



Memorandum

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

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From: Christian Heath
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Subject: Recommendations for 2026 sport Pacific halibut fisheries south of Cape Falcon to the Oregon/California boarder.

Recommendations for the 2026 Central Oregon Coast (Cape Falcon to Humbug Mountain) and Southern Oregon (Humbug Mountain to the Oregon/California boarder) subareas

Summary

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife recommends the following for the Central Oregon Coast and Southern Oregon subareas:

- Spring all-depth fishery fixed open dates for the Central Oregon Coast: May 1 through July 31, 7-days per week; or until the subarea all-depth (spring and summer) catch limit is taken.
- Two-fish Pacific halibut bag limit per angler per day beginning May 1 for the Oregon Central Coast and Southern Oregon subareas.

Background

For Pacific halibut (referred to as halibut for the remainder of this memo), The Pacific Fishery Management Council's (PFMC) Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) specifies the proportion of the Fishery Constant Exploitation Yield (FCEY) each fishery, subarea, and season is allocated within Regulatory Area 2A (WA, OR and CA). The FCEY is unknown during the development of the CSP, though approved by commissioners during the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) annual meeting. Thus, at the conclusion of the IPHC annual meeting, catch limits are made available for fisheries in IPHC Regulatory Area 2A.

Marine Resources Program

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The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) solicits public input on (1) open dates for the sport Pacific halibut Central Oregon Coast subarea spring all-depth fishery and (2) preferred bag limit (one or two) for the Central Oregon Coast subarea and the Southern Oregon subarea (per the CSP), following the IPHC annual meeting. During recent years with higher catch limits, the Central Oregon Coast all-depth spring and summer seasons have evolved from a series of two or three-day open periods to a fishery that in 2024 and 2025 opened May 1 through October 31, with a two-fish bag limit.

Central Oregon Coast subarea spring all-depth season dates

Each year a number of fixed open dates (along with back-up dates) are set for the spring all-depth fishery. Fixed dates are open fishing days established preseason and will not be modified inseason except if the combined spring and summer all-depth catch limits are estimated to be achieved, then any remaining fixed dates will be closed. The intent of fixed dates is to allow anglers to plan fishing trips with minimal concern of having the fishery closed. Back-up dates are similar in that the days are identified preseason, though these days will not open if the spring all-depth catch limit is estimated to be achieved, thus preserving the summer all-depth season that is scheduled to begin on August 1.

Bag limit

Beginning in 2023, a provision in the CSP allows for the daily bag limit in subareas south of Cape Falcon to increase from one-fish to two-fish per angler per day preseason. In 2024 and 2025, the Central Oregon Coast and Southern Oregon subareas began the fishery on May 1 with a two-fish daily bag limit to allow more opportunity to harvest the allocation as well as provide efficiencies for anglers fishing offshore. The State of Oregon continues to have an annual harvest limit of six halibut per angler.

Public Input

ODFW hosted an in-person and online public meeting (February 2, 2026) on the number and timing of fixed and back-up dates to be adopted for the spring all-depth fishery for the Central Oregon Coast. Sixteen individuals attended the public meeting, representing many coastal angling communities. Additionally, emails and phone calls have been received from anglers since the completion of the 2025 halibut season voicing opinions and suggestions on how to approach the sport halibut fishery in 2026. The respondents included a mix of private boat owners and passengers, charter boat operators/crew and passengers, including both coastal and inland residents, out of state anglers, as well as port officials and owners of fishing supply businesses.

During the public meeting, ODFW staff provided a summary of the 2026 IPHC annual meeting and highlighted any changes to the CSP prior to opening discussion on how best to approach the upcoming halibut season. For 2026, ODFW presented two scenarios to the public. The first, open May 1 through June 30 as fixed dates and have the month of July available as back-up dates. The second was to open May 1 through July 31 as fixed dates, providing more fixed dates for anglers to plan trips in advance, though at minimal risk of eating into the summer all-depth catch limit.

Stakeholders who provided input were in favor of the spring all-depth fishery being open seven days per week, May 1 through July 31, with a 2-fish bag limit to begin the year. The last several years, due to a combination of weather and small average size of fish, a portion of the Central Oregon Coast all-depth allocation has been unharvested. ODFW staff did point out that there is a chance that if weather and fishing are good in May and June, the spring allocation could be exceeded, eating into some of the summer all-depth catch limit. Anglers who provided input were willing to take that risk, pointing out the unharvested quota of the past few years.

Recommendation for 2026 Central Oregon Coast and Southern Oregon subareas

ODFW staff recommendations are an attempt to balance opportunity to fully utilize the spring catch limit, while also preserving the summer all-depth season. After careful review of the CSP, recent harvest rates, angler effort trends, fish sizes, the risk of exceeding the spring (and summer) catch limits, the commercial fishery timing, and feedback from the public, ODFW staff recommend the following for the 2026 sport halibut fisheries south of Cape Falcon:

- Fixed dates for the Central Oregon Coast subarea all-depth spring season: May 1 - July 31
- Angler daily bag limit for the Oregon Central Coast and Southern Oregon subareas: 2 halibut

The Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission (OFWC) will meet on April 24, 2026, to discuss and adopt the sport Pacific halibut fishery dates and bag limit into state rule.

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