



Washington
Department of
**FISH and
WILDLIFE**

Summary of Washington Pacific Halibut Fisheries Management in 2012

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**WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
SUMMARY OF PACIFIC HALIBUT FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN 2012**

The purpose of this report is to summarize the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) management and enforcement activities for the 2012 Pacific halibut fisheries. It includes a synopsis of Washington's recreational catch and incidental halibut catch in the sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis. A summary of WDFW's enforcement efforts relative to patrolling the North Coast (Neah Bay and La Push) recreational halibut fisheries is attached.

Washington's Recreational Halibut Fisheries in 2012

Washington's halibut fisheries are managed under the Pacific Fishery Management Council's Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan for Area 2A. The catch sharing plan specifies how the Area 2A total allowable catch (TAC) as defined by IPHC is allocated or "shared" among various state commercial and recreational sectors. For Washington, WDFW manages its recreational fisheries by subarea. These subareas are:

1. Puget Sound (inside waters east of the Sekiu River, including Puget Sound)
 - Eastern Region (inner Sound waters east of Low Point)
 - Western Region (Strait waters west of Low Point)
2. North Coast (waters in the Strait of Juan de Fuca west of the Sekiu River and Pacific Ocean waters south to the Queets River)
3. South Coast (Pacific Ocean waters south of the Queets River to Leadbetter Point)
4. Columbia River (Pacific Ocean waters south of Leadbetter Point to Cape Falcon, Oregon)

A summary of Washington's recreational halibut seasons for 2012 is described in Table 1.

Table 1.

Subarea	Quota (lbs)	Catch (lbs)	Avg Wt (lbs)	Season Dates
Puget Sound	57,393	Not available		West: May 24 – June 23 East: May 3 – June 2 Thu-Sat except Memorial Day Thu-Mon
North Coast	108,030	105,479	21.33	May 10, 12, 17, 19, 31 June 2, 14
South Coast	42,739	46,467	19.10	Primary: May 6, 8, 13, 15, 20 Nearshore: May 6 – June 8 7-days / week
Columbia River ^{1/}	11,895	5,905	17.18	Early: May 3 – July 14 Thu-Sat; Late: Aug 3 – Sept 30 Fri-Sun

^{1/} Columbia River harvest is Washington catch only.

Halibut are measured at the dock and the lengths of the samples are then converted to weights. On the coast, lengths are taken throughout the season on a weekly basis and applied to the number of halibut caught to project the total catch in pounds. The catches are then monitored and the fisheries are closed when they are projected to attain their respective subarea quota.

North Coast Subarea

The general management structure for the north coast subarea has remained unchanged since 2009 when revisions were made to provide better notification of fishery closures and re-openings resulting from in-season quota management. The improved public notification process was accomplished by identifying two weeks pre-season that the halibut fishery would be closed to monitor quota attainment and provide advanced notice as to when potential openings would occur if sufficient quota remained. The season structure using the management closure early in the season continues to provide some fishing opportunity in June.

South Coast Subarea

The South Coast subarea was structured to open on the first Sunday in May and continue two days per week (Sunday and Tuesday) for three consecutive weeks before a management closure the following week. The management closure provides adequate time to monitor quota attainment and provide advance notice of a potential closure. In 2012, the sub-area quota for the primary season lasted for the first three weeks and as a result the management closure was not needed. The nearshore fishery was open seven days per week to improve access to the nearshore set-aside and reduce the amount of incidentally caught halibut that would otherwise be discarded on days the primary season is closed or after the halibut season is over.

Columbia River Subarea

The season structure for the Columbia River subarea was revised in 2012 to divide the subarea quota so that 80% was reserved for an early season and the remaining 20% was set aside to provide for a late season fishing opportunity. In addition, the contribution of quota pounds set aside for this subarea was revised so that equal amounts of quota pounds were contributed from both the Washington and Oregon/California sport allocations. In 2012, the early season opened on May 3 and continued three days per week, Thursday through Saturday through July 14. The late season opened Friday August 3 and continued three days per week, Friday through Sunday through September 30.

Puget Sound Subarea

In-season catch estimates are not available for the Puget Sound fishery so fishing seasons are set after the quota is announced using historical catch data to project quota attainment. The method used to set the seasons was adjusted in 2009 to address higher than anticipated catch rates. The changes resulted in fewer open days per week and a shorter season overall. The fishery continued to operate under this new season structure in 2012.

WDFW held a public meeting in early February, following the IPHC Annual Meeting, to gather public input prior to setting the 2012 seasons. The 2012 seasons were very similar to 2011 with the eastern region opening on the first Thursday in May and continuing through June 2. The western region opened on the Thursday before Memorial Day and continued through June 23. Both regions were open three days per week (Thursday-Saturday) with the exception of Memorial Day weekend when they both were open Thursday through Monday.

WDFW is in the process of producing a post-season catch estimate for 2012. Refinements to the Puget Sound estimation methods are being implemented to incorporate improvements

recommended the federal Marine Recreational Information Program (MRIP). The final catch estimate will be available in early 2013 and will be added to this report as soon as it is available.

Canadian Halibut Landed Into Neah Bay

As part of WDFW's port sampling efforts for recreational halibut fisheries, we also sample the halibut caught in Canadian waters and landed into Neah Bay from March through October. The number of Canadian halibut landed into Neah Bay totaled 595 for 2012 which is approximately 32 percent less than in 2011. The amount of Canadian halibut landed into Neah Bay has decreased significantly since 2008 likely due to increasing restrictions implemented by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada on recreational halibut regulations and licensing requirements for the waters adjacent to Neah Bay. Table 4 summarizes the Canadian halibut catch landed into Neah Bay for 2008-2012.

Table 2. Canadian halibut landings into Neah Bay, Washington, in 2008-2012.

Year	# Boats	# Anglers	# Halibut
2008	834	3,412	4,778
2009	624	1,956	1,609
2010	539	1,629	1,245
2011	425	1,253	880
2012	335	833	595

Incidental Halibut Catch in the 2012 Sablefish Fishery North of Point Chehalis, WA

The 2A Halibut Catch Sharing Plan provides for incidental landings of halibut in the primary longline sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis, Washington, in years when the Area 2A TAC is greater than 900,000 lbs. The primary directed sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis will be allocated the Washington sport allocation that is in excess of 214,110 lb, provided a minimum of 10,000 pounds is available. The amount of halibut allowed in the directed sablefish fishery is capped at 70,000 lbs; any remaining allocation is transferred back to the Washington recreational fishery and divided among the subareas according to the methodology described in the Plan. The 2012 area 2A TAC was 989,000 pounds and the Washington sport allocation was 235,283 leaving 21,173 for incidental halibut landings in the longline sablefish fishery. The Pacific Fishery Management Council adopted a 50 pound halibut per 1,000 pound sablefish limit per landing with up to two additional halibut in excess of the 50 pounds per 1,000 pound landing ratio allowed per landing (both dressed weight, halibut with head-on). The sablefish fishery extends from April 1 through October 31 with associated halibut landings allowed beginning in May.

Eleven vessels made a total of 32 landings containing halibut in the directed tier-limit sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis. The total catch of dressed, head-off halibut in the directed sablefish fishery north of Pt. Chehalis at the conclusion of the fishery on October 31 was 5,010 pounds which is 31% of the established quota. The incidental halibut landings in the sablefish fishery north of Point Chehalis from 2008-2012 are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Incidental Halibut in the Sablefish Fishery North of Pt. Chehalis

Year	Vessels	Landings	Quota	Catch	% of Quota
2012	11	32	21,173	5,010	31.0%
2011	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
2010	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a
2009	17	79	11,895	6,154	51.7%
2008	36	58	70,000	39,729	56.8%

Summary

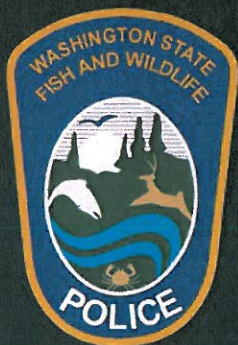
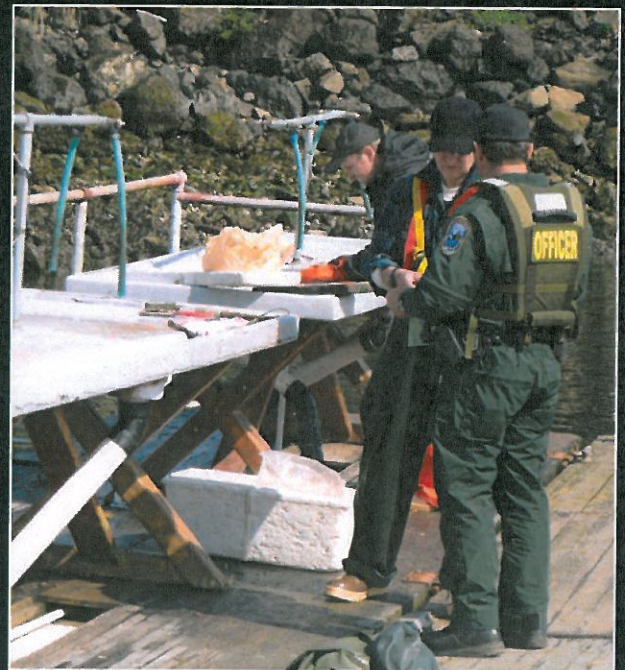
WDFW plans to continue to monitor and sample our recreational and commercial fisheries, including the amount of halibut caught in Canadian waters and landed into Neah Bay; continue to take a precautionary approach when setting our Puget Sound season; maintain our enforcement efforts during the halibut recreational fisheries; and monitor the efforts to document halibut bycatch in the West Coast commercial fisheries and recommend appropriate action through the Pacific Fishery Management Council.



Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife

- Enforcement Program -

2012 Halibut Enforcement Summary



Compiled By: Deputy Chief Mike Cenci

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Opener Summary	2
“Cheating Offshore” commercial halibut summary.....	3
2012 Halibut Patrol Data and Statistics	4



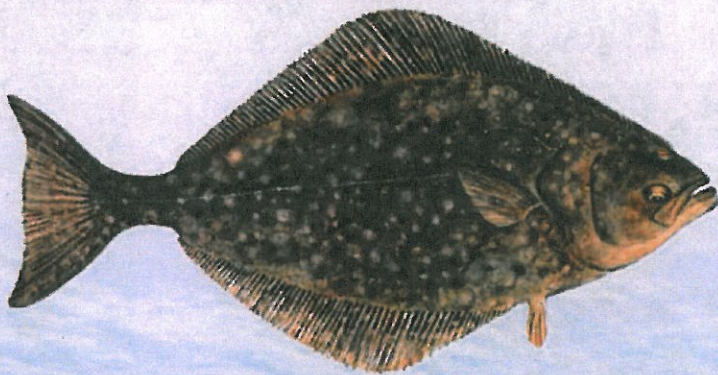
HALIBUT ENFORCEMENT SUMMARY

2012

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Statewide Marine Division has concentrated enforcement activities around the recreational halibut season along the north coast for the past several years. The 2012 season was no exception. Enforcement patrols were designed to address Washington's halibut rules and offer a level of protection for other species that can be encountered while pursuing halibut, particularly those stocks that are designated as overfished. Additionally, cross-border activities associated with fishing in Canada were monitored.

Concurrent enforcement activities that occurred during the 2012 halibut patrols included, but were not limited to:

- (1) Ensuring compliance with the Rockfish Conservation Area bottomfish closure
- (2) Enforcing Canary and Yellow-eye Rockfish no-retention rules
- (3) Monitoring and maintaining compliance with Canadian-caught halibut landings
- (4) Enforcing rules of the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary
- (5) Enforcing the 20-Fathom/120' Bottomfish restrictions
- (6) Monitoring vessel safety compliance
- (7) and Ensuring general compliance with groundfish fishing regulations as well as all other laws of the State of Washington.



Halibut Conservation:

Coastal Halibut Opener Enforcement

The recreational halibut season opened in Marine Areas 3 & 4, and as expected, angler participation was high as this delicious table fare was pursued with a vengeance. There were well over 100 boats out of La Push and over 250 boats out of Neah Bay each day of the three day, ten officer patrol emphasis. While compliance was comparatively good, officers still issued citations to a number of deserving souls for a variety of violations. Here's a snap shot of what officers found:

On day one...

The ocean was less than pleasant and many fishermen stayed in the strait of Juan de Fuca. One boat was found in possession of three closed season canary rockfish. Other violations included possessing fish in an unlawful condition (mutilating to hide closed season species, fish under minimum length, etc), failing to record halibut, and possession of closed season rockfish east of the Tatoosh-Bonilla line.

On day two...

The directed Halibut season was closed but nice weather and calm seas had everyone out fishing for bottom fish instead. Officers Anderson & Marthaller and Sergeant Chadwick worked a remote resort area from shore, monitoring boats with limits of fish coming in, as well as other boats heading out catch fish. Some were filleting fish after catching their limit and then preceeding to head back out for an additional over-the-limit catch. All officers can do at this point is to keep track of the first limit, and hope to get a second check in without tipping off the violators.

Late in the afternoon, the first double tripper came in. Sergeant Chadwick and Officer Marthaller made contact while Officer Anderson kept track of everyone. Over the next three hours, two citations were issued for exceeding the limit for rockfish, one citation was issued for possession of six undersize lingcod and warnings were given to others for over limit rockfish. There was one citation issued for a hidden closed-day halibut.

On the third day of the emphasis...

The Halibut season was open again. The offshore weather was good and Officer Apple, Anderson, & Hopkins located a vessel 1.5 miles inside an area closed to halibut fishing, known as the Yelloweye rockfish conservation zone. Citations were issued for closed area fishing.

Officers later stopped a vessel for a routine inspection and found five mutilated ling cod fillets (to avoid size restrictions) and one halibut. The ling cod was hidden underneath filleted halibut in plastic baggies, with the fisherman claiming the halibut was a friend's, and the cod fillets were from a previous day's fishing (*sure they were*). Officer Anderson pointed out to the men that the ling cod fillets were suspiciously supple and not cold to the touch, indicating that fish had recently been landed. The men were cited for Unlawful Fishing 2nd for the over limit amount of ling cod on the vessel, and for possessing mutilated fish (ling cod).

Cheating Offshore:

Sixty illegal Halibut discovered on one commercial fishing vessel

Patrolling offshore commercial fisheries usually means a long day and a bumpy ride, especially when officers find violations. It was that kind of day when Student Officer Smith was inducted into the world of the halibut long-line fishery. Smith, his training Officer Hopkins, and Officer Anderson were 27 miles offshore of Long Beach when they boarded a boat skippered by a well known offender.

Right away, the officers discovered numerous violations. The vessel had just finishing pulling the last of its gear and was running undersized halibut through a crucifix, effectively ripping their jaws open. While an efficient way of removing fish from the hooks, it doesn't do much for long term survivability. But then the skipper didn't have any intention of releasing them anyway. More illegal sized fish were found stashed on the deck.

Student Officer Smith and Officer Anderson stayed on the vessel for the four-hour escorted trip back to port while our patrol boat followed. Never idle, the two officers continued to search through the hundreds of fish and found an additional 40 undersized and illegally possessed halibut. Once back in port the officers climbed into the hold and dug through the ice and slime looking for more. And they found them—bringing the total to 60 illegal halibut. A number of serious charges will be levied. NOAA is also interested in the case.



2012 Enforcement Activity Data

<i>Anglers Contacted</i>	<i>Total Violations</i>	<i>Citations</i>	<i>Warnings</i>	<i>Total Violations citations+warnings</i>	<i>Federal Referrals</i>
980	131	49	82	131	1

Enforcement Activity Statistics

<i>Years</i>	<i>Anglers Contacted</i>	<i>Total Violations</i>	<i>Percentage of Contacts in Violation</i>
2007	1,057	110	10%
2008	424	38	9%
2009	1,309	265	20%
2010	763	136	18%
2011	625	81	13%
2012	980	131	13%
<i>Average</i>	860	127	14%

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