

Species		Historic range	Family	Status	When listed	Critical habitat	Special rules
Scientific name	Common name						
FLOWERING PLANTS							
* <i>Holocarpha macradenia.</i>	* Santa Cruz tarplant	* U.S.A. (CA)	* Asteraceae	* T	* 690	* NA	* NA
*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

Dated: March 13, 2000.
Jamie Rappaport Clark,
Director, Fish and Wildlife Service.
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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 300

[Docket No. 991220343-0071-02; I.D. 120999D]

RIN 0648-AM52

Pacific Halibut Fisheries; Catch Sharing Plans

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Final rule; annual management measures for Pacific halibut fisheries and approval of catch sharing plans.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA (AA), on behalf of the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC), publishes the annual management measures promulgated as regulations by the IPHC and approved by the Secretary of State governing the Pacific halibut fishery. The AA also announces the approval of modifications to the Catch Sharing Plan (Plan) for Area 2A and implementing regulations for 2000. These actions are intended to enhance the conservation of the Pacific halibut stock and further the goals and objectives of the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC).

DATES: Effective March 15, 2000.

ADDRESSES: NMFS Alaska Region, 709 West 9th Street., P.O. Box 21668, Juneau, AK 99802-1668; or NMFS Northwest Region, 7600 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, WA 98115-0070 (<http://www.nwr.noaa.gov>).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: James Hale, 907-586-4345 or Yvonne deReynier, 206-526-6140.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The IPHC has promulgated regulations governing the Pacific halibut fishery in 2000, under the Convention between the United States and Canada for the Preservation of the Halibut Fishery of the North Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea (Convention), signed at Ottawa, Ontario, on March 2, 1953, as amended by a Protocol Amending the Convention (signed at Washington, D.C., on March 29, 1979). The IPHC regulations have been approved by the Secretary of State of the United States under section 4 of the Northern Pacific Halibut Act (Halibut Act, 16 U.S.C. 773-773k). Pursuant to regulations at 50 CFR 300.62, the approved IPHC regulations setting forth the 2000 IPHC annual management measures are published in the **Federal Register** to provide notice of their effectiveness, and to inform persons subject to the regulations of the restrictions and requirements.

The IPHC held its annual meeting on January 10-13, 2000, in Lynnwood, WA, and adopted regulations for 2000. The substantive changes to the previous IPHC regulations (64 FR 13519, March 19, 1999) include:

1. New catch limits for all areas;
2. A requirement that the operator of a vessel that offloads halibut must completely offload all halibut from the vessel once the offloading commences;
3. Establishment of opening dates for the Area 2A commercial directed halibut fishery.

In addition, this action implements the Plan for regulatory Area 2A. This Plan was developed by the PFMC under authority of the Halibut Act. Section 5 of the Halibut Act (16 U.S.C. 773c) provides that the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary) shall have general responsibility to carry out the Halibut Convention (Convention) between the United States and Canada, and that the Secretary shall adopt such regulations as may be necessary to carry out the purposes and objectives of the Convention and the Halibut Act. The Secretary's authority has been delegated

to the AA. Section 5 of the Halibut Act also authorizes the Regional Fishery Management Council having authority for the geographic area concerned to develop regulations governing the Pacific halibut catch in U.S. Convention waters that are in addition to, but not in conflict with, regulations of the IPHC. Pursuant to this authority, NMFS requested the PFMC to allocate halibut catches should such allocation be necessary.

Catch Sharing Plan for Area 2A

The PFMC prepared annual Plans from 1988 to 1994 to allocate the halibut catch limit for Area 2A among treaty Indian, non-Indian commercial, and non-Indian sport fisheries in and off Washington, Oregon, and California. In 1995, NMFS implemented a Council-recommended long-term Plan (60 FR 14651, March 20, 1995). In each of the intervening years between 1995 and the present, minor revisions to the Plan have been made to adjust for the changing needs of the fisheries. The Plan allocates 35 percent of the Area 2A total allowable catch (TAC) to Washington treaty Indian tribes in Subarea 2A-1, and 65 percent to non-treaty fisheries in Area 2A, with the treaty fisheries divided into commercial fisheries, and ceremonial and subsistence fisheries. The allocation to non-treaty fisheries is divided into three shares, with the Washington sport fishery (north of the Columbia River) receiving 36.6 percent, the Oregon/California sport fishery receiving 31.7 percent, and the commercial fishery receiving 31.7 percent. The commercial fishery is further divided into two sectors; a directed (traditional longline) commercial fishery that is allocated 85 percent of the non-Indian commercial harvest, and 15 percent for harvests of halibut caught incidental to the salmon troll fishery. The directed commercial fishery in Area 2A is confined to southern Washington (south of 46°53'18" N. lat.), Oregon and California. The Plan also divides the sport fisheries into seven geographic areas, each with separate allocations, seasons, and bag limits.

No vessel with a commercial license (directed or incidental) for halibut may be used in any sport fishery for halibut. No vessel with a charter license for halibut or that has been used to fish for halibut in sport fisheries may be used to fish in a commercial fishery for halibut in the same calendar year. A vessel may be licensed either to fish the directed commercial fishery for halibut, or to land halibut incidentally to the salmon troll fishery, but not both.

For 2000, PFMC recommended changes to the Plan to modify the Pacific halibut fisheries in Area 2A in 2000 and beyond pursuant to recommendations from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), and pursuant to a Stipulation and Order resulting from a sub-proceeding of *U.S. v. Washington*. The purpose of these changes is to align the structure of the CSP more closely with the character of the Washington and Oregon sport fisheries, and to bring the Plan into compliance with a court order for the allocation between treaty and non-treaty fisheries. For the Washington sport fisheries, PFMC recommended altering the boundary between the Puget Sound and North Coast subareas, the two northernmost sport fishing subareas in Area 2A. This change would move the boundary eastward from the Bonilla-Tatoosh line to the mouth of the Sekiu River. To account for a shift in the size of the two subareas, PFMC also recommended changing the Plan to increase the portion of the Washington sport quota allocated to the North Coast subarea from 57.7 percent of the first 130,845 lb (59.4 mt) allocated to the Washington sport fishery to 62.2 percent. The portion of the Washington sport quota allocated to the Puget Sound subarea will correspondingly decrease from 28 percent of the first 130,845 lb (59.4 mt) allocated to the Washington sport fishery to 23.5 percent. For the Washington sport fisheries, PFMC also recommended increasing the flexibility of the process by which the closed "hot spot" zone in the Washington South Coast subarea could be opened inseason. For the Oregon sport fisheries, PFMC has recommended combining the subquotas for the inside 30-fathom fisheries for Northern and Southern Central Coast subareas. This change will simplify management of the inside 30-fathom fisheries to ensure that the seasons are of the same duration north and south of the Siuslaw River.

In addition to the above changes proposed by the States of Washington and Oregon, PFMC recommended accommodating in the Plan a court-

ordered change in the allocation of halibut between treaty and non-treaty fisheries. In July 1999, the tribes, states, and Federal government agreed to settle the tribes' claim for an equitable adjustment to the current halibut allocation arising from allocations during the years 1989 through 1993, in which tribal treaty rights to halibut had not been met. The parties agreed in a stipulation, and their agreement has been entered as a court order, that 25,000 lb (11.3 mt) (dressed weight) of halibut would be transferred from the non-treaty halibut allocation to the treaty halibut allocation in each year from 2000 through 2007.

A complete description of the PFMC recommended changes to the Plan, notice of a draft Environmental Assessment and Regulatory Impact Review (EA/RIR), and proposed sport fishery management measures were published in the **Federal Register** on January 4, 2000 (65 FR 272), with a request for public comments. No public comments were received on the proposed changes to the Plan or on the EA/RIR. Therefore, NMFS has approved the changes to the Plan as proposed, made a finding of no significant impact, and finalized the EA/RIR. Copies of the complete Plan for Area 2A as modified and the final EA/RIR are available from the NMFS Northwest Regional Office (see **ADDRESSES**).

In accordance with the Plan, the ODFW and the WDFW held public workshops (after the IPHC set the Area 2A quota) on January 31 and February 3, 2000, respectively, to develop recommendations on the opening dates and weekly structure of the sport fisheries. The WDFW and ODFW sent letters to NMFS advising on the outcome of the workshops and provided the following comments and recommendations on the opening dates and season structure for the sport fisheries.

Comment 1: WDFW recommended a May 25 to July 27 season, 5 days per week (closed Tuesday and Wednesday) for the Washington Inside Waters area sport fishery. The recommended number of fishing days is based on analysis of past harvest patterns in this fishery.

Response: NMFS agrees with the calculated number of fishing days necessary to achieve, but not exceed, the subquota for this area. The recommended season has been incorporated in the 2000 sport fishery measures.

Comment 2: WDFW recommended that the Washington North Coast area sport fishery be structured such that 7,000 lb (3.2 mt) of the subarea quota be

reserved to provide for the second priority in the Plan—a July 1 season. The WDFW recommendation is for the sport fishery to open on May 2 and continue 5 days per week (closed Sunday and Monday) to June 30, or until 92,744 lb (42 mt) of the 99,774 lb (45.2 mt) quota are harvested. The fishery would reopen on July 1 and on July 4, and continue 5 days per week until the quota has been taken.

Response: NMFS agrees and has incorporated these recommendations into the 2000 sport fishery measures.

Comment 3: WDFW recommended that the seasonal structure set forth in the Plan and described in the proposed rule (65 FR 272, January 4, 2000) be implemented for the sport fisheries in the Washington South Coast and the Columbia River subareas. WDFW further requested a review in the first week of May to determine whether the South Coast subarea "hot spot" should remain closed during the sport fishing season.

Response: NMFS has structured the seasons for these subareas in accordance with the Plan, and will schedule a South Coast area "hot spot" discussion with WDFW and interested stakeholders at the beginning of the season.

Comment 4: ODFW recommended a 5-day season of May 11, 12, 13, 18, and 19 for the May opening in the Oregon Central Coast and South Coast subareas based on an analysis of past harvest rates, which indicated an increasing annual trend in the sport fishery.

Response: NMFS has implemented ODFW's recommendation for the 5-day fixed season in May for these two subareas. The Plan stipulates that the number of fixed season days established will be based on the projected catch per day with the intent of not exceeding the subarea season subquotas.

Comment 5: ODFW and the public in attendance at the ODFW workshop recommended that if sufficient unharvested quota remains for an additional day of fishing after the May fixed opening days in the Oregon Central and South Coast subareas, an additional opening date would be scheduled for Friday, June 9; if sufficient quota remains for three, four, five, or six additional days, then June 8, June 16, June 16–17, and June 15 would also be opened, in that order.

Response: The Plan stipulates that "If sufficient catch remains for an additional day of fishing after the May season or the August season, openings will be provided if possible in May and August respectively. Potential additional open dates for both the May and August seasons will be announced pre-season." Further, the Plan stipulates

that "ODFW will monitor landings and provide a post-season estimate of catch within 2 weeks of the end of the fixed season." Since a 5-day May season would extend to late May (May 19), additional opening dates in May cannot be set that would provide the necessary 2-week timeframe for ODFW to estimate the catch during the fixed season. Therefore, NMFS agrees with the recommendation to set potential additional open dates in June.

Comment 6: ODFW recommended a mid-July review of the May all-depth harvest and the catch projections for the inside 30-fathom curve fisheries, to determine whether sufficient halibut remains for an August fishery. If sufficient halibut quota remains, ODFW recommends Friday, August 4 or Friday and Saturday, August 4 and 5 for the August fishery. If a post-fishery assessment indicates that enough halibut remains in the quota for a third fishing day in August, the additional day would occur on August 18.

Response: If the mid-July review indicates that there is sufficient halibut for an August fishery, the fishery will be open on Friday, August 4, in accordance with the Plan. If there is enough quota available for 2 days of fishing, the second day of the fishery will be August 5. NMFS concurs with the ODFW recommendation to reserve August 18 as a third possible August fishing day, if sufficient quota remains from the August 4 and/or 5 fishery.

NMFS has implemented sport fishing management measures in Area 2A based on recommendations from the states in accordance with the CSP.

Annual Halibut Management Measures

The annual management measures that follow for the 2000 Pacific halibut fishery are identical to those recommended by the IPHC and approved by the Secretary of State, and include the domestic regulations approved by NMFS that are necessary to implement the CSP in Area 2A.

2000 PACIFIC HALIBUT FISHERY REGULATIONS

1. Short Title

These regulations may be cited as the Pacific Halibut Fishery Regulations.

2. Interpretation

(1) In these Regulations,

(a) *Authorized officer* means any State, Federal, or Provincial officer authorized to enforce these regulations including, but not limited to, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO), Alaska

Division of Fish and Wildlife Protection (ADFWP), the United States Coast Guard (USCG), the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Oregon State Police;

(b) *Charter vessel* means a vessel used for hire in sport fishing for halibut, but not including a vessel without a hired operator;

(c) *Commercial fishing* means fishing the resulting catch of which either is or is intended to be sold or bartered;

(d) *Commission* means the International Pacific Halibut Commission;

(e) *Daily bag limit* means the maximum number of halibut a person may take in any calendar day from Convention waters;

(f) *Fishing* means the taking, harvesting, or catching of fish, or any activity that can reasonably be expected to result in the taking, harvesting, or catching of fish, including specifically the deployment of any amount or component part of setline gear anywhere in the maritime area;

(g) *Fishing period limit* means the maximum amount of halibut that may be retained and landed by a vessel during one fishing period;

(h) *Land*, with respect to halibut, means the offloading of halibut from the catching vessel;

(i) *License* means a halibut fishing license issued by the Commission pursuant to section 3;

(j) *Maritime area*, in respect of the fisheries jurisdiction of a Contracting Party, includes without distinction areas within and seaward of the territorial sea or internal waters of that Party;

(k) *Operator*, with respect to any vessel, means the owner and/or the master or other individual on board and in charge of that vessel;

(l) *Overall length* of a vessel means the horizontal distance, rounded to the nearest foot, between the foremost part of the stem and the aftermost part of the stern (excluding bowsprits, rudders, outboard motor brackets, and similar fittings or attachments);

(m) *Person* includes an individual, corporation, firm, or association;

(n) *Regulatory area* means an area referred to in section 6;

(o) *Setline gear* means one or more stationary, buoyed, and anchored lines with hooks attached;

(p) *Sport fishing* means all fishing other than commercial fishing and treaty Indian ceremonial and subsistence fishing;

(q) *Tender* means any vessel that buys or obtains fish directly from a catching vessel and transports it to a port of landing or fish processor;

(2) In these Regulations, all bearings are true and all positions are determined

by the most recent charts issued by the National Ocean Service or the Canadian Hydrographic Service.

(3) In these Regulations all weights shall be computed on the basis that the heads of the fish are off and their entrails removed.

3. Licensing Vessels

(1) No person shall fish for halibut from a vessel, nor possess halibut on board a vessel, used either for commercial fishing or as a charter vessel in Area 2A unless the Commission has issued a license valid for fishing in Area 2A in respect of that vessel.

(2) A license issued for a vessel operating in Area 2A shall be valid only for operating either as a charter vessel or a commercial vessel, but not both.

(3) A vessel with a valid Area 2A commercial license cannot be used to sport fish for Pacific halibut in Area 2A.

(4) A license issued for a vessel operating in the commercial fishery in Area 2A shall be valid only for either the directed commercial fishery during the fishing periods specified in paragraph (2) of section 8 or the incidental catch fishery during the salmon troll fishery specified in paragraph (3) of section 8, but not both.

(5) A license issued in respect of a vessel referred to in paragraph (1) must be carried on board that vessel at all times and the vessel operator shall permit its inspection by any authorized officer.

(6) The Commission shall issue a license in respect of a vessel, without fee from its office in Seattle, Washington, upon receipt of a completed, written, and signed "Application for Vessel License for the Halibut Fishery" form.

(7) A vessel operating in the directed commercial fishery in Area 2A must have its "Application for Vessel License for the Halibut Fishery" form postmarked no later than 11:59 P.M. on April 30, or on the first weekday in May if April 30 is a Saturday or Sunday.

(8) A vessel operating in the incidental commercial fishery during the salmon troll season in Area 2A must have its "Application for Vessel License for the Halibut Fishery" form postmarked no later than 11:59 P.M. on March 31, or the first weekday in April if March 31 is a Saturday or Sunday.

(9) Application forms may be obtained from any authorized officer or from the Commission.

(10) Information on "Application for Vessel License for the Halibut Fishery" form must be accurate.

(11) The "Application for Vessel License for the Halibut Fishery" form

shall be completed and signed by the vessel owner.

(12) Licenses issued under this section shall be valid only during the year in which they are issued.

(13) A new license is required for a vessel that is sold, transferred, renamed, or re-documented.

(14) The license required under this section is in addition to any license, however designated, that is required under the laws of the United States or any of its States.

(15) The United States may suspend, revoke, or modify any license issued under this section under policies and procedures in Title 15, Code of Federal Regulations, part 904.

4. Inseason Actions

(1) The Commission is authorized to establish or modify regulations during the season after determining that such action:

(a) Will not result in exceeding the catch limit established preseason for each regulatory area;

(b) Is consistent with the Convention between the United States of America and Canada for the Preservation of the Halibut Fishery of the Northern Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea, and applicable domestic law of either Canada or the United States; and

(c) Is consistent, to the maximum extent practicable, with any domestic catch sharing plans developed by the United States or Canadian governments.

(2) Inseason actions may include, but are not limited to, establishment or modification of the following:

- (a) Closed areas;
- (b) Fishing periods;
- (c) Fishing period limits;
- (d) Gear restrictions;
- (e) Recreational bag limits;
- (f) Size limits; or
- (g) Vessel clearances.

(3) Inseason changes will be effective at the time and date specified by the Commission.

(4) The Commission will announce inseason actions under this section by providing notice to major halibut processors; Federal, State, United States treaty Indian, and Provincial fishery officials; and the media.

5. Application

(1) These Regulations apply to persons and vessels fishing for halibut in, or possessing halibut taken from, waters off the west coast of Canada and the United States, including the southern as well as the western coasts of Alaska, within the respective maritime areas in which each of those countries exercises exclusive fisheries jurisdiction as of March 29, 1979.

(2) Sections 6 to 21 apply to commercial fishing for halibut.

John—This language differs slightly from IPHC language. I don't know what AKR prefers. (3) Section 7 applies to the Western Alaska Community Development Quota (CDQ) fishery in Area 4E.

(4) Section 22 applies to the United States treaty Indian tribal fishery in Area 2A-1.

(5) Section 23 applies to sport fishing for halibut.

(6) These Regulations do not apply to fishing operations authorized or conducted by the Commission for research purposes.

6. Regulatory Areas

The following areas shall be regulatory areas for the purposes of the Convention:

(1) Area 2A includes all waters off the states of California, Oregon, and Washington;

(2) Area 2B includes all waters off British Columbia;

(3) Area 2C includes all waters off Alaska that are east of a line running 340° true from Cape Spencer Light (58°11'57" N. lat., 136°38'18" W. long.) and south and east of a line running 205° true from said light;

(4) Area 3A includes all waters between Area 2C and a line extending from the most northerly point on Cape Aklek (57°41'15" N. lat., 155°35'00" W. long.) to Cape Ikolik (57°17'17" N. lat., 154°47'18" W. long.), then along the Kodiak Island coastline to Cape Trinity (56°44'50" N. lat., 154°08'44" W. long.), then 140° true;

(5) Area 3B includes all waters between Area 3A and a line extending 150° true from Cape Lutke (54°29'00" N. lat., 164°20'00" W. long.) and south of 54°49'00" N. lat. in Isanotski Strait;

(6) Area 4A includes all waters in the Gulf of Alaska west of Area 3B and in the Bering Sea west of the closed area defined in section 10 that are east of 172°00'00" W. long. and south of 56°20'00" N. lat.;

(7) Area 4B includes all waters in the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska west of Area 4A and south of 56°20'00" N. lat.;

(8) Area 4C includes all waters in the Bering Sea north of Area 4A and north of the closed area defined in section 10 which are east of 171°00'00" W. long., south of 58°00'00" N. lat., and west of 168°00'00" W. long.;

(9) Area 4D includes all waters in the Bering Sea north of Areas 4A and 4B, north and west of Area 4C, and west of 168°00'00" W. long.;

(10) Area 4E includes all waters in the Bering Sea north and east of the closed

area defined in section 10, east of 168°00'00" W. long., and south of 65°34'00" N. lat.

7. Fishing in Regulatory Area 4E

(1) A person may retain halibut taken with setline gear in the Area 4E CDQ fishery that are smaller than the size limit specified in section 13, provided that no person may sell or barter such halibut.

(2) The manager of a CD CDQ organization that authorizes persons to harvest halibut in the Area 4E CDQ fishery must report to the Commission the total number and weight of undersized halibut taken and retained by such persons pursuant to section 7, paragraph (1). This report, that shall include data and methodology used to collect the data, must be received by the Commission prior to December 1 of the year in which such halibut were harvested.

(3) Section 7 shall be effective until December 31, 2000.

8. Fishing Periods

(1) The fishing periods for each regulatory area apply where the catch limits specified in section 11 have not been taken.

(2) Each fishing period in the Area 2A directed fishery south of 46°53'18" N. lat. shall begin at 0800 hours and terminate at 1800 hours local time on July 5, July 19, August 2, August 23, September 6, and September 20, unless the Commission specifies otherwise.

(3) Notwithstanding paragraph (2), and paragraph (7) of section 11, an incidental catch fishery is authorized during salmon troll seasons in Area 2A. Vessels participating in the salmon troll fishery in Area 2A may retain halibut caught incidentally during authorized periods, in conformance with the annual salmon management measures announced in the **Federal Register**. The notice also will specify the ratio of halibut to salmon that may be retained during this fishery.

(4) The fishing period in Areas 2B, 2C, 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, and 4E shall begin at 1200 hours local time on March 15 and terminate at 1200 hours local time on November 15, unless the Commission specifies otherwise.

(5) All commercial fishing for halibut in Areas 2A, 2B, 2C, 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, and 4E shall cease at 1200 hours local time on November 15.

9. Closed Periods

(1) No person shall engage in fishing for halibut in any regulatory area other than during the fishing periods set out in section 8 in respect of that area.

(2) No person shall land or otherwise retain halibut caught outside a fishing period applicable to the regulatory area where the halibut was taken.

(3) Subject to paragraphs (7), (8), (9), and (10) of section 19, these Regulations do not prohibit fishing for any species of fish other than halibut during the closed periods.

(4) Notwithstanding paragraph (3), no person shall have halibut in his/her possession while fishing for any other species of fish during the closed periods.

(5) No vessel shall retrieve any halibut fishing gear during a closed period if the vessel has any halibut on board.

(6) A vessel that has no halibut on board may retrieve any halibut fishing gear during the closed period after the operator notifies an authorized officer or representative of the Commission prior to that retrieval.

(7) After retrieval of halibut gear in accordance with paragraph (6), the vessel shall submit to a hold inspection at the discretion of the authorized officer or representative of the Commission.

(8) No person shall retain any halibut caught on gear retrieved under paragraph (6).

(9) No person shall possess halibut aboard a vessel in a regulatory area during a closed period unless that vessel is in continuous transit to or within a port in which that halibut may be lawfully sold.

10. *Closed Area*

All waters in the Bering Sea north of 55°00'00" N. lat. in Isanotski Strait that are enclosed by a line from Cape Sarichef Light (54°36'00" N. lat., 164°55'42" W. long.) to a point at 56°20'00" N. lat., 168°30'00" W. long.;

thence to a point at 58°21'25" N. lat., 163°00'00" W. long.; thence to Strogonof Point (56°53'18" N. lat., 158°50'37" W. long.); and then along the northern coasts of the Alaska Peninsula and Unimak Island to the point of origin at Cape Sarichef Light are closed to halibut fishing and no person shall fish for halibut therein or have halibut in his/her possession while in those waters except in the course of a continuous transit across those waters. All waters in Isanotski Strait between 55°00'00" N. lat. and 54°49'00" N. lat. are closed to commercial halibut fishing.

11. *Catch Limits*

(1) The total allowable catch of halibut to be taken during the halibut fishing periods specified in section 8 shall be limited to the weight expressed in pounds or metric tons shown in the following table:

CATCH LIMITS

Regulatory Area	Pounds	Metric Tons
2A	163,096.00	74.00
2B	10,600,000.00	4,807.30
2C	8,400,000.00	3,809.50
3A	18,310,000.00	8,303.90
3B	15,030,000.00	6,816.30
4A	4,970,000.00	2,254.00
4B	4,910,000.00	2,226.80
4C	2,030,000.00	920.60
4D	2,030,000.00	920.60
4E	390,000.00	176.90

(2) Notwithstanding paragraph (1) of this section, the catch limit in Area 2A shall be divided between a directed halibut fishery to operate south of 46°53'18" N. lat. during the fishing periods set out in paragraph 2 of Section 8 and an incidental halibut catch fishery during the salmon troll fishery in Area 2A described in paragraph 3 of Section 8. Inseason actions to transfer catch between these fisheries may occur in conformance with the Catch Sharing Plan for Area 2A.

(a) The catch limit in the directed halibut fishery is 138,632 lb (62.9 mt).

(b) The catch limit in the incidental catch fishery during the salmon troll fishery is 24,464 lb (11.1 mt).

(3) The Commission shall determine and announce to the public the specific dates during which the directed fishery will be allowed in Area 2A and the date on which the catch limit for Area 2A will be taken.

(4) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), Area 2B will close only when all Individual Vessel Quotas assigned by Canada's Department of Fisheries and

Oceans are taken, or November 15, whichever is earlier.

(5) Notwithstanding paragraph (1), Areas 2C, 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, and 4E will each close only when all Individual Fishing Quotas and all Community Development Quotas issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service have been taken, or November 15, whichever is earlier.

(6) If the Commission determines that the catch limit specified for Area 2A in paragraph (1) would be exceeded in an unrestricted 10-hour fishing period as specified in paragraph (2) of section 8, the catch limit for that area shall be considered to have been taken unless fishing period limits are implemented.

(7) When under paragraphs (2), (3) or (6) the Commission has announced a date on which the catch limit for Area 2A will be taken, no person shall fish for halibut in that area after that date for the rest of the year, unless the Commission has announced the reopening of that area for halibut fishing.

12. *Fishing Period Limits*

(1) It shall be unlawful for any vessel to retain more halibut than authorized by that vessel's license in any fishing period for which the Commission has announced a fishing period limit.

(2) The operator of any vessel that fishes for halibut during a fishing period when fishing period limits are in effect must, upon commencing an offload of halibut to a commercial fish processor, completely offload all halibut on board said vessel to that processor and ensure that all halibut is weighed and reported on State fish tickets.

(3) The operator of any vessel that fishes for halibut during a fishing period when fishing period limits are in effect must, upon commencing an offload of halibut other than to a commercial fish processor, completely offload all halibut on board said vessel and ensure that all halibut are weighed and reported on State fish tickets.

(4) The provisions of paragraph (3) are not intended to prevent retail over-the-side sales to individual purchasers so long as all the halibut on board is ultimately offloaded and reported.

(5) When fishing period limits are in effect, a vessel's maximum retainable catch will be determined by the Commission based on:

- (a) The vessel's overall length in feet and associated length class;
 - (b) The average performance of all vessels within that class; and
 - (c) The remaining catch limit.
- (6) Length classes are shown in the following table:

Overall Length	Vessel Class
1-25	A
26-30	B
31-35	C
36-40	D
41-45	E
46-50	F
51-55	G
56+	H

(7) Fishing period limits in Area 2A apply only to the directed halibut fishery referred to in paragraph (2) of section 8.

13. Size Limits

(1) No person shall take or possess any halibut that:

- (a) With the head on, is less than 32 inches (81.3 cm) as measured in a straight line, passing over the pectoral fin from the tip of the lower jaw with the mouth closed, to the extreme end of the middle of the tail; or
- (b) With the head removed, is less than 24 inches (61.0 cm) as measured from the base of the pectoral fin at its most anterior point to the extreme end of the middle of the tail.

(2) No person shall possess on board a vessel a halibut that has been mutilated, or otherwise disfigured in any manner that prevents the determination of whether the halibut complies with the size limits specified in this section, except that:

- (a) This paragraph shall not prohibit the possession on board a vessel of halibut cheeks cut from halibut caught by persons authorized to process the halibut on board in accordance with NMFS regulations published at Title 50, Code of Federal regulations, part 679; and
- (b) No person shall possess a filleted halibut on board a vessel.

(3) No person on board a vessel fishing for, or tendering, halibut caught in Area 2A shall possess any halibut that has had its head removed.

14. Careful Release of Halibut

All halibut that are caught and are not retained shall be immediately released outboard of the roller and returned to the sea with a minimum of injury by

- (a) Hook straightening;

- (b) Cutting the gangion near the hook; or
- (c) Carefully removing the hook by twisting it from the halibut with a gaff.

15. Vessel Clearance in Area 4

(1) The operator of any vessel that fishes for halibut in Areas 4A, 4B, 4C, or 4D must obtain a vessel clearance before fishing in any of these areas, and before the unloading of any halibut caught in any of these areas, unless specifically exempted in paragraphs (9), (12), (13), (14), or (15).

(2) The vessel clearance required under paragraph (1) prior to fishing in Area 4A may be obtained only at Dutch Harbor or Akutan, Alaska from an authorized officer of the United States, a representative of the Commission, or a designated fish processor.

(3) The vessel clearance required under paragraph (1) prior to fishing in Area 4B may only be obtained at Nazan Bay on Atka Island or Adak, Alaska from an authorized officer of the United States, a representative of the Commission, or a designated fish processor.

(4) The vessel clearance required under paragraph (1) prior to fishing in Area 4C or 4D may be obtained only at St. Paul or St. George, Alaska from an authorized officer of the United States, a representative of the Commission, or a designated fish processor by VHF radio and allowing the person contacted to confirm visually the identity of the vessel.

(5) The vessel operator shall specify the specific regulatory area in which fishing will take place.

(6) Before unloading any halibut caught in Area 4A, a vessel operator may obtain the clearance required under paragraph (1) only in Dutch Harbor or Akutan, Alaska, by contacting an authorized officer of the United States, a representative of the Commission, or a designated fish processor.

(7) Before unloading any halibut caught in Area 4B, a vessel operator may obtain the clearance required under paragraph (1) only in Nazan Bay on Atka Island or Adak, by contacting an authorized officer of the United States, a representative of the Commission, or a designated fish processor by VHF radio or in person.

(8) Before unloading any halibut caught in Area 4C or 4D, a vessel operator may obtain the clearance required under paragraph (1) only in St. Paul, St. George, Dutch Harbor, or Akutan, Alaska, either in person or by contacting an authorized officer of the United States, a representative of the Commission, or a designated fish processor. The clearances obtained in

St. Paul or St. George, Alaska, can be obtained by VHF radio and allowing the person contacted to confirm visually the identity of the vessel.

(9) Any vessel operator who complies with the requirements in section 18 for possessing halibut on board a vessel that was caught in more than one regulatory area in Area 4 is exempt from the clearance requirements of paragraph (1) of this section, but must comply with the following requirements:

(a) The operator of the vessel must obtain a vessel clearance prior to fishing in Area 4 in either Dutch Harbor, Akutan, St. Paul, St. George, Adak, or Nazan Bay on Atka Island by contacting an authorized officer of the United States, a representative of the Commission, or a designated fish processor. The clearance obtained in St. Paul, St. George, Adak, or Nazan Bay on Atka Island can be obtained by VHF radio and allowing the person contacted to confirm visually the identity of the vessel. This clearance will list the Areas in which the vessel will fish; and

(b) Before unloading any halibut from Area 4, the vessel operator must obtain a vessel clearance from Dutch Harbor, Akutan, St. Paul, St. George, Adak, or Nazan Bay on Atka Island by contacting an authorized officer of the United States, a representative of the Commission, or a designated fish processor. The clearance obtained in St. Paul or St. George can be obtained by VHF radio and allowing the person contacted to confirm visually the identity of the vessel. The clearance obtained in Adak or Nazan Bay on Atka Island can be obtained by VHF radio.

(10) Vessel clearances shall be obtained between 0600 and 1800 hours, local time.

(11) No halibut shall be on board the vessel at the time of the clearances required prior to fishing in Area 4.

(12) Any vessel that is used to fish for halibut only in Area 4A and lands its total annual halibut catch at a port within Area 4A is exempt from the clearance requirements of paragraph (1).

(13) Any vessel that is used to fish for halibut only in Area 4B and lands its total annual halibut catch at a port within Area 4B is exempt from the clearance requirements of paragraph (1).

(14) Any vessel that is used to fish for halibut only in Area 4C and lands its total annual halibut catch at a port within Area 4C is exempt from the clearance requirements of paragraph (1).

(15) Any vessel that is used to fish for halibut only in Areas 4D and 4E and lands its total annual halibut catch at a port within Areas 4D, 4E, or the closed area defined in section 10, is exempt

from the clearance requirements of paragraph (1).

16. Logs

(1) The operator of any U.S. vessel that has an overall length of 26 feet (7.9 meters) or greater shall keep an accurate log of all halibut fishing operations including the date, locality, amount of gear used, and total weight of halibut taken daily in each locality. The log information must be recorded in the groundfish daily fishing logbook provided by NMFS, or Alaska hook-and-line logbook provided by Petersburg Vessels Owner Association or Alaska Longline Fishermen's Association, or the logbook provide by IPHC.

(2) The log referred to in paragraph (1) shall be

(a) Maintained on board the vessel;

(b) Updated not later than 24 hours after midnight local time for each day fished and prior to the offloading or sale of halibut taken during that fishing trip;

(c) Retained for a period of two years by the owner or operator of the vessel;

(d) Open to inspection by an authorized officer or any authorized representative of the Commission upon demand; and

(e) Kept on board the vessel when engaged in halibut fishing, during transits to port of landing, and for five (5) days following offloading halibut.

(3) The log referred to in paragraph (1) does not apply to the incidental halibut fishery in Area 2A defined in paragraph (3) of section 8.

(4) The operator of any Canadian vessel shall keep an accurate log of all halibut fishing operations including the date, locality, amount of gear used, and total weight of halibut taken daily in each locality. The log information must be recorded in the British Columbia Halibut Fishery logbook provided by DFO.

(5) The log referred to in paragraph (4) shall be:

(a) Maintained on board the vessel;

(b) Updated not later than 24 hours after midnight local time for each day fished and prior to the offloading or sale of halibut taken during that fishing trip;

(c) Retained for a period of two years by the owner or operator of the vessel;

(d) Open to inspection by an authorized officer or any authorized representative of the Commission upon demand;

(e) Kept on board the vessel when engaged in halibut fishing, during transits to port of landing, and for five (5) days following offloading halibut; and

(f) Mailed to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (white copy) and IPHC (yellow copy) within seven days of offloading.

(6) The poundage of any halibut that is not sold, but is used by the vessel operator, his/her crew members, or any other person for personal use, shall be recorded in the vessel's log within 24-hours of offloading.

(7) No person shall make a false entry in a log referred to in this section.

17. Receipt and Possession of Halibut

(1) No person shall receive halibut from a United States vessel that does not have on board the license required by section 3.

(2) No person shall offload halibut from a vessel unless the gills and entrails have been removed prior to offloading.

(3) A commercial fish processor or buyer in the United States who purchases or receives halibut directly from the owner or operator of a vessel that was engaged in halibut fishing must weigh and record all halibut on board said vessel at the time offloading commences and record on State fish tickets or Federal catch reports the date, locality, name of vessel, Halibut Commission license number (for Area 2A), the name(s) of the person(s) from whom the halibut was purchased; and the scale weight obtained at the time of offloading of all halibut on board the vessel including the pounds purchased; pounds in excess of IFQs, IVQs, or fishing period limits; pounds retained for personal use; and pounds discarded as unfit for human consumption. It shall be the responsibility of the owner or operator of the vessel making the offload to offload all halibut from the vessel once offloading commences.

(4) The master or operator of a Canadian vessel that was engaged in halibut fishing must weigh and record all halibut on board said vessel at the time offloading commences and record on Provincial fish tickets or Federal catch reports the date, locality, name of vessel, the name(s) of the person(s) from whom the halibut was purchased; and the scale weight obtained at the time of offloading of all halibut on board the vessel including the pounds purchased; pounds in excess of IVQs; pounds retained for personal use; and pounds discarded as unfit for human consumption.

(5) No person shall make a false entry on a State fish ticket or a Federal catch or landing report referred to in paragraph (3) and (4).

(6) A copy of the fish tickets or catch reports referred to in paragraph (3) and (4) shall be:

(a) Retained by the person making them for a period of three years from the date the fish tickets or catch reports are made; and

(b) Open to inspection by an authorized officer or any authorized representative of the Commission.

(7) No person shall possess any halibut that he/she knows to have been taken in contravention of these Regulations.

(8) When halibut are delivered to other than a commercial fish processor the records required by paragraph (3) shall be maintained by the operator of the vessel from which that halibut was caught, in compliance with paragraph (6).

(9) It shall be unlawful to enter a Halibut Commission license number on a State fish ticket for any vessel other than the vessel actually used in catching the halibut reported thereon.

18. Fishing Multiple Regulatory Areas

(1) Except as provided in this section, no person shall possess at the same time on board a vessel halibut caught in more than one regulatory area.

(2) Halibut caught in Regulatory Areas 2C, 3A, and 3B may be possessed on board a vessel at the same time providing the operator of the vessel:

(a) Has a NMFS-certified observer on board when required by NMFS regulations published at Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations, § 679.7(f)(4); and

(b) Can identify the regulatory area in which each halibut on board was caught by separating halibut from different areas in the hold, tagging halibut, or by other means.

(3) Halibut caught in Regulatory Areas 4A, 4B, 4C, and 4D may be possessed on board a vessel at the same time providing the operator of the vessel:

(a) Has a NMFS-certified observer on board the vessel when halibut caught in different regulatory areas are on board; and

(b) Can identify the regulatory area in which each halibut on board was caught by separating halibut from different areas in the hold, tagging halibut, or by other means.

(4) Halibut caught in Regulatory Areas 4A, 4B, 4C, and 4D may be possessed on board a vessel when in compliance with paragraph (3) and if halibut from Area 4 are on board the vessel, the vessel can have halibut caught in Regulatory Areas 2C, 3A, and 3B on board if in compliance with paragraph (2).

19. Fishing Gear

(1) No person shall fish for halibut using any gear other than hook and line gear.

(2) No person shall possess halibut taken with any gear other than hook and line gear.

(3) No person shall possess halibut while on board a vessel carrying any

trawl nets or fishing pots capable of catching halibut.

(4) All setline or skate marker buoys carried on board or used by any United States vessel used for halibut fishing shall be marked with one of the following:

(a) The vessel's name;

(b) The vessel's state license number; or

(c) The vessel's registration number.

(5) The markings specified in paragraph (4) shall be in characters at least four inches in height and one-half inch in width in a contrasting color visible above the water and shall be maintained in legible condition.

(6) All setline or skate marker buoys carried on board or used by a Canadian vessel used for halibut fishing shall be

(a) Floating and visible on the surface of the water; and

(b) Legibly marked with the identification plate number of the vessel engaged in commercial fishing from which that setline is being operated.

(7) No person on board a vessel from which setline gear was used to fish for any species of fish anywhere in Area 2A during the 72-hour period immediately before the opening of a halibut fishing period shall catch or possess halibut anywhere in those waters during that halibut fishing period.

(8) No vessel from which setline gear was used to fish for any species of fish anywhere in Area 2A during the 72-hour period immediately before the opening of a halibut fishing period may be used to catch or possess halibut anywhere in those waters during that halibut fishing period.

(9) No person on board a vessel from which setline gear was used to fish for any species of fish anywhere in Areas 2B, 2C, 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, or 4E during the 72-hour period immediately before the opening of the halibut fishing season shall catch or possess halibut anywhere in those areas until the vessel has removed all of its setline gear from the water and has either

(a) Made a landing and completely offloaded its entire catch of other fish; or

(b) Submitted to a hold inspection by an authorized officer.

(10) No vessel from which setline gear was used to fish for any species of fish anywhere in Areas 2B, 2C, 3A, 3B, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, or 4E during the 72-hour period immediately before the opening of the halibut fishing season may be used to catch or possess halibut anywhere in those areas until the vessel has removed all of its setline gear from the water and has either

(a) Made a landing and completely offloaded its entire catch of other fish; or

(b) Submitted to a hold inspection by an authorized officer.

(11) Notwithstanding any other provision in these regulations, a person may retain and possess, but not sell or barter halibut taken with trawl gear only as authorized by NMFS' Prohibited Species Donation regulations.

20. Retention of Tagged Halibut

(1) Nothing contained in these Regulations prohibits any vessel at any time from retaining and landing a halibut that bears a Commission tag at the time of capture, if the halibut with the tag still attached is reported at the time of landing and made available for examination by a representative of the Commission or by an authorized officer.

(2) After examination and removal of the tag by a representative of the Commission or an authorized officer, the halibut

(a) May be retained for personal use; or

(b) May be sold if it complies with the provisions of section 13, Size Limits.

21. Supervision of Unloading and Weighing

The unloading and weighing of halibut may be subject to the supervision of authorized officers to assure the fulfillment of the provisions of these Regulations.

22. Fishing by United States Treaty Indian Tribes

(1) Halibut fishing in subarea 2A-1 by members of United States treaty Indian tribes located in the State of Washington shall be regulated under regulations promulgated by the National Marine Fisheries Service and published in the **Federal Register**.

(2) Subarea 2A-1 includes all waters off the coast of Washington that are north of 46°53'18" N. lat. and east of 125°44'00" W. long., and all inland marine waters of Washington.

(3) Commercial fishing for halibut in subarea 2A-1 is permitted with hook and line gear from March 15 through November 15, or until 305,000 pounds (138.3 mt) is taken, whichever occurs first.

(4) Ceremonial and subsistence fishing for halibut in subarea 2A-1 is permitted with hook and line gear from January 1 through December 31, and is estimated to take 10,500 pounds (4.8 metric tons).

23. Sport Fishing for Halibut

(1) No person shall engage in sport fishing for halibut using gear other than

a single line with no more than two hooks attached; or a spear.

(2) In all waters off Alaska:

(a) The sport fishing season is from February 1 to December 31;

(b) The daily bag limit is two halibut of any size per day per person.

(3) In all waters off British Columbia:

(a) The sport fishing season is from February 1 to December 31;

(b) The daily bag limit is two halibut of any size per day per person.

(4) In all waters off California, Oregon, and Washington:

(a) The total allowable catch of halibut shall be limited to 188,307 pounds (85.4 mt) in waters off Washington and 163,097 pounds (74.0 mt) in waters off California and Oregon;

(b) The sport fishing subareas, subquotas, fishing dates, and daily bag limits are as follows, except as modified under the inseason actions in Section 24. All sport fishing in Area 2A is managed on a "port of landing" basis, whereby any halibut landed into a port counts toward the quota for the area in which that port is located, and the regulations governing the area of landing apply, regardless of the specific area of catch.

(i) In Puget Sound and the U.S. waters in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, east of a line extending from 48°17'30" N. lat., 124°23'70" W. long.) north to the 48°24'10" N. lat., 124°23'10" W. long., there is no quota. This area is managed by setting a season that is projected to result in a catch of 49,137 lb (22.3 mt).

(A) The fishing season is May 25 through July 27, 5 days a week (Thursday through Monday).

(B) The daily bag limit is one halibut of any size per day per person.

(ii) In the area off the north Washington coast, west of the line described in paragraph (d)(2)(i) of this section and north of the Queets River (47°31'42" N. lat.), the quota for landings into ports in this area is 99,774 lb (45.3 mt).

(A) The fishing seasons are:

(1) Commencing May 2 and continuing 5 days a week (Tuesday through Saturday) until 92,774 lb (42.1 mt) are estimated to have been taken and the season is closed by the Commission, or until June 30, whichever occurs first.

(2) Commencing July 1 and continuing 5 days a week (Tuesday through Saturday) until the overall area quota of 99,774 lb (45.3 mt) are estimated to have been taken and the area is closed by the Commission, or until September 30, whichever occurs first.

(B) The daily bag limit is one halibut of any size per day per person.

(C) A portion of this area about 19 nm (35 km) southwest of Cape Flattery is closed to sport fishing for halibut. The closed area is within a rectangle defined by these four corners: 48°18'00" N. lat., 125°11'00" W. long.; 48°18'00" N. lat., 124°59'00" W. long.; 48°04'00" N. lat., 125°11'00" W. long.; and, 48°04'00" N. lat., 124°59'00" W. long.

(iii) In the area between the Queets River, WA and Leadbetter Point, WA (46°38'10" N. lat.), the quota for landings into ports in this area is 34,482 lb (15.6 mt).

(A) The fishing season commences on May 1 and continues 5 days a week (Sunday through Thursday) in all waters, and commences on May 1 and continues 7 days a week in the area from Queets River south to 47°00'00" N. lat. and east of 124°40'00" W. long., until 33,482 lb (15.2 mt) are estimated to have been taken and the season is closed by the Commission. Immediately following this closure, the season reopens in the area from the Queets River south to 47°00'00" N. lat. and east of 124°40'00" W. long. and continues every day until 34,482 lb (15.6 mt) are estimated to have been taken and the area is closed by the Commission, or until September 30, whichever occurs first.

(B) The daily bag limit is one halibut of any size per day per person.

(C) A portion of this area is closed to sport fishing for halibut. The closed area is within a rectangle defined by these four corners: 47°19'00" N. lat., 124°53'00" W. long.; 47°19'00" N. lat., 124°48'00" W. long.; 47°16'00" N. lat., 124°53'00" W. long.; and, 47°16'00" N. lat., 124°48'00" W. long.

(iv) In the area between Leadbetter Point, WA and Cape Falcon, OR (45°46'00" N. lat.), the quota for landings into ports in this area is 8,177 lb (3.7 mt).

(A) The fishing season commences on May 1, and continues every day through September 30, or until 8,177 lb (3.7 mt) are estimated to have been taken and the area is closed by the Commission, whichever occurs first.

(B) The daily bag limit is the first halibut taken, per person, of 32 inches (81.3 cm) or greater in length.

(v) In the area off Oregon between Cape Falcon and the Siuslaw River at the Florence north jetty (44°01'08" N. lat.), the quota for landings into ports in this area is 143,574 lb (65.1 mt).

(A) The fishing seasons are:

(1) The first season is limited to the area inside the 30-fathom (55 m) curve nearest to the coastline as plotted on National Ocean Service charts numbered 18520, 18580, and 18600. It commences May 1 and continues every

day through September 30, or until the combined subquotas of the north central and south central inside 30-fathom fisheries (12,324 lb (5.6 mt)) or any inseason revised subquota is estimated to have been taken and the season is closed by the Commission, whichever is earlier.

(2) The second season is open on May 11, 12, 13, 18, and 19. The projected catch for this season is 97,630 lb (44.3 mt). If sufficient unharvested catch remains for an additional days fishing, the season will reopen. Dependent on the amount of unharvested catch available, the season reopening dates will be June 9; if sufficient quota remains for two days, then June 10 would also be open; if sufficient quota remains for three, four, five, or six additional days, then June 8, June 16–17, then June 15 would also be opened, in that order. If a decision is made inseason by NMFS to allow fishing on one or more of these additional dates, notice of the opening will be announced on the NMFS hotline (206) 526-6667 or (800) 662-9825. No halibut fishing will be allowed on any of the additional dates in June unless the opening date is announced on the NMFS hotline.

(3) The third season is open on August 4 or until the combined quotas for the all-depth fisheries in the subareas described in paragraphs (v) and (vi) of this section totaling 142,618 lb (64.7 mt) are estimated to have been taken and the area is closed by the Commission, whichever is earlier. An inseason announcement will be made in mid-July as to whether the fishery will be open on August 4 and/or 5. If the harvest during this opening does not achieve the 142,618 lb (64.7 mt) quota, the season will reopen. Dependent on the amount of unharvested catch available, the season reopening date will be August 18. If a decision is made inseason to allow fishing on August 5 or August 18, notice of the reopening date will be announced on the NMFS hotline (206) 526-6667 or (800) 662-9825.

(B) The daily bag limit is the first halibut taken, per person, of 32 inches (81.3 cm) or greater in length.

(vi) In the area off Oregon between the Siuslaw River at the Florence north jetty and Humbug Mountain, Oregon (42°40'30" N. lat.), the quota for landings into ports in this area is 11,368 lb (5.2 mt).

(A) The fishing seasons are:

(1) The first season is limited to the area inside the 30-fathom (55 m) curve nearest to the coastline as plotted on National Ocean Service charts numbered 18520, 18580, and 18600. It commences May 1 and continues every

day through September 30, or until the combined subquotas of the north central and south central inside 30-fathom fisheries (12,324 lb (5.6 mt)) or any inseason revised subquota is estimated to have been taken and the season is closed by the Commission, whichever is earlier.

(2) The second season is open on May 11, 12, 13, 18, and 19. The projected catch for this season is 9,094 lb (4.1 mt). If sufficient unharvested catch remains for an additional days fishing, the season will reopen. Dependent on the amount of unharvested catch available, the season reopening dates will be June 9; if sufficient quota remains for three, four, five, or six additional days, then June 8, then June 16–17, then June 15 would also be opened, in that order. If a decision is made inseason by NMFS to allow fishing on one or more of these additional dates, notice of the opening will be announced on the NMFS hotline (206) 526-6667 or (800) 662-9825. No halibut fishing will be allowed on any of the additional dates in June unless the opening date is announced on the NMFS hotline.

(3) The third season is open on August 4 or until the combined quotas for the all-depth fisheries in the subareas described in paragraphs (v) and (vi) of this section totaling 142,618 lb (64.7 mt) are estimated to have been taken and the area is closed by the Commission, whichever is earlier. An inseason announcement will be made in mid-July as to whether the fishery will be open on August 4 and/or 5. If the harvest during this opening does not achieve the 142,618 lb (64.7 mt) quota, the season will reopen. Dependent on the amount of unharvested catch available, the season reopening date will be August 18. If a decision is made inseason to allow fishing on August 5 or August 18, notice of the reopening date will be announced on the NMFS hotline (206) 526-6667 or (800) 662-9825.

(B) The daily bag limit is the first halibut taken, per person, of 32 inches (81.3 cm) or greater in length.

(vii) In the area south of Humbug Mountain, Oregon (42°40'30" N. lat.) and off the California coast, there is no quota. This area is managed on a season that is projected to result in a catch of less than 4,893 lb (2.2 mt).

(A) The fishing season will commence on May 1 and continue every day through September 30.

(B) The daily bag limit is the first halibut taken, per person, of 32 inches (81.3 cm) or greater in length.

(c) The Commission shall determine and announce closing dates to the public for any area in which the

subquotas in this Section are estimated to have been taken.

(d) When the Commission has determined that a subquota under paragraph (4)(b) of this section is estimated to have been taken, and has announced a date on which the season will close, no person shall sport fish for halibut in that area after that date for the rest of the year, unless a reopening of that area for sport halibut fishing is scheduled in accordance with the Catch Sharing Plan for Area 2A, or announced by the Commission.

(5) Any minimum overall size limit promulgated under Commission or NMFS regulations shall be measured in a straight line passing over the pectoral fin from the tip of the lower jaw with the mouth closed, to the extreme end of the middle of the tail.

(6) No person shall fillet, mutilate, or otherwise disfigure a halibut in any manner that prevents the determination of minimum size or the number of fish caught, possessed, or landed.

(7) The possession limit for halibut in the waters off the coast of Alaska is two daily bag limits.

(8) The possession limit for halibut in the waters off the coast of British Columbia is three halibut

(9) The possession limit for halibut in the waters off Washington, Oregon, and California is the same as the daily bag limit.

(10) The possession limit for halibut on land in Area 2A north of Cape Falcon, OR is two daily bag limits.

(11) The possession limit for halibut on land in Area 2A south of Cape Falcon, OR is one daily bag limit.

(12) Any halibut brought aboard a vessel and not immediately returned to the sea with a minimum of injury will be included in the daily bag limit of the person catching the halibut.

(13) No person shall be in possession of halibut on a vessel while fishing in a closed area.

(14) No halibut caught by sport fishing shall be offered for sale, sold, traded, or bartered.

(15) No halibut caught in sport fishing shall be possessed on board a vessel when other fish or shellfish aboard the said vessel are destined for commercial use, sale, trade, or barter.

(16) The operator of a charter vessel shall be liable for any violations of these regulations committed by a passenger aboard said vessel.

24. Flexible inseason management provisions in Area 2A.

(1) The Regional Administrator, NMFS Northwest Region, after consultation with the Chairman of the Pacific Fishery Management Council,

the Commission Executive Director, and the Fisheries Director(s) of the affected state(s), is authorized to modify regulations during the season after making the following determinations.

(A) The action is necessary to allow allocation objectives to be met.

(B) The action will not result in exceeding the catch limit for the area.

(C) If any of the sport fishery subareas north of Cape Falcon, OR are not projected to utilize their respective quotas by September 30, NMFS may take inseason action to transfer any projected unused quota to a Washington sport subarea projected to have the fewest number of sport fishing days in the calendar year.

(2) Flexible inseason management provisions include, but are not limited to, the following:

(A) Modification of sport fishing periods;

(B) Modification of sport fishing bag limits;

(C) Modification of sport fishing size limits; and

(D) Modification of sport fishing days per calendar week.

(3) Notice procedures.

(A) Actions taken under this section will be published in the **Federal Register**.

(B) Actual notice of inseason management actions will be provided by a telephone hotline administered by the Northwest Region, NMFS, at 206-526-6667 or 800-662-9825 (May through September) and by U.S. Coast Guard broadcasts. These broadcasts are announced on Channel 16 VHF-FM and 2182 kHz at frequent intervals. The announcements designate the channel or frequency over which the notice to mariners will be immediately broadcast. Since provisions of these regulations may be altered by inseason actions, sport fishers should monitor either the telephone hotline or U.S. Coast Guard broadcasts for current information for the area in which they are fishing.

(4) Effective dates.

(A) Any action issued under this section is effective on the date specified in the publication or at the time that the action is filed for public inspection with the Office of the Federal Register, whichever is later, except that any partial or complete inseason opening of the Washington South Coast sport fishery closed area may be made effective upon announcement on the NMFS hotline.

(B) If time allows, NMFS will invite public comment prior to the effective date of any inseason action filed with the **Federal Register**. If the Regional Administrator determines, for good cause, that an inseason action must be

filed without affording a prior opportunity for public comment, public comments will be received for a period of 15 days after of the action in the **Federal Register**.

(C) Any inseason action issued under this section will remain in effect until the stated expiration date or until rescinded, modified, or superseded. However, no inseason action has any effect beyond the end of the calendar year in which it is issued.

(5) Availability of data. The Regional Administrator will compile, in aggregate form, all data and other information relevant to the action being taken and will make them available for public review during normal office hours at the Northwest Regional Office, NMFS, Sustainable Fisheries Division, 7600 Sand Point Way NE, Seattle, WA.

25. Fishery election in Area 2A.

(1) A vessel that fishes in Area 2A may participate in only one of the following three fisheries in Area 2A:

(a) The sport fishery under Section 23;

(b) The commercial directed fishery for halibut during the fishing period(s) established in Section 8; or

(c) The incidental catch fishery during the salmon troll fishery as authorized in Section 8.

(2) No person shall fish for halibut in the sport fishery in Area 2A under Section 23 from a vessel that has been used during the same calendar year for commercial halibut fishing in Area 2A or that has been issued a permit for the same calendar year for the commercial halibut fishery in Area 2A.

(3) No person shall fish for halibut in the directed halibut fishery in Area 2A during the fishing periods established in Section 8 from a vessel that has been used during the same calendar year for the incidental catch fishery during the salmon troll fishery as authorized in Section 8.

(4) No person shall fish for halibut in the directed commercial halibut fishery in Area 2A from a vessel that, during the same calendar year, has been used in the sport halibut fishery in Area 2A or that is licensed for the sport charter halibut fishery in Area 2A.

(5) No person shall retain halibut in the salmon troll fishery in Area 2A as authorized under Section 8 taken on a vessel that, during the same calendar year, has been used in the sport halibut fishery in Area 2A, or that is licensed for the sport charter halibut fishery in Area 2A.

(6) No person shall retain halibut in the salmon troll fishery in Area 2A as authorized under Section 8 taken on a vessel that, during the same calendar year, has been used in the directed

commercial fishery during the fishing periods established in Section 8 for Area 2A or that is licensed to participate in the directed commercial fishery during the fishing periods established in Section 8 in Area 2A.

26. Previous Regulations Superseded

These regulations shall supersede all previous regulations of the Commission, and these regulations shall be effective each succeeding year until superseded.

Classification

IPHC Regulations

Because approval by the Secretary of State of the IPHC regulations is a foreign affairs function, the notice-and-comment and delay-in-effective date requirements of the Administrative Procedure Act, 5 U.S.C. 553, do not apply to this notice of the effectiveness and content of the IPHC regulations, *Jensen v. NMFS*, 512 F.2d 1189 (9th Cir. 1975). Because prior notice and an opportunity for public comment are not required to be provided for this rule by 5 U.S.C. 553, or by any other law, the analytical requirements of the Regulatory Flexibility Act, 5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*, are not applicable.

Catch Sharing Plan for Area 2A

An Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review was prepared on the proposed changes to the CSP. NMFS has determined that the proposed changes to the CSP and the management measures implementing the CSP contained in these regulations will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, and the preparation of an environmental impact statement on the final action is not required by section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act or its implementing regulations. At the proposed rule stage, the Chief Counsel for Regulation, Department of Commerce, certified to the Chief Counsel for Advocacy of the Small Business Administration that this action will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. No comments were received on this certification. Consequently, no regulatory flexibility analysis has been prepared.

This action has been determined to be not significant for purposes of E.O. 12866.

List of Subjects in 50 CFR Part 300

Fisheries, Fishing, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements, Treaties.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 773-773k.

Dated: March 15, 2000.

Andrew A. Rosenberg,
Deputy Asst. Administrator for Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.
[FR Doc. 00-6837 Filed 3-15-00; 2:31 pm]
BILLING CODE 3510-22-F

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 679

[Docket No. 991207325-0063-02; I.D. 100699A]

RIN 0648-AJ52

Fisheries of the Exclusive Economic Zone Off Alaska; A Cost Recovery Program for the Individual Fishing Quota Program

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: NMFS establishes regulations to implement cost recovery for the Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program for fixed gear halibut and sablefish fisheries in waters in and off of Alaska (IFQ Program). Cost recovery is necessary because section 304(d) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) requires the Secretary of Commerce (Secretary) to collect fees to recover actual costs incurred for Federal management and enforcement of these IFQ fisheries. This action is intended to impose and provide for collection of such fees.

DATES: Effective March 15, 2000.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the Environmental Assessment/Regulatory Impact Review (EA/RIR) and the Final Regulatory Flexibility Analysis (FRFA) for this action may be obtained from NMFS, Sustainable Fisheries Division, Alaska Region, NMFS, P.O. Box 21668 Juneau, AK 99802-1668, Attn: Lori J. Gravel, or by calling the Alaska Region, NMFS, at (907) 586-7228.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Jay Ginter, 907-586-7228.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 304(d)(2)(A) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act requires the Secretary to "collect a fee to recover the actual costs directly related to the management and enforcement of any * * * individual fishing quota program." Section 304(d)(2)(B) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act specifies an upper limit on these fees, when the fees must be collected,

and where the fees must be deposited. Section 303(d)(4) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act allows NMFS to reserve up to 25 percent of the fees collected for use in an IFQ loan program to aid in financing the purchase of IFQ or quota share (QS) by entry-level and small-vessel fishermen.

The final rule will recover costs for the IFQ Program only. NMFS intends to implement cost recovery for the Community Development Quota (CDQ) program through separate rulemaking.

The Magnuson-Stevens Act specifies the following with respect to the imposition of IFQ cost-recovery fees:

1. Fees must recover actual costs directly related to actual enforcement and management of the IFQ Program;
2. Fees must not exceed 3 percent of the ex-vessel value of fish harvested under any such program;
3. Fees are in addition to any other fees charged under the Magnuson-Stevens Act;
4. With the exception of money reserved for the IFQ loan program, fees must be deposited in the Limited Access System Administrative Fund (LASAF) in the U.S. Treasury; and
5. Fees must be collected at either the time of a legal landing of halibut or sablefish, filing of a landing report, or sale of such fish during a fishing season or in the last quarter of the calendar year in which the fish is harvested.

Background

NMFS, Alaska Region, administers the IFQ Program. The IFQ Program is a limited access system authorized by section 303(b) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act and the Northern Pacific Halibut Act of 1982. NMFS implemented the IFQ Program in March 1995. Regulations implementing the IFQ Program are set forth at 50 CFR part 679. NMFS published a proposed rule to recover costs of managing and enforcing the IFQ Program on December 27, 1999 (64 FR 72302), and solicited public comments through January 26, 2000.

Cost Recovery Program Description

An IFQ permit holder incurs a fee liability for every pound of IFQ halibut and sablefish that is landed on his or her permit. The IFQ permit holder must collect from himself or herself the amount due for all IFQ halibut and IFQ sablefish landings on his or her permit(s). The IFQ permit holder is also responsible for submitting this payment to NMFS on or before the due date of January 31 following the calendar year in which the landings were made. The dollar amount of the fee due is determined by multiplying the IFQ fee percentage (3 percent or less) by the ex-