

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

2018 Treaty Halibut Summary

The 2018 treaty halibut allocation was 416,500 lbs. of which 389,500 lbs. was the commercial Total Allowable Catch (TAC), and 27,000 lbs. were set aside for the Ceremonial and Subsistence (C&S) fishery. The tribes that participate in the tribal halibut fisheries located in the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) marine area 2A are: Coastal Tribes: Hoh, Makah, Quileute, Quinault; Puget Sound Tribes: Jamestown S'Klallam, Lower Elwha Klallam, Lummi, Nooksack, Port Gamble S'Klallam, Skokomish, Suquamish, Swinomish, and Tulalip.

For the 2018 tribal halibut season, the tribes formed an agreement under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that incorporated elements of the 2000 Management Plan. The MOU maintained the core structure of previous management plans with an unrestricted fishery without landing limits, a restricted fishery with a 500 lb. per trip limit, and a late season/mop up fishery. However, under the MOU, each tribe could prosecute their unrestricted and then their restricted fishery 48 hours after their unrestricted fishery within the March 24th and April 28th timeframe. Similarly, tribes could individually prosecute a late season fishery within an agreed upon timeframe.

In the unrestricted fishery, a tribe could harvest halibut for 36 hours at a time of their choosing (thus minimizing the derby aspect of the fishery), and then after a 48-hour gap, pursue their restricted fishery opportunity for 37 hours, provided both fisheries took place between March 24th and April 28th. The total unrestricted catch was 153,446 lbs. over 173 landings. The level of catch for the unrestricted fishery was lower than normal for two reasons: 1) the majority of halibut did not show up in the tribes' U&As until May, and 2) weather conditions during late March and early April were not ideal. The total restricted catch was 37,043 lbs. from 142 landings.

After the unrestricted and restricted fisheries had been completed, a conference call was held on April 30th to discuss a late season fishery to harvest the remaining TAC; the tribes agreed it should be an unrestricted fishery given that over 50% of the TAC was left (approx. 196,000 lbs.). On May 1st, another conference call was held to shore up details for the unrestricted late season fishery. The tribes agreed to a 30-hour unrestricted fishery that each tribe could prosecute individually during May 4 – May 15. The rationale was to allow each tribe to fish during periods of favorable weather and tides, and to allow for limited overlap with non-treaty fishing. A conference call was held on May 17th to review catch from the late season fishery up to that date, and to extend the timeframe to May 23rd for tribes who had not yet fished to pursue their opportunity. The unrestricted late season fishery took place during May 4 – May 23, with a total harvest of 213,265 lbs. across 97 landings.

The 2018 tribal halibut commercial season closed to all parties on May 24, 2017. The total tribal commercial halibut catch in 2018 was 403,754 dressed lbs. which was 3.7% over the allocation. The C&S halibut fishery will continue until December 31, 2018.