

harvesting effort into southern areas of halibut biomass and is not based on a conservation concern.

The allocations recommended by the Council are intended to continue until new information becomes available such as new information on biomass distribution. Upon receipt of new information, the Council can decide if the information necessitates reconsidering the issue of halibut allocation.

The Council recommended dividing the commercial fishery into two sectors, with 85 percent of the non-Indian commercial fishery allocation for a directed halibut fishery and 15 percent for incidental harvests of halibut during the salmon troll fisheries. The Council acknowledged that salmon trollers traditionally harvested halibut during salmon fisheries, but have been excluded from their traditional halibut fishery because recent years' season structuring limited commercial halibut openings to 1 or 2 days in the summer that did not correspond with salmon troll openings. Therefore, the Council adopted a separate allocation to allow trollers to renew their traditional access to halibut incidentally caught during the May and June salmon troll fishery as described in the proposed Plan at § 301.23. In order to ensure that salmon trollers do not target on halibut and exceed their allocation, the Council adopted a ratio fishery whereby a salmon troller would not be allowed to retain halibut until a specified number of chinook salmon had been caught; the vessel would be limited to landing one halibut per that number of chinook. The initial ratio proposed by the Council is one halibut per 25 chinook, but this ratio would be adjusted annually after halibut and chinook quotas are determined, to ensure the fishery is viable without exceeding the halibut quota. Also, because the chinook quotas and harvest guidelines can affect whether this fishery can be prosecuted, the Council adopted rollover provisions that would allow the transfer of any quota remaining from this fishery on June 30 to the directed halibut fishery, which normally opens in July or August. In addition, if quota remained unharvested from the directed fishery, it would be transferred to the fall salmon troll fisheries.

The Council considered three new management measures that would apply to the commercial and sport fisheries. The first measure would prohibit commercial fishing for halibut from any vessel that participates in the sport fishery for halibut in Area 2A, and vice versa. The basis for this measure was concern that increased numbers of

charterboat vessels and private vessels operating in the sport fishery were obtaining commercial licenses and also participating in the commercial fishery in Area 2A. This "double-dipping" into both commercial and sport allocations was viewed as inconsistent with the Council's allocation intent to provide separate quotas and opportunity for each harvesting sector to utilize its allocation. Therefore, the Council recommended restrictions on the issuance of IPHC licenses to vessels operating in Area 2A.

The second management measure considered by the Council was possession limits on land. The current IPHC regulations on possession limits for halibut in Area 2A stipulate only that the possession limit on the water is the same as the daily bag limit and do not address possession limits on land. Because the three states have different regulations and interpretations on possession limits on land and condition of fish (e.g., frozen, fresh) as they relate to possession limits, enforcement has varied between states and ports. A possession limit on land is intended to restrict the number of halibut trips that sport fishers can make so that the sport allocation is better distributed among sport users. This would allow for longer seasons because the quotas would not be achieved as quickly. The Council adopted a measure that would ensure a consistent application of possession limits in the subareas north and south of Cape Falcon. These possession limits would apply to all halibut possessed, regardless of condition of fish (e.g., frozen, fresh). For the sport fisheries north of Cape Falcon, the Council adopted a possession limit on land of two daily bag limits. Because of the more remote locations of the sport halibut fishing ports (such as Neah Bay) in Washington, the Council adopted a possession limit on land of two daily bag limits to allow fishers more opportunity to fish in those remote locations that require more travel time to access. Further, this possession limit was proposed because it was consistent with Washington sport regulations and would be easier to enforce. For the sport fisheries south of Cape Falcon, the possession limit on land would be the same as the daily bag limit. This possession limit on land of one daily bag limit is consistent with Oregon sport regulations for all other species and would make enforcement easier.

The third management measure considered by the Council was an alternate approach to establishing sport fishery geographic subareas whereby "landing zones" would be created, consisting of the ports in the geographic

area, and regulation of and accounting for catch would be by area of landing rather than area of catch. The landing zone approach would prevent vessels out of other ports from utilizing a subquota intended for another subarea. It also would simplify enforcement and accounting by eliminating the need to verify area of catch. The Council adopted this measure and recommended that all sport fishing in 2A (except for fish caught in the north Washington coast area and landed in Neah Bay) be managed on a "port of landing" basis, whereby any halibut landed into a port would count toward the quota for the area in which that port is located, and the regulations governing the area of landing would apply, regardless of the specific area of catch. Neah Bay is treated differently because, although it is located in the Washington inside waters subarea, it is the principal port used by sport fishers to access the Washington north coast subarea.

The Council considered the structuring of the sport fisheries and suballocations among ports in geographic areas as described in the EA/RIR. The division of the sport allocation among geographic areas is intended to spread the sport fishing opportunity and allow it to occur in a manner that is most beneficial to the sport fishers in those areas. Some areas that have low halibut fishing effort and success are managed for seasons that allow fishers to retain incidental catches throughout the months when sport fishing is accessible, while other areas are characterized by high fishing effort and catch and are managed to allow maximum fishing opportunity while preventing quotas from being achieved too quickly. This approach results in differing bag limits and seasons in each subarea that are designed to maximize the sport fishing opportunity and fishing experience for anglers, based on the specific characteristics of fishing patterns and catches in the respective areas.

The Council divided the sport fisheries into seven areas that represent the principal ports areas that sport fishers use. The seven areas, which are defined below, are: (1) Washington inside waters, (2) Washington north coast, (3) Washington south coast, (4) Columbia River area, (5) Oregon central coast, (6) Oregon south coast, and (7) California coast. The management goals for the sport fishery in each subarea are described in the Plan proposed at § 301.23. The suballocations and season structuring recommended by the Council for each of these areas is as follows.