

**National Marine Fisheries Service
Office of Law Enforcement**

***West Coast Enforcement Division Report to
The International Pacific Halibut Commission***



January 2016 ~ December 2016

**NOAA Fisheries Office of Law Enforcement
West Coast Division
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Office of Law Enforcement
West Coast Division Report to International Pacific Halibut Commission
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West Coast Enforcement Division Overview

The West Coast Enforcement Division (WCD) provides marine resource enforcement and compliance assistance for the West Coast, primarily California, Oregon and Washington, but to also include Colorado, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming. Our staff includes special agents and enforcement officers stationed in California, Oregon and Washington. Our territory includes 1,500 miles of Canadian Border; 1,293 miles of rigorous Pacific Ocean coastline and 7,863 miles of tidal shoreline; five National Marine Sanctuaries, to include 290 Marine Conservation Areas; Puget Sound; 21 major international seaports; 18 international airports; 222,471 square nautical miles of Pacific Ocean; and 339,375 square miles of land encompassing numerous rivers and tributaries feeding into the Pacific Ocean. Our primary missions include compliance assistance and enforcing domestic fishing regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act; protecting federally-listed marine species and critical habitats under the Endangered Species Act; ensuring species protection and preservation under the Marine Mammal Protection Act; monitoring imports and exports of marine products at international ports (air and sea), border crossings, and during commercial inspections under the Lacey Act; and protecting essential fish habitats.

Our responsibilities are carried out by a sworn staff comprised of special agents and enforcement officers, and an operations support staff comprised of program managers, enforcement technicians, systems administrators, and administration specialists. Additionally, we work closely and conduct joint operations with other federal partners; the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the United States Attorney's (USA) offices, and others, and our state partners; Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Division (OSP), the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Enforcement Program (WDFW), and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). Our state partners work under a Cooperative Enforcement Program. OLE's Enforcement Officer is the bedrock for our uniformed presence and the frontline in the enforcement and management of Pacific halibut for Washington, Oregon and California.

In January, AD Giles attended the annual 2016 International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) meeting in Vancouver, Canada where he provided the West Coast Enforcement Report to the Council. Several key topics were addressed, which included the overview of the Pacific Halibut stock assessments and approval of catch limits and regulations. A proposal was introduced that would grant authority to CDFW to enforce IPHC regulations. AD Giles commented to the proposal, stating by granting CDFW IPHC authority, it brings enforcement consistency to the west coast as the states of Washington and Oregon already have the authority. The halibut

fishery has extended further south into CA and by giving CDFW IPHC authority, it will only improve enforcement and monitoring efforts. The Council later approved the proposal.

For CY 2016, the Office of Law Enforcement in the West Coast Division had numerous personnel changes. The Assistant Director for WCD OLE retired at the end of December 2016. A Deputy Special Agent-in-Charge (DSAC) was hired in July 2016 and is assigned to the Seattle, WA regional office. Five special agents previously assigned to field offices in Monterey, CA; Arcata, CA; Santa Rosa, CA; Long Beach, CA and Roseburg, OR retired in 2016. Two Supervisory Enforcement Officers (SEO's) positions were filled. The SEO hired for Astoria, OR (Central Coast) will supervise EO's in Oregon and Washington. The SEO hired for Alameda, CA (South Coast) will supervise EO's in California. WCD OLE is currently in the process of hiring nine new Enforcement Officers which will be located in Seattle, Bellingham and Westport, WA; Newport, OR; Santa Rosa, Alameda, Monterey, Long Beach and San Diego, CA. Additionally, three Enforcement Technicians were hired - one in Seattle, WA (VMS) and one each in Astoria, OR and Long Beach, CA (Operational).

The Office of Law Enforcement restructured the administrative program staff to better facilitate agency needs by creating two support groups. The Supervisory Administrative Officer will lead a team of Mission Support personnel, including a secretary, three administrative assistants (Seattle, WA; Portland, OR and Long Beach, CA), two information technology analysts, and a program analyst for the West Coast Cooperative Enforcement Program. The VMS Program Manager has been assigned as a Program Manager for Investigative Support. That team consists of four VMS enforcement technicians (Seattle, WA) and three operational enforcement technicians (Seattle, WA; Astoria, OR and Long Beach, CA).

Office of Law Enforcement - Cooperative Enforcement Program (CEP)

Under the Federally funded NOAA Cooperative Enforcement Program, OLE has ongoing formal Cooperative Enforcement Agreements (CEA) and Joint Enforcement Agreements (JEA) with all three West Coast States: California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) – Law Enforcement Division, Oregon State Police (OSP) – Fish and Wildlife Division, and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) – Police. These agreements extend federal authority for state agencies to enforce specific federal laws and regulations as defined in specific agreed upon federal priorities within each agreement, including the enforcement of the Northern Pacific Halibut Act.

In addition to providing reimbursement for direct federal fisheries enforcement work performed by state officers, wardens, and troopers in support of federal fisheries enforcement priorities, the agreements also provide funding for state administrative overhead and direct purchases of large assets (i.e., boats, vehicles, etc.) as well as small or portable assets (i.e.,

radios, plotters, computers, thermal imaging, cameras, etc.) and services (maintenance of equipment and vessels). The West Coast Cooperative Enforcement Program received \$2.78M for the 2015 agreements – the last of these agreements concluded August 30th, 2016; and \$2.68M towards the new 2016 agreements – this first of which commenced July 1st, 2016.

Within the framework of each agreement, under targeted enforcement there are defined marine law enforcement, compliance assistance, and living resource management responsibilities under assorted specific federal *traditional* priorities that each agency is tasked with responsibility for – these typically include land-based services and at-sea services, and may include air services if available within the agency and if determined necessary. With the 2016 agreements there is now a blend of traditional and new concept targeted (or *executable*) priorities. The traditional priorities operate the same as under prior agreements where each agency has federal priorities that share a pool of defined hours for each of the services (sea, land, and air). By having a pool of hours to draw from our West Coast OLE and state partner leadership teams have flexibility on how much emphasis to apply towards specific traditional priorities based on trends, fisheries data, incidents, environments, ecosystems, and the living marine resources. California and Oregon both have Northern Pacific halibut enforcement and management under traditional priorities, along with other assigned traditional priorities, however, Washington has adopted the Northern Pacific halibut as one of their executable priorities. Executable priorities are defined and very specific, they have a set amount funding, services, and timeframes, with very specific goals; Washington also has traditional priorities. These being the first agreements under the new concept this will also be a learning period for us to assess how effective executable priorities are in providing focused enforcement.

These agreements foster a cooperative environment; producing a viable collaborative approach to federal and state living marine resources enforcement and management. There is consistent ongoing cooperative efforts between Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife (WDFW) – Police, Oregon State Police – Fish and Wildlife Division (OSP), California Department of Fish and Game – Law Enforcement Division (CDFW), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Office of Law Enforcement (OLE), and the United States Coast Guard (USCG) for the enforcement, preservation, and management of living marine resources. The USCG is an excellent federal partner, providing at-sea and air resources and willingly supporting state partner and federal operations. Partnering with WDFW Officers, CDFW Wardens, and OSP Troopers ensure comprehensive protection and compliance through the monitoring of directed and incidental commercial, recreational, and tribal fisheries. This is accomplished by conducting vessel boardings, monitoring off-loads, inspections of processors, wholesalers, dealers, markets, air and sea ports, and cold storage facilities, and through follow-up, surveillance, investigations, and collaborative operations inclusive of halibut catch limits, quotas, size limits, and document inspections. The significant contributions of our West Coast Cooperative Enforcement Program Partners (CDFW, OSP, WDFW), and the USCG, furthers OLE's efforts to provide coastal living marine resource protection and compliance.



California Department of Fish & Wildlife – Law Enforcement Division

CDFW Funding & Services:

CDFW now has provisions within their Cooperative Enforcement Agreement (CEA) and their Joint Enforcement Agreement (JEA) for the Northern Pacific Halibut Act. Primarily halibut activities are focused in northern California.

CDFW was provided \$1,103,945 in federal funding for JEA 2015 with a lifecycle that began September 1st, 2015 and expired August 31st, 2016, encompassing eight months of CY 2015. This agreement, in addition to funding law enforcement services, also funded these direct purchases of marine enforcement equipment and technology: The co-purchase of a skiff patrol vessel, with \$35,006.15 in federal funding, with the vessel covering locations in the San Joaquin River, and the Sacramento and San Joaquin Delta areas.

Their new agreement, JEA 2016, lifecycle has now been modified and the new agreement commenced on September 1st, 2015 and includes four months of CY 2016. The new agreement resulted in \$1,061,030 in federal funding; this agreement is scheduled to expire August 30th, 2017. As with the 2015 agreement, the 2016 agreement also provides for the purchase of marine enforcement equipment and technology: A new patrol vessel to cover two Pacific Ocean coastal locations, in San Diego and Santa Cruz, \$245,464.

CDFW responsibilities for halibut enforcement for land-based activities includes conducting dockside patrols, off-load monitoring, licenses, incidental catch, compliance, verification checks, and collaborative enforcement efforts. CDFW at-sea responsibilities include patrolling the Pacific Ocean, conducting operations, collaborative enforcement, and inspecting at-sea vessels and personnel for licenses, federal permits, logbooks, marine permits and registration, and fish on board, with emphasis in the Exclusive Economic Zone. Most of their agency activities toward halibut is regionalized to the North Pacific Ocean Coast.

As previously noted, California now has a formal agreement for halibut enforcement under the Cooperative Enforcement Program. CDFW enforcement efforts regarding halibut are both recreational and commercial, with Pacific halibut having specific seasons and California halibut being available during the entire year.

Their agency is limited in their data management abilities as their agency has no centralized records management system and aggregating specifics in reporting data is challenging. Having

said this, Captain Robert Puccinelli, and John Clithero, Program Analyst, have provided a summary of their agency's involvement in Pacific halibut enforcement and management:

For CY2016 CDFW committed fourteen commissioned staff toward halibut enforcement activities, for a total of 1,134.5 operational hours. Their at-sea activities encompassed: 1,014.5 at-sea hours (714 at-sea near-shore vessel personnel hours and 300.5 at-sea near-shore vessel hours,). Their dockside activities encompassed 120 hours. CDFW approximate funding applied toward halibut enforcement and management was \$71,326.50 (\$64,306.50 at-sea operations and \$7,020.00 for land-based operations). Wardens performing multi-species enforcement of halibut, groundfish, and salmon made 767 contacts, and observed all individuals and crews to be in compliance with no enforcement actions taken.

CDFW Enforcement Highlights:

CDFW performed halibut enforcement and compliance dockside and at-sea patrols on the California North Pacific Coast, including the major ports of Mendocino, Humboldt, and Del Norte counties; Point Arena, Albion, Noyo Harbor, Shelter Cove, Eureka, Trinidad, and Crescent City. Wardens also routinely contacted and interacted with the crew and clients of eight party boats (with each boat containing approximately six recreational anglers) that were targeting halibut and placed emphasis on 15 sport boat ramps for checks. For dockside, checks were conducted of angler bag limits, while at-sea patrols were a combination marine patrols targeting halibut, salmon and rockfish.

Oregon State Police – Fish & Wildlife Division



OSP Funding & Services:

OSP was provided \$788,128 in federal funding for JEA 2015, with a lifecycle that began July 1st, 2014 and expired August 31st, 2016, with all services completed June 30th, 2016 – encompassing six months of CY 2016. The agreement was extended three months to enable the procurement of a patrol vessel. This agreement, in addition to funding law enforcement services, also funded these direct purchases of marine enforcement equipment and technology: A twin engine jet patrol vessel designed for deployment on the Snake River, \$150,731.32 – we anticipate vessel delivery in the coming weeks.

Their new agreement, JEA 2016, lifecycle began July 1st, 2016, and includes six months of CY 2016. The new agreement resulted in \$747,750 in federal funding this agreement and is scheduled to expire June 30th, 2017. As with the 2015 agreement, the 2016 agreement also provides for the purchase of marine enforcement equipment and technology: co-purchase of a Salem, Oregon patrol vessel, with \$49,801 in federal funding; two Yamaha 200-hp outboard engines (\$17,343 each; \$34,687 total), and 15 Mustang dry suits (\$1,600 each; \$24,000 total).

OSP responsibilities for halibut enforcement for land-based activities includes conducting dockside patrols, off-load monitoring, licenses, incidental catch, compliance, verification checks, and collaborative enforcement efforts. OSP at-sea responsibilities include patrolling the Pacific Ocean, conducting operations, collaborative enforcement, and inspecting at-sea vessels and personnel for licenses, federal permits, logbooks, marine permits and registration, and fish on board, with emphasis in the Exclusive Economic Zone.

For CY2016 OSP committed 18 commissioned staff toward halibut enforcement activities, for a total of 427.75 operational hours. Their at-sea activities encompassed: 296.25 at-sea hours (97 at-sea near-shore vessel personnel hours, 48.5 at-sea near-shore vessel hours, 100.50 at-sea long-range vessel personnel hours, and 50.25 at-sea long-range vessel hours). Their dockside activities encompassed 131.50 hours. OSP approximate funding applied towards Halibut enforcement and management was \$28,385.36 (\$19,828.65 at-sea operations and \$8,556.71 for land-based operations). OSP Troopers contacted 739 anglers with 46 not being in compliance (for a 94% compliance rate), with one case referred to OLE.

OSP Enforcement Highlights:

Offshore Guardian Patrol with NOAA

In May, the Oregon State Police Marine Fisheries Team and NOAA Law Enforcement Officers conducted offshore Guardian patrols out of Newport during the first all-depth recreational halibut opener. Over the two-day patrol, the team contacted 103 recreational halibut anglers, two recreational salmon anglers and boarded three commercial salmon boats. The team issued five citations for failure to validate harvest card; two citations to recreational salmon anglers for angling prohibited method - barbed hooks for salmon; one warning for unlawful possession of groundfish beyond 30 fathoms (resulting in the seizure of a yellowtail rockfish), and five warnings issued for angling closed area - Yelloweye rockfish closure area (Stonewall Banks).

Nighttime Surveillance at South Beach

In May, a trooper and trooper recruit from the Astoria office, conducted nighttime surveillance at the South Beach Marina in Newport during a recreational halibut season. The troopers watched as a recreational fishing vessel entered the marina in the dark and tied up in a slip. The boat was contacted and subsequent investigation revealed that the anglers had retained five halibut. Of the five halibut retained, only two of the anglers had validated their tags. When initially contacted, one male subject told the troopers that he had not caught any halibut and that he needed to use the restroom. After further investigation, the troopers discovered that the individual who left the dock did in fact retain a halibut. When the male subject returned to the dock, he admitted that he had retained a halibut and that he had just filled out his tag when he went to the restroom. Three subjects were cited for failure to immediately validate a harvest card for halibut. Numerous other boats were contacted and multiple warnings were given for failure to properly validate a harvest card for halibut.

Incorrect Buyer's License

In June, a Marine Fisheries Team Senior Trooper was monitoring commercial halibut offloads in Newport when she observed a small boat loaded with fishing totes motor across the port. The boat had an expired Oregon boat license. The Trooper made contact with the boat as it tied up to a large commercial fishing boat. It was determined the small boat was acting like a tender boat for a local wholesale dealer and about to buy halibut away from the wholesale dealer location. The trooper determined the wholesale dealer did not possess the correct buyer's license for the tender that would allow for it to make the fish purchase away from the dealer location. The trooper contacted the wholesale dealer who claimed this was the first load the tender was going to buy. The dealer was instructed to purchase the correct buyer's license in order to complete the halibut transaction. After the dealer purchased the correct buyer's license for the tender, it was allowed to proceed with buying fish. The dealer was warned for the buyer's license but was cited for an expired certificate of number for the state boat registration.

Cape Falcon Boat Patrol

In June, a senior trooper, a trooper, and a trooper recruit from Astoria conducted a boat patrol on the Pacific Ocean off of Cape Falcon. Four boats angling for near-shore halibut were contacted. Two persons contacted were issued citations for angling with more than one rod/line, and one contacted person was issued a citation for failure to immediately validate harvest card for halibut.

Garibaldi Ocean Patrol

In July, a trooper and trooper recruit from the Tillamook office conducted an ocean patrol out of Garibaldi. During the patrol a boat was contacted near Twin Rocks (Rockaway) which was found to have two halibut and one sablefish. Investigation revealed that two subjects were Washington residents, and one was an Oregon resident. None of the subjects had a combined angling tag, and the Washington residents did not possess a non-resident angling license. The subjects attempted to purchase the tags at a local bait shop around 4:30am but it was closed and they did not want to wait. Two subjects were cited for unlawful possession of halibut and one was cited for not having a non-resident angling license. Warnings were also given for one no non-resident license and unlawful possession of sablefish. All fish were seized and donated to the Tillamook County Jail.

Also during the patrol, a subject was contacted near Three Arch Cape with a non-validated halibut on board. The subject had returned to angling and the halibut did not appear freshly caught. The subject was cited for failure to immediately validate their harvest card. Another boat was also contacted near the Tillamook jetty, which had retained what the subject stated he believed were two vermilion rockfish. The two fish were actually Yelloweye rockfish which are closed to all harvest. The subject was cited and the fish were seized.

Barbed Hook Warning

In July, the Marine Fisheries Team conducted an ocean patrol out of Newport as part of the Cooperative Enforcement Review (CEP) with NOAA Office of Law Enforcement (OLE) staff that included the OLE West Coast Division's Assistant Director, the OLE West Coast CEP Coordinator, and the OLE CEP National Program Manager. The team utilized their small boats from Newport and Tillamook along with the PV Guardian to target recreational and commercial fishing vessels. During the patrol, a recreational fisherman was warned for fishing for halibut with barbed hooks after retaining salmon. One commercial fishing boat contact was cited for fishing using a prohibited method and for more than four spreads per line. One salmon, observed to have been taken from one of the illegal spreads, was seized and donated to the Lincoln County Food Share.

Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife – Police

WDFW Funding & Services:



WDFW was provided \$897,712 in federal funding for JEA 2015, with a lifecycle that began on September 1st, 2015 and expired August 31st, 2016; encompassing eight months of CY2016. This agreement, in addition to funding law enforcement services, also funded one direct purchase of marine enforcement equipment and technology: co-purchase a patrol vessel that is assigned to Washington Pacific Ocean North Coast, Strait of Juan de Fuca, and the Puget Sound, with \$176,387.64 in federal funding. Additionally, the agreement funded \$5,576.42 in technical and surveillance gear (digital camera, long-range lens, spotting scopes, and weatherproof housings) in protection of the Southern Resident Killer Whales.

Their new agreement, JEA 2016 lifecycle began September 1st, 2016, and includes four months of CY2016. The new agreement resulted in \$851,652 in federal funding, this agreement is scheduled to expire August 31st, 2017. A strong potential exists for another \$25,000 in federal funding for a proposed king crab operation—this is pending. As with the 2015 agreement, the 2016 agreement also provides for the purchase of marine enforcement equipment and technology: a patrol vessel to be deployed on the Columbia River for \$150,000; a digital camera and long-range lens for \$2,600, satellite trackers for \$1,430 and spotting scopes for \$4,200.

WDFW responsibilities for halibut enforcement for land-based activities includes commercial off-load monitoring, compliance, and verification checks, and recreational emphasis and inspections of key coastal ports, to ensure compliance of limits, size, and gear restrictions. WDFW at-sea enforcement includes patrolling, conducting operations, and vessel inspections, illegal trafficking in sport-caught halibut, unreported/undocumented catch, and selective gear restrictions, with emphasis in the Exclusive Economic Zone.

WDFW patrol officers conducted halibut-related compliance inspections on the water, at the dock, and in the market place along the Washington coast, Strait of Juan de Fuca and Puget

Sound. Officers patrolled during the open commercial and recreational seasons and during closures to provide protection throughout the entire year.

WDFW committed 21 commissioned staff toward halibut enforcement, for a total of 579.25 hours. Their at-sea activities encompassed: 823.87 at-sea hours (489.25 at-sea personnel hours and 244.62 at-sea long-range vessel hours). Their dockside activities encompassed 90 hours. WDFW approximate funding applied toward halibut enforcement and management was \$47,210.03 (\$43,407.53 at-sea operations and \$3,802.50 for land-based operations). WDFW officers accomplished 1,872 recreational contacts and 103 commercial contacts, issued 121 warnings and 103 citations.

Overview

Halibut can be found throughout Puget Sound and offshore waters. This resource is shared among four user groups in Washington State: recreational, directed non-Indian commercial, non-Indian incidental, and tribal fishermen. Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) police developed a patrol plan for 2016 that provides comprehensive protection throughout the entire year.

As halibut seasons and habitats overlap with other fisheries, directed halibut patrols often revealed federal and state violations related to other species. Conversely, halibut violations were also found during patrols intended to maintain compliance in other fisheries. Common halibut violations included mutilation of fish so that size or species could not be determined, failure to account for catch, fishing for and possession of rockfish or halibut in closed areas, closed-season fishing, exceeding limits, failing to submit catch for inspection (hidden fish), and fishing with no license.

Strategic Planning

The Patrol Plan's focus areas include:

1. Elevating enforcement presence at- sea and shoreside during halibut-directed fisheries or when halibut can be legally retained incidental to other fisheries;
2. Ensuring compliance with halibut hot spots that are closed to fishing during open halibut seasons (intended for Yelloweye and Canary rockfish protection);
3. Providing a presence on the halibut grounds during season closures, to include during non-halibut fisheries in locations where halibut could be intercepted;
4. Monitoring commercial off-loads;
5. Inspecting wholesale and retail sellers to ensure lawful origin of halibut in commerce;
6. Ensuring the safety of all persons engaging in commercial and recreational fisheries; and

7. Conducting joint patrols with partners agencies such as Tribal, United States Coast Guard and local sheriffs' offices in order to expand patrol coverage.

Patrol Highlights

Recreational Season:

Three separate detachments of officers conducted saturation patrols in Marine Areas 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 prior to and during the recreational and commercial coastal halibut openers. WDFW police committed four patrol boats and deployed officers on United States Coast Guard (USCG) and the Clallam County Sheriff's vessels to expand the at-sea presence. In addition to DFW officers detecting recreational and commercial fishing violations, USCG boarding teams terminated the voyages of several vessels due to a lack of required safety equipment.

Closed Area Commercial Fishing:

Officers onboard a 56' long-range patrol vessel encountered a buoy marking commercial hook and line gear deployed in an area closed to commercial fishing. A vessel pulling away from the discovered buoy was detained; the operator, a tribal member, denied that the fishing gear belonged to him and claimed he had drifted south of his usual and accustomed fishing grounds by nearly five miles. Upon closer inspection of the buoy, the vessel name was faintly visible – and noted as being the same as the detained vessel. Upon being confronted over this, the fisherman admitted he was intentionally fishing in an area closed to commercial fishing. Officers ensured that over three hundred halibut, rockfish and sablefish were released from the hooks. The case was referred to NOAA OLE for prosecution.

Incidental Fisheries

Incidental Halibut Fishery:

Commercial salmon troll areas overlap halibut grounds. Trollers may legally retain halibut incidental to the salmon fishery, however limits apply. Commercial trollers were routinely inspected to ensure compliance, with one fisherman found to be over his limit of halibut. This case was prosecuted in state court.

Rockfish Violations:

Rockfish and halibut can be caught incidental to one another. Some areas that hold populations of halibut are also habitat for Yelloweye and Canary rockfish. The Yelloweye species is designated as "overfished" by the Pacific Fishery Management Council. Although recently Canary rockfish populations have increased, restrictions are still in place. In order to reduce the impacts to rockfish, some areas are closed to fishing during the open season. One noteworthy

rockfish case involved a vessel with 23 rockfish over the possession limit, including prohibited Canary and Yelloweye.

Plundering Rockfish:

Sometimes the weather is not conducive to traveling great distances for halibut, so anglers will often switch to targeting rockfish and lingcod. In LaPush, an officer questioned two nervous anglers if the “fishing had been good.” The men responded they had caught thirty-eight rockfish, but after inspecting the boat, the officer discovered another thirty-three rockfish they had stashed in a fish hold. Not only were the individuals in violation for being in possession of a gross over-limit, but they possessed an undersized lingcod as well.

Pre-meditated Poaching

Closed-Season Possession:

Commercial West Coast setline anglers targeting black cod regularly encounter halibut as bycatch, especially when they are using hook-and-line style gear instead of groundfish pots. Except under limited circumstance, it is illegal to retain the halibut.

An officer received a tip that a commercial black cod fisherman had illegally retained halibut in a hidden compartment and was going to offload it after dark from his boat moored in Ilwaco. After several hours of surveillance, the fisherman loaded two large coolers into a waiting truck. The officer inspected the coolers and found nine flatfish, two rockfish and over two hundred and twenty five pounds of undocumented and closed-season halibut. The fish were donated to a local charity and charges were forwarded to the prosecutor’s office.

Commercial Focus

Fish Company Inspections:

Wholesale fish dealers and processors are inspected throughout the season to ensure proper catch accounting and enforce possession limits. One commercial vessel was discovered to have delivered two hundred and eighteen pounds of halibut in excess of the limit. The overage was seized and state citations were issued to the captain.

During an inspection at a fish processing plant, an officer discovered undersized halibut from two separate deliveries. The fish were seized, donated to charity and the captain was charged in state court.

Office of Law Enforcement – West Coast Division Investigations & Patrols

Investigations

(1603675) - The owner/operator of a fishing vessel notified an OLE enforcement officer of a 185 lb. overage of halibut caught during the second commercial halibut season of the year. The subject paid a \$1,156.25 summary settlement, which was equivalent to the fair market value of the overage.

(1604138) - An OLE special agent boarded a commercial fishing vessel while on a joint patrol with the US Coast Guard. The emphasis of the patrol was IPHC Area 2A enforcement. Three notable violations were identified: unlawful use of a crucifier, failure to comply with enforcement procedures, and interference with an officer during an enforcement inspection. The investigation is ongoing.

Patrols

Enforcement officers monitored numerous offloads of commercially harvested halibut at the dock following halibut openings. Enforcement Officers also participated in joint patrols with the US Coast Guard and WDFW.

Vessel Monitoring Staff:

VMS enforcement technicians monitored vessel positions before, during, and after halibut openings. No incidents were found.