top ports, both with approximately 41 percent of the total poundage landed. Garibaldi had approximately 12 percent, while Pacific City and Depoe Bay each had a bit under three percent.

Spring All-Depth

The 2020 spring all-depth season was scheduled to open May 15-17, but was delayed for one week, until May 21-23. The decision to delay came after much communication and coordination with officials from coastal counties, cities, and port officials. The week delay allowed additional time for

communities, facilities, and fishing related businesses to prepare for the influx of halibut anglers while meeting COVID-19 restrictions and precautions.

Once the season opened, fishing was slow, with anglers releasing a lot of fish in the 24-30 inch size range in hopes of catching a larger halibut. The July 9-11 opening had the best catch rate, while the June 18-20 opening had the highest average weight at approximately 22 pounds, round weight. The average weight for the season was 19 pounds, round weight, down from 24 pounds in 2019. When the fishery closed by regulation, total landings were 114,235 pounds (67 percent) of the 171,103 pound allocation. The remaining poundage was available for other fisheries or subareas within Oregon, if needed.

Summer All-Depth

The 2020 fishery opened the first Thursday through Sunday in August with Thursdays added due to the



Newport South Beach ramp closure

amount of quota available, as scheduled pre-season. The fishery closed by regulation on Oct. 31, with landings totaling 20,161 pounds (30% percent) of the 67,898 pound allocation. This is the lowest landings total from the summer all-depth season in over 10 years, due to a combination of poor ocean conditions for much of August and September and the small average size seen in other fisheries. The average size for the season was 14 pounds, round weight, down from 24 pounds in 2019.

Southern Oregon Subarea

In 2020, the Southern Oregon Subarea was allocated 8,000 pounds, and opened as scheduled pre-season on May 1. The halibut fishery in this subarea does not draw nearly the amount of anglers as the Central Coast Subarea all-depth fishery, leading to fewer concerns about an influx of halibut anglers. Landings in this fishery proceeded as most years with 50-500 pounds landed weekly. However the second and third weeks of August combined had almost 3,000 pounds landed. These were two of the best weeks in terms of pounds landed in this subarea since 2014. The fishery closed by regulation on Oct. 31 with landings totaling 7,381 pounds (98 percent of the allocation). As in the other subareas and fisheries, the average weight was also down in 2020 (15 pounds, round weight) compared to 2019 (29 pounds, round weight).

Update on Combining All-Depth Halibut & Longleader Gear Fishery

Both the PFMC and the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission approved allowing longleader gear fishing to occur on the same trip as all-depth halibut fishing beginning in 2021. It will be allowed during months when the regular bottomfish fishery is restricted to shallower than 40 fathoms, anticipated to be June, July, and August. In May, September, and October when the regular bottomfish fishery is open to all depths, regular bottomfish will be allowed with all-depth halibut on the same trip, as has been allowed in September and October the last couple of years.

For current information and inseason changes, use your smart phone to scan this QR code: or type in: <https://tinyurl.com/ORHalibut> to be taken to the Sport Halibut Webpage



2020 Fish Average Size

In 2020, anglers throughout Oregon, California, Washington, and even up into Alaska reported encountering a large number of “small” fish, in the 24-30 inch range. Most anglers don’t like to keep these fish which yield smaller fillet size. While the smaller size may seem concerning to some anglers, it appears to actually be good news because there are now at least two strong year classes (2011 and 2012) that will be reaching a larger size (30-32 inches or greater) preferred by anglers over the next few years. Fish that were hatched in 2011 and 2012 would be in the 24-30 inch size range in 2020. The IPHC has seen signs of these potential year classes during their annual survey work throughout the US West Coast, British Columbia, and Alaska and report those fish are now large enough to start being caught by recreational fishermen.



ODFW sampler measuring a halibut

For more information, see: <https://iphc.int/uploads/pdf/am/am097/iphc-2021-am097-08.pdf>

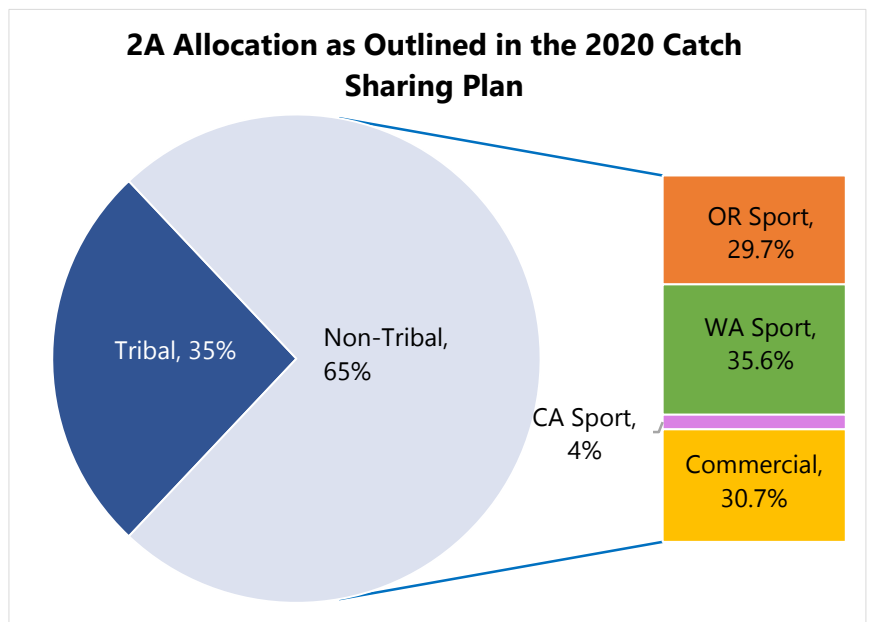
International Pacific Halibut Commission



The [International Pacific Halibut Commission](https://iphc.int) (IPHC) oversees all things Pacific halibut in the Eastern North Pacific Ocean. This includes Alaska, British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, and California. They conduct research, do stock assessments, and set fishery harvest levels (allocations), for all areas including Area 2A (WA, OR, & CA). At the IPHC annual meeting in February 2020, the Commissioners once again set the total allocation for Area 2A at 1.5 million pounds. The Commissioners continued to indicate that, barring a conservation concern, the allocation for Area 2A would remain at that level for the next four years (through 2022), as agreed upon in 2018.

Pacific Fishery Management Council

Within Area 2A, allocations and seasons for the Tribal, commercial, and recreational fisheries are outlined in the [2020 Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan](#). The [Pacific Fishery Management Council](#) can make changes to the Catch Sharing Plan annually at their September and November meetings. Anglers can propose changes annually through this Council process. ODFW facilitates this by hosting public meetings in late July or early August to get angler input on how the fishery has proceeded and gather and discuss any proposed changes. ODFW summarizes the public meetings and provides that information to the Council to assist with decision making.

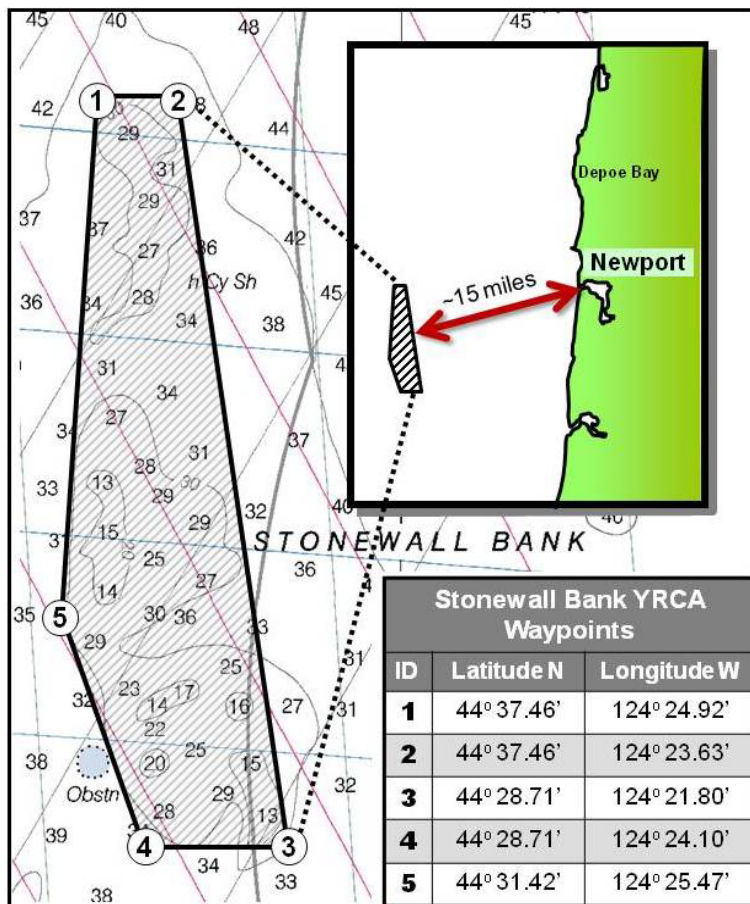


Halibut Fishing is Good for the Oregon Economy

The recreational Pacific halibut fishery contributed approximately \$3.2 million to the Oregon economy in 2020 through fishing-related expenditures such as gas, bait, gear, moorage, restaurants, and hotels. This translates to approximately 43 full-time job equivalents. Anglers fishing out of Newport had the most effort and highest economic contribution, about \$1.88 million. Anglers fishing out of Depoe Bay, Charleston, and Brookings contributed between \$0.26 and \$0.3 million each. Even in ports with less halibut effort this fishery may be an important part of local economies, especially in the spring and early summer.

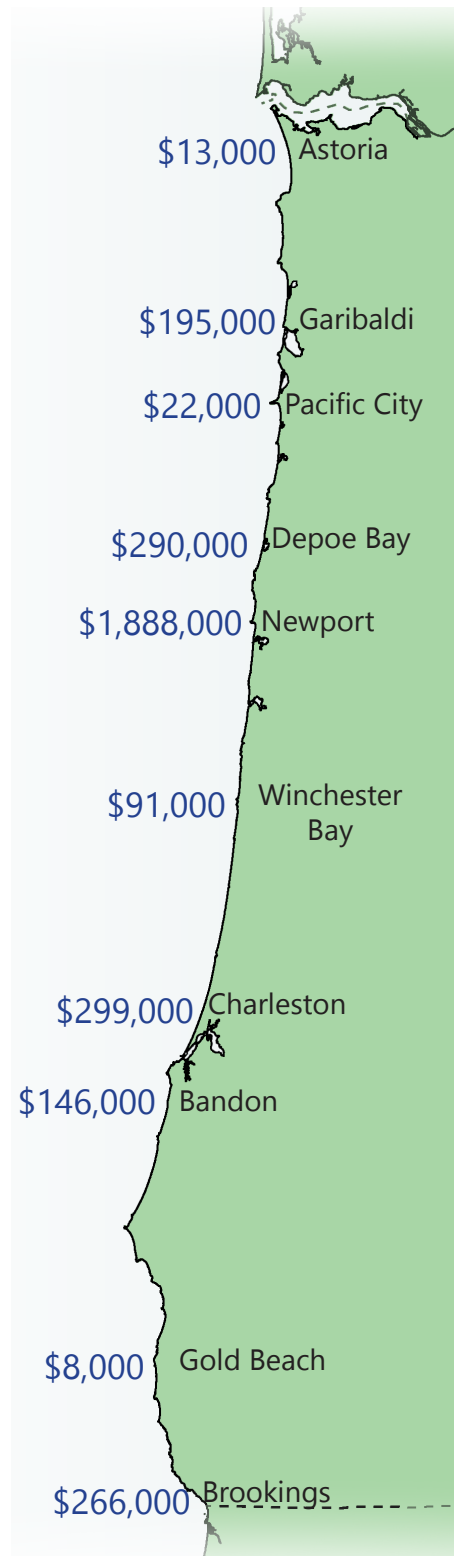
Enforcement

The Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Division's Marine Fisheries Team helps ODFW by enforcing fishing regulations. They patrol both on land and at sea to ensure that fishing regulations are followed. Regulations are in place to keep fisheries sustainable, and enforcement of regulations is a key piece to the overall management. Common issues encountered are: fishing without a license, failing to immediately tag halibut, exceeding the bag limit, retaining prohibited species (e.g., yelloweye rockfish) or undersized fish (e.g., lingcod or cabezon), and fishing in closed areas (e.g., Stonewall Bank Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Area).



Stonewall Bank Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Area (YRCA). Closed to halibut & bottomfish fishing.

Approximate economic contribution by halibut anglers, by port in 2020

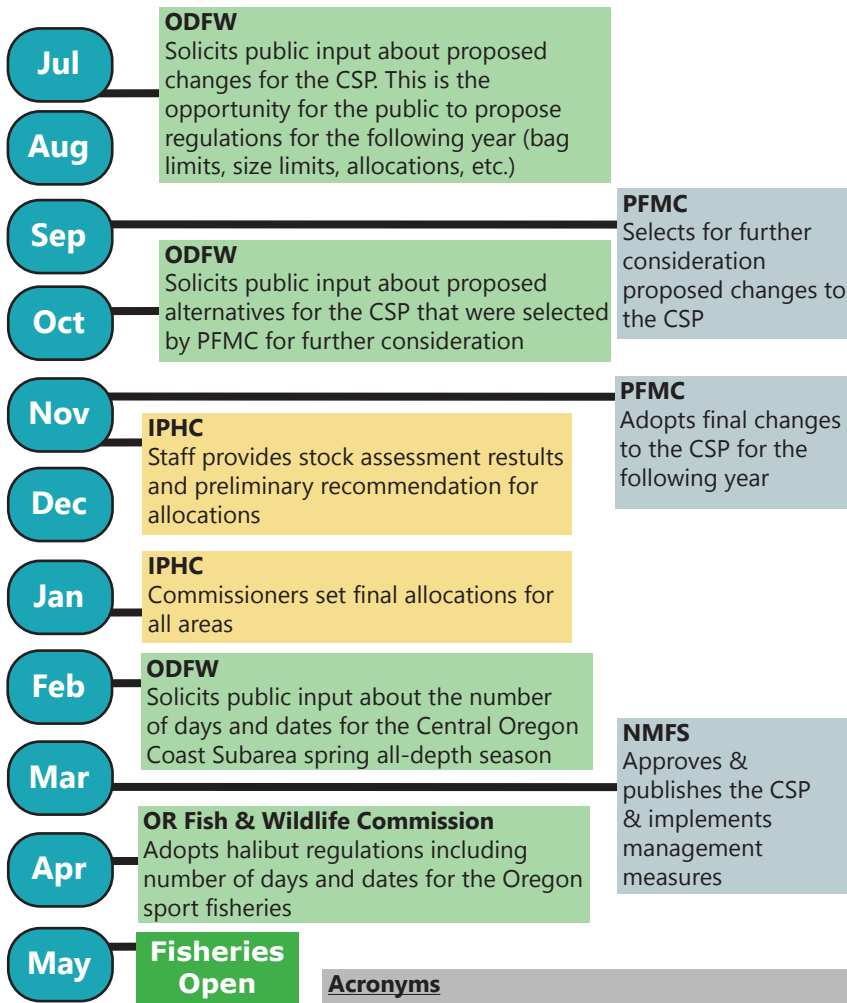


How & When to Get Involved

Due to the multiple agencies involved in management of Pacific halibut, it can be confusing about how, when, and to whom to provide input or make suggested changes. This timeline shows the key times for ODFW, PFMC, and IPHC halibut management. As mentioned above, ODFW begins the annual process by hosting a series of public meetings in late July or early August to start getting input on possible changes for the next year's halibut fisheries. The PFMC, IPHC, and Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission meetings are all open to the public and provide time and opportunity for public comments. More information can be found on the website for each agency:

- IPHC: <https://iphc.int/>
- PFMC: <https://www.pcouncil.org/>
- OFWC: <https://www.dfw.state.or.us/agency/commission/>

Timeline and agencies for the annual Pacific halibut regulatory process



Acronyms	
CSP	Catch Sharing Plan
IPHC	International Pacific Halibut Commission
NMFS	National Marine Fisheries Service
ODFW	Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
PFMC	Pacific Fishery Management Council



Angler with a large halibut. Photo courtesy of Matt Blume

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Marine Resources Program**
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<https://myodfw.com/pacific-halibut-sport-regulations>

Marine Reserves



For Information, see:
<https://oregonmarinereserves.com/>