



# TRANSITION OF MANAGEMENT IN THE IPHC REGULATORY AREA 2A

## Background

In October 2018, the IPHC provided to the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) a draft of a regulatory proposal for longer fishing periods in the non-treaty directed commercial Pacific halibut fishery in the IPHC Regulatory Area 2A. This came as a result of safety concerns with the derby-style fishing with only two or three 10-hour openings per season. In response to the IPHC's proposal, the PFMC developed a list of management concerns, noting that it could consider the structure of the directed fishery more broadly. At its April 2019 meeting, the PFMC reviewed the report prepared by its staff which highlighted management considerations that included licensing and in-season management. Further direction by the PFMC was provided and included the PFMC's intent to manage the directed commercial Pacific halibut fishery.

In the discussions following the April 2019 meeting, the IPHC expressed willingness to work with the PFMC to develop a mutually agreeable transition plan. It has been noted that the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has the authority to enact Pacific halibut fishing regulations under the

[Northern Pacific Halibut Act of 1982](#) for the directed commercial fishery provided such regulations are consistent with broader [IPHC Fishery Regulations](#). As such, the fishery could transition to the PFMC/NMFS management with little change to the fishery structure in the immediate future (i.e., it would remain a derby-fishery), while the PFMC could revisit the fishery structure in the future.

At its November 2020 meeting, the PFMC took the final action and adopted a set of [management alternatives accommodating the 2A transition](#). The PFMC decided to utilize September and November Catch Sharing Plan process to consider the **directed fishery framework**, including guidance for **vessel limits and in-season changes** for NMFS implementation. Moreover, the decision was made to charge NMFS with **issuing permits for all 2A Pacific halibut fisheries**: directed commercial, incidental salmon troll, incidental sablefish, and recreational charter. However, the administrative complexity did not allow for accommodation of the transition on time for the 2021 fishing season, as originally planned.

## Status of implementation

The [proposed rule \(87 FR 44318\)](#) implementing the 2A management transition was published on 26 July 2022 and remained open for comments until 25 August 2022. The [final rule \(87 FR 74322\)](#) was published on 5 December 2022 and becomes effective on 4 January 2023. Among notable changes are **new applications deadlines**, two weeks earlier than previously required by the IPHC for the incidental salmon and sablefish fisheries (from 2023, 1 March), and two months earlier than the previous IPHC deadline for directed commercial fishery permit applications (from 2023, 15 February). NMFS is also requiring application information in addition to what the IPHC required; specifically, those applying for directed commercial fishery permits must provide **vessel length documentation**. **Online permit application form** will be available through the NOAA Fisheries Pacific halibut web page at: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/west-coast/commercial-fishing/west-coast-fishing-permits>.

Additionally, NMFS is in process of collecting information necessary to issue permits and manage the non-tribal directed commercial

fishery beginning in 2023, including in-season actions. In the early stages of the transition, the IPHC Secretariat will be supporting NMFS, offering expertise gained through years of experience in fisheries management in the IPHC Regulatory Area 2A.

Moving forward, annual management alternatives for the 2A Pacific halibut fisheries will be considered through the PFMC process at its September and November meetings. The PFMC and NMFS have stated that maintaining the general season structure with vessel limits consistent with the protocols developed by IPHC for the directed fishery is the most efficient and stable path forward. This will be especially important in the next few years as NMFS navigates the new process and logistics related to management of this fishery.

## More information

For more information on implementation by NMFS, contact [nmfs.wcr.halibut@noaa.gov](mailto:nmfs.wcr.halibut@noaa.gov). For questions on IPHC Fishery Regulations, contact IPHC Secretariat at [secretariat@iphc.int](mailto:secretariat@iphc.int).

Offloading Pacific halibut in Newport, Oregon

