

fisheries in IPHC statistical Area 2A (off Washington, Oregon, and California).

In 1995, NMFS implemented the Pacific 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 TAC to Washington treaty Indian tribes in Subarea 2A-1 and 65 percent to non-Indian fisheries in Area 2A. The allocation to non-Indian 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 a directed commercial fishery that is allocated 85 percent of the commercial allocation and an incidental catch in the salmon troll fishery that is allocated 15 percent of the commercial allocation. The directed commercial fishery in Area 2A is confined to southern Washington (south of 46°53'18" N. lat.), Oregon, and California. North of 46°53'18" N. lat. (Pt. Chehalis), the Plan allows for incidental halibut retention in the primary limited entry sablefish fishery when the overall Area 2A TAC is above 900,000 lb (408.2 mt). The Plan also divides the sport fisheries into seven geographic subareas, each with separate allocations, seasons, and bag limits.

#### **Pacific Council Recommended Changes to the Plan**

Each year, the states and tribes consider whether changes to the Plan are needed or desired by their fishery participants. Fishery managers from the states and tribes hold public meetings before both the September and November Pacific Council meetings to get public input on revisions to the Plan. At the September 2002 Pacific Council meeting, the states recommended several changes to the Plan and the tribes announced that they had no proposal for revising the Plan in 2003. Following the September 2002 Pacific Council meeting, the states again reviewed their proposals with the public and drafted their recommended revisions for review by the Pacific Council.

At its October 29 through November 1, 2002, meeting, the Pacific Council considered the results of State-sponsored workshops on the proposed changes to the Plan and public comments, and made the final recommendations for modifications to the Plan as follows:

(1) Divide the Washington North Coast subarea recreational quota such that 78 percent of the quota for that subarea is available to a May fishery and 22 percent is available for a late June fishery. Revise the closed area within this sport fishery subarea to better protect yelloweye rockfish, an overfished groundfish species.

(2) Require non-treaty commercial vessels operating in the directed commercial fishery for halibut to fish offshore of 100 fm (184 m) to protect yelloweye rockfish.

(3) Cap the incidental halibut retention allocation for the primary sablefish fishery at 70,000 lb (31.8 kg) when halibut is available to that fishery so that the fishery is maintained as an incidental, not directed, opportunity.

(4) Change the season ending date for Oregon sport fisheries in the North Central and South Central areas from September 30 to October 31.

(5) Revise the inseason management provisions to allow more flexibility for managers making inseason adjustments to fishery openings and closures to ensure that the available quota may be taken.

(6) Change the names of the Oregon North Central and South Central all-depth fisheries from the "May" and "August" fisheries to the "Spring" and "Summer" fisheries.

#### **Proposed Changes to the Catch Sharing Plan**

NMFS is proposing to approve and to make the following changes to the Plan:

In section (e) of the Plan, Non-Indian Commercial Fisheries, insert a new third sentence in paragraph (2) to read as follows:

This fishery may also be managed with closed areas designed to protect overfished groundfish species. Any such closed areas will be described annually in Federal halibut regulations and published in the **Federal Register**.

In section (e) of the Plan, Non-Indian Commercial Fisheries, add a sentence at the end of the first paragraph of paragraph (3) to read as follows:

The amount of halibut allocated to the sablefish fishery will be shared as follows: up to 70,000 lb (31.8 kg) of halibut to the primary sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis. Any remaining allocation will be distributed to the Washington sport fishery among the four subareas according to the sharing described in the Plan, Section (f)(1).

In section (f) of the Plan, Sport Fisheries, revise the third sentence through the end of the paragraph of paragraph (1)(ii) to read from the third sentence as follows:

The management objective for this subarea is to provide a quality recreational fishing opportunity during May and the latter part of June. To meet this objective, the north coast subarea quota will be allocated as follows: 72 percent for the month of May and 28 percent for the latter part of June. The fishery will open on May 1, and continue 5 days per week (Tuesday through Saturday) until the May allocation is projected to be taken. If May 1 falls on a Sunday or Monday, the fishery will open on the following Tuesday. The fishery will then reopen on the third Wednesday in June and continue until the remaining quota is projected to be taken, 5 days per week (Tuesday through Saturday.) No sport fishing for halibut is allowed after September 30. The daily bag limit in all fisheries is one halibut per person, with no size limit. A "C-shaped" yelloweye rockfish conservation area that is closed to recreational groundfish and halibut fishing is defined by the following coordinates in the order listed:

48°18' N. lat.; 125°18' W. long.;  
48°18' N. lat.; 124°59' W. long.;  
48°11' N. lat.; 124°59' W. long.;  
48°11' N. lat.; 125°11' W. long.;  
48°04' N. lat.; 125°11' W. long.;  
48°04' N. lat.; 124°59' W. long.;  
48°00' N. lat.; 124°59' W. long.;  
48°00' N. lat.; 125°18' W. long.;  
and connecting back to 48°18' N. lat.;  
125°18' W. long.

In section (f) of the Plan, Sport Fisheries, revise the third through the thirteenth sentence of paragraph (1)(v) to read from the third sentence as follows:

The structuring objectives for this subarea are to provide two periods of fishing opportunity in spring and in summer in productive deeper water areas along the coast, principally for charterboat and larger private boat anglers, and provide a period of fishing opportunity in the summer for nearshore waters for small boat anglers. Fixed season dates will be established pre-season for the spring and summer openings and will not be modified inseason except that the summer openings may be modified inseason if the combined Oregon all-depth quotas are estimated to be achieved. Recent year catch-rates will be used as a guideline for estimating the catch rate for the spring and summer fisheries each year. 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. Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) will monitor landings and provide a postseason estimate of catch within 2 weeks of the