

Information Bulletin



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MINIMUM COMMERCIAL SIZE FOR HALIBUT

During the 1940's the Halibut Commission established a minimum weight for halibut at five pounds (head-off, eviscerated weight) and a minimum length of 26 inches (head-on). In 1973, the size limit was changed to 32 inches (head-on) and 24 inches (head-off).

The growth rate of halibut has increased markedly during the past 30 years. Now, the average halibut remains in the chicken category (5 to 10 pounds) for only two years, half as long as in 1940. If allowed to grow, chicken halibut will double their weight in two years and will be more valuable when landed as mediums (10 to 60 pounds). The Commission raised the minimum size to maximize the benefit of this rapid growth.

The new minimum size is 32 inches with the head on, measured from the tip of the jaw to the end of the tail; and 24 inches with the head off, measured from the base of the pectoral fin to the end of the tail (see drawing). Fish of this size weigh about ten pounds. The new regulation does not stipulate a weight limit, eliminating the problem that existed when fish of legal length were often below the legal weight.

The benefit from the larger size limit will depend, in part, on the survival of sublegal fish that are caught and released. Fishermen are urged to unhook small halibut carefully and to release them promptly to improve the chance of survival.

The new minimum size does not apply in the Bering Sea where the old limit of 26 inches and five pounds will be in force through 1973.

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