



Marine Resources

3rd Annual Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife Marine Resources Program 2021 Sport Pacific Halibut Review



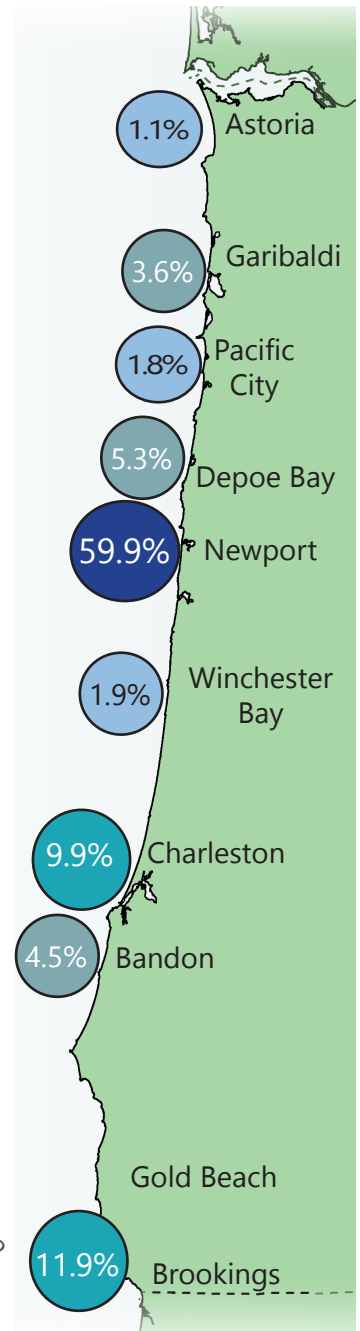
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This newsletter provides a summary of Oregon's 2021 recreational Pacific halibut fishery.

2021-Somewhat Back to Normal



Percentage of halibut angler trips by port in 2021.



Annual US West Coast Quota, 2010-2022

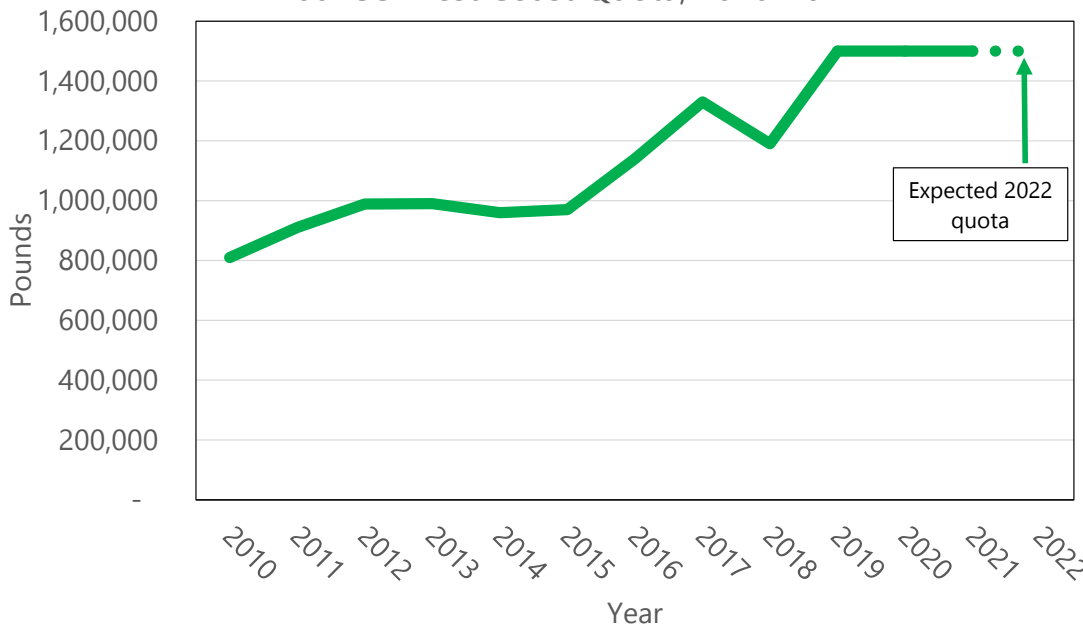


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Oregon Subareas and Allocations

Fisheries for Pacific halibut in Oregon, Washington, and California are managed as Halibut Management Area 2A. This area accounts for about four percent of the volume of Pacific halibut in their entire range. These fish range from northern California through British Columbia and Alaska to Russia.

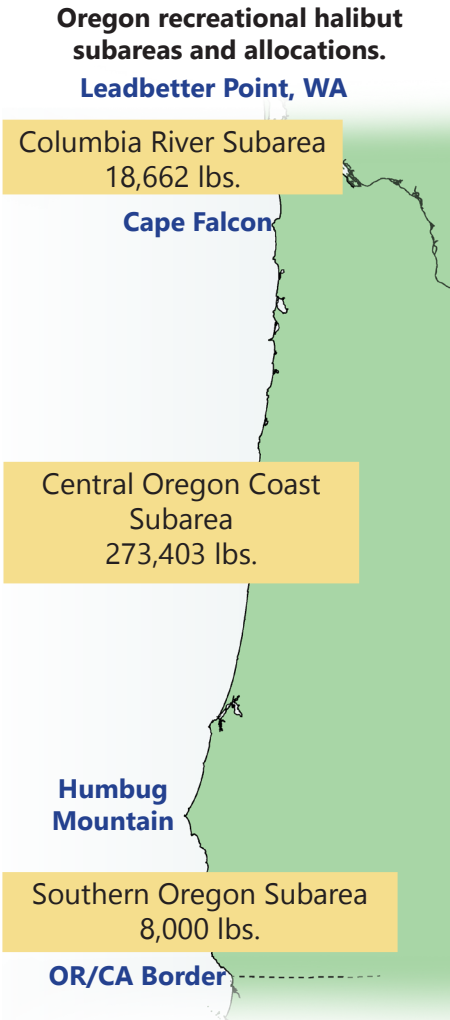
Oregon’s recreational fisheries get 29.7 percent of Management Area 2A’s non-tribal allocation. In 2021, this was 289,575 pounds of halibut.

In Oregon, this fishery is managed in three subareas:

- Columbia River
- Central Oregon Coast
- Southern Coast

Each subarea gets a certain amount of quota (right). In two of the subareas, the quota is divided based on depth and season (see table below).

Summary of 2021 Oregon Recreational Halibut Effort and Landings by Subarea and Season.



Subarea	Season	Number of Angler Trips	Number of 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	140	83	14.8	19.5	1,232
Central Oregon Coast Subarea	Nearshore	2,104	786	14.0	19	10,982
	Spring All-Depth	5,181	4,904	14.2	19	69,795
	Summer All-Depth	3,311	3,111	13.4	18	41,799
Southern Oregon Subarea		1,454	375	15.2	20.5	5,699
Oregon Total		12,190	9,259	14	19	129,507

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

2021 Oregon Recreational Summary

Although the COVID-19 pandemic continued through 2021, the recreational halibut seasons returned to more “normal” operations compared to 2020.

There were no widespread facility or business closures. However, many charter vessels still operated with reduced capacity to promote social distancing. Increased effort by private vessels across all fisheries (salmon, bottomfish, halibut) continued in 2021.

A banner coho salmon fishing season along the Central Oregon Coast drew effort away from Pacific halibut fishing beginning in late July.

Columbia River Subarea

The Columbia River Subarea is jointly managed by the Oregon and Washington Departments of Fish and Wildlife. This subarea’s quota is split between the nearshore and all-depth fisheries.

Nearshore

The nearshore fishery received 500 pounds of the quota. This lets anglers fishing for other species keep incidentally caught halibut when the all-depth halibut fishery is not open.

As in the previous four years, there were no landings into Oregon ports and minimal landings into Washington ports.

The most landed in any year in this fishery is about 250 pounds. If effort and landings increase, the quota can be adjusted through the annual Catch Sharing Plan process.



ODFW dockside sampler interviewing a charter captain.

All-Depth

This fishery initially received 18,162 pounds of quota. This included over 3,000 pounds moved from the Southern Oregon Subarea. The fishery opened in early May and all ports were open to anglers.

Early fishing was good with nearly 4,500 pounds harvested in the third week of May. Only 40 pounds were harvested the following week, due to ocean conditions and bar restrictions.

Fishing continued on all scheduled open dates to the end of June. Just under 17,000 pounds were landed.

Enough of the quota remained in other subareas to re-open this fishery for an extra day in August and September. In these two days, 2,300 pounds were landed.

At this point, the all-depth fishery landed 21,182 pounds, just over 3,000 pounds more than the subarea’s initial quota. The overage was covered by quotas not used in other Oregon and Washington subareas.

Central Oregon Coast Subarea

Nearshore

This fishery opened May 1 with a 32,808 pound quota. Decent fishing happened, as weather and ocean conditions allowed, through the end of June. In early July, effort and landings dropped off as many anglers turned to one of the best coho salmon fishing seasons in years.

With 33 percent of the quota harvested, the subarea was opened to all-depths daily beginning Sept. 13. All landings after that date counted against the summer all-depth quota rather than the nearshore quota.

In most years, the majority of the landings occur into Newport, Depoe Bay, and Pacific City. That trend continued in 2021. Newport had 57 percent of landings followed by Pacific City (16 percent) and Depoe Bay (12 percent). Garibaldi, Charleston, and Bandon each had four to seven percent of the landings.



A halibut fillet.

Spring All-Depth

This fishery's first opening was May 13-15 with a 172,224-pound quota. It was open for all fixed and back-up dates for a total of eight dates. By regulation, the fishery closed July 31.

Ocean conditions did not cooperate much of the time. Five of the openings saw just 5,000 pounds landed. Weather was good for the other three openings that saw landings of 17,000 to 20,000 pounds.

Total landings were 69,795 pounds. The remaining quota was available for other fisheries or subareas within Oregon, if needed.

Summer All-Depth

The fishery opened Thursday, Aug. 5 with a 68,351-pound quota.

With the amount of quota this year, Thursdays were added to the usual Friday through Sunday openings beginning Aug. 19. The fishery opened daily Sept. 13 with a two-fish bag limit.

An outstanding coho salmon season drew many anglers, slowing down the halibut fishery after the initial opening. Halibut fishing closed by regulation Oct. 31 with 41,799 pounds landed.

Southern Oregon Subarea

This fishery opened May 1 with a quota of 8,000 pounds and 50 to 500 pounds landed weekly. On Sept. 13 the bag limit increased to two fish per day until the Oct. 31 closure. Total landings were 5,669 pounds.

2021 Average Fish Size



ODFW dockside sampler measuring a halibut. (Photo taken prior to COVID-19)

In 2020, anglers throughout Oregon, California, Washington, and Alaska reported encountering many "small" 24 to 30-inch fish. In 2021, anglers reported a lot of slightly larger 28 to 32-inch fish which is good news.

The International Pacific Halibut Commission's (IPHC) annual survey shows the 2012 year-class is the largest since 2006. Halibut hatched in 2012 would have been in the size ranges anglers reported in 2020 and 2021.

These fish are just starting to reach the 30 to 32-inch size many anglers prefer to keep and will continue to grow over the next several years.

For more information see:

<https://iphc.int/uploads/pdf/im/im097/ppt/iphc-2021-im097-10-p.pdf>

Update on Combining All-Depth Halibut & Longleader Gear Fishery

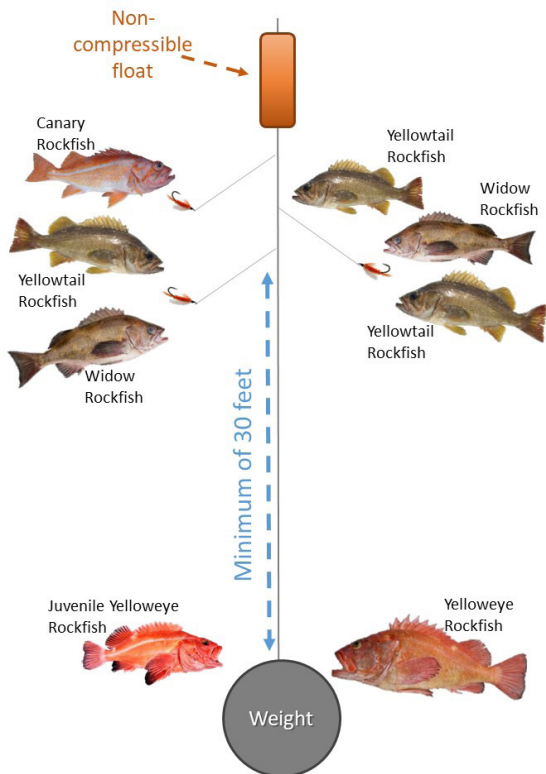


Diagram of longleader gear.

2021 was the first year anglers could [longleader gear fish](#) on the same trip as all-depth halibut fishing, and with that there were some growing pains with regulations.

When all-depth halibut fishing, anglers could keep sablefish, Pacific cod, and other species of flatfish **or** keep longleader gear species, but not both. This is due to federal regulation limitations.

Some anglers assumed the new longleader gear opportunity would be *in addition to* the few groundfish species allowed with all-depth halibut, not an alternative to.

ODFW is working through the Pacific Fishery Management Council process to let anglers have both options of groundfish species with all-depth halibut. The soonest this would be in place is 2023.

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



International Pacific Halibut Commission

The [International Pacific Halibut Commission](#) (IPHC) oversees all things Pacific halibut in the Eastern North Pacific Ocean. This includes Alaska, British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, and California.

The IPHC conducts research and stock assessments and sets halibut harvest levels (allocations/quotas) for these areas, including Area 2A .



The IPHC set Area 2A's harvest level at 1.5 million pounds in 2019, the highest level in over 10 years. The IPHC Commissioners indicated this would remain through 2022 unless a conservation concern arose.

IPHC will set a new quota for 2023 at its annual meeting in early 2023.

Pacific Fishery Management Council



The [Pacific Fishery Management Council](#) (PFMC) divides Area 2A's quota (set by the IPHC) between Tribal, commercial, and recreational halibut fisheries. This information is outlined in the [2021 Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan](#).

The PFMC considers changes to the Catch Sharing Plan annually at its September and November meetings. Anglers can propose changes through that process.

ODFW holds public meetings each year to get angler input on how the fishery has gone so far that year. Any proposed changes for the following year are also discussed. These meetings are held in late July or early August and are advertised to the public.

ODFW gives a summary of the public meetings to PFMC. This helps PFMC set the Pacific halibut quota and regulations for Area 2A fisheries.

Halibut Fishing is Good for the Oregon Economy

The recreational Pacific halibut fishery contributed approximately \$2.1 million to Oregon's economy in 2021 through fishing-related costs such as gas, bait, gear, moorage, food, and hotels. This translates to about 29 full-time jobs.

Anglers fishing out of Newport contributed about \$1.32 million. Anglers fishing out of Depoe Bay, Charleston, and Brookings added between \$150 and \$180 thousand in each port.

Even ports with less halibut effort and lower overall economic impact can have an important role in the local economies, especially in the spring and early summer.

Enforcement

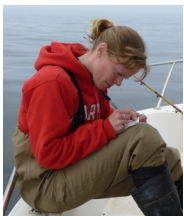
The Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Division's Marine Fisheries Team with the U.S. Coast Guard and NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement enforce marine fishing regulations. They patrol on land and at sea.

Rules keep fisheries sustainable, and enforcement is a key piece of the overall management.

Common issues seen are:

- fishing without a license
- not immediately tagging halibut
- exceeding the bag limit
- keeping prohibited species such as yelloweye rockfish
- keeping undersized fish, often lingcod or cabezon
- fishing in closed areas such as Marine Reserves or the Stonewall Bank Yelloweye Rockfish Conservation Area

Reminder: **IMMEDIATELY** upon landing and keeping a halibut, you need to record the fish on your Combined Angling Tag



Immediately means:

- Prior to rebaiting and putting the rod back out to fish
- Before taking a snack or drink break
- Not 5, 10, or 15 minutes later
- Do not wait until you are on the way back to the dock



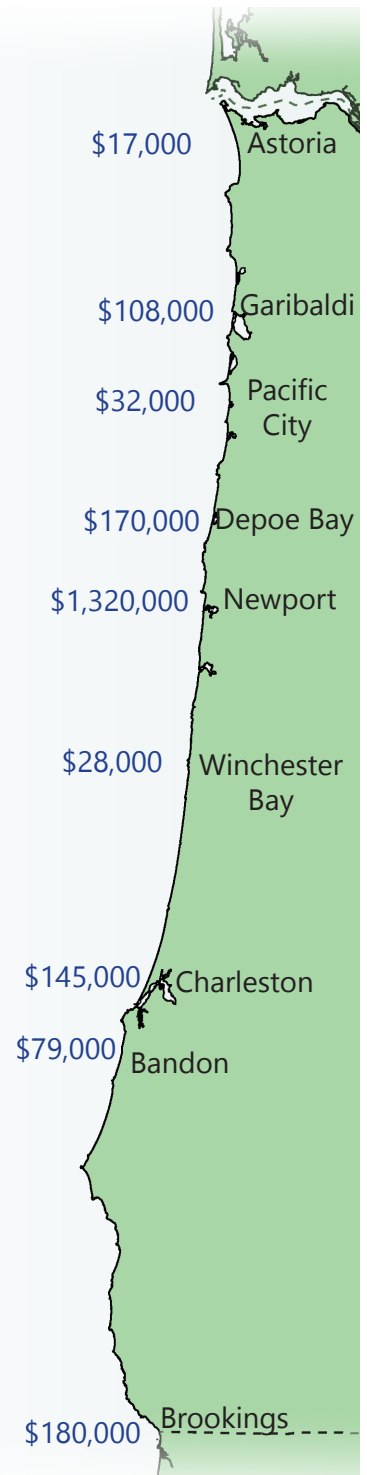
If using electronic tagging, make sure to download the app and log in before you leave the dock: <https://myodfw.com/ELS>

- If having trouble getting the app to open while offshore, try putting the phone in "airplane" mode
- Once the app is open, you can record your fish
- When you get back into cell service take off "airplane" mode, and it will upload tagged fish to the system

For more info on tagging halibut, see:

<https://myodfw.com/articles/9-tips-tagging-fish-and-game-using-e-tagging-or-paper-tags>

Approximate economic contribution by halibut anglers, by port in 2021.



How & When to Get Involved

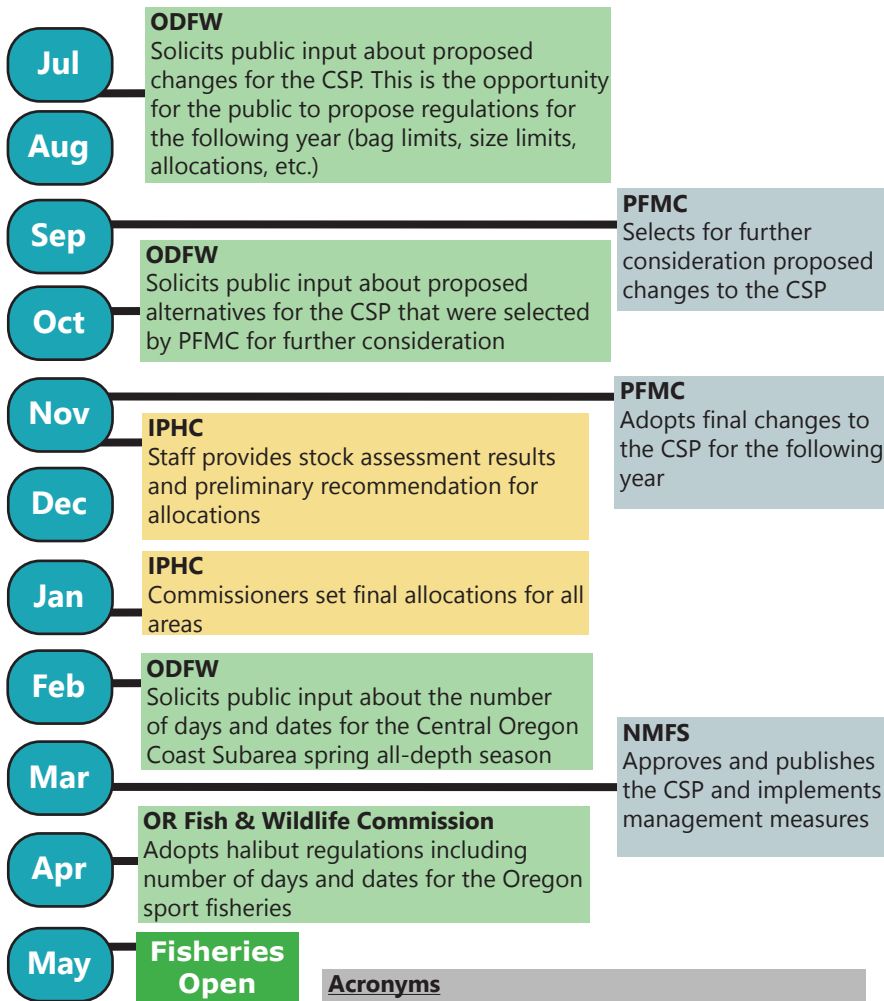
With several agencies involved in managing Pacific halibut, knowing how, when, and to whom to provide input or suggest changes can be confusing.

This timeline below shows the key points in ODFW, PFMC, and IPHC halibut management.

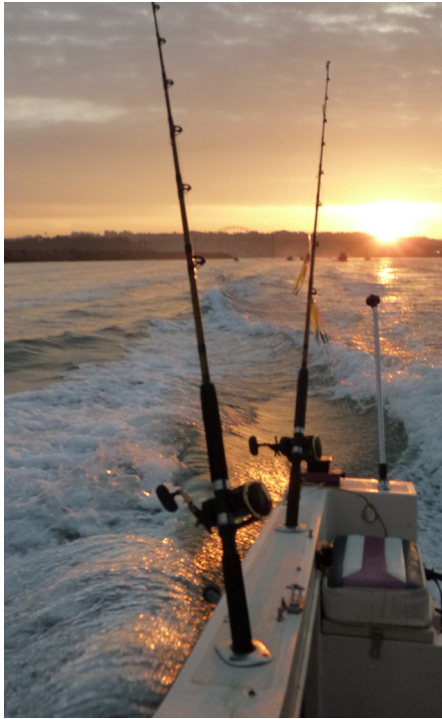
PFMC, IPHC, and Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission meetings are all open to the public and provide time and opportunity for public comments. More information can be found on each agency's website.

- 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



Headed out of Newport for halibut. Photo courtesy of Lynn Mattes.

Marine Reserves

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

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