

ACTION: Inseason action.

SUMMARY: The Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA, on behalf of the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC), publishes this inseason action pursuant to IPHC regulations approved by the U.S. Government to govern the Pacific halibut fishery. NMFS announces that the Area 2A (off Washington, Oregon, and California) commercial halibut fishery quota has been reached and both the directed commercial fishery and the incidental halibut catch fishery during salmon trolling in Area 2A are closed for the remainder of 1996. This action is intended to enhance the conservation of the Pacific halibut stock.

EFFECTIVE DATE: 1800 hrs, Pacific Daylight time, August 1, 1996, until 2400 hrs, Pacific local time, December 31, 1996.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Joe Scordino, 206-526-6140.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In the final regulations implementing the Catch Sharing Plan (Plan) for Area 2A (61 FR 11337, March 20, 1996), the commercial fishery for Pacific halibut in Area 2A was divided between a directed halibut fishery with a quota of 91,052 lb (41.3 metric tons (mt)) and an incidental halibut catch fishery during the salmon troll fishery with a quota of 16,068 lb (7.3 mt). The Plan stipulates that if the quota for the incidental catch fishery is not harvested during the May and June salmon troll fishery, the remaining quota will be made available to the directed halibut fishery on July 1. Further, the Plan stipulates that if the quota for the directed halibut fishery is not harvested by July 31 and the halibut quota for the salmon troll fishery was not harvested during the May/June fishery, then the landings of halibut caught incidentally during salmon troll fisheries will be allowed effective August 1. The salmon troll fishery closed June 30, 1996, and the remaining incidental Pacific halibut catch of 8,066 lb (3.65 mt) was added to the directed commercial catch limit (61 FR 39362, July 29, 1996).

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In accordance with the annual management measures for ocean salmon fisheries (61 FR 20175, May 6, 1996), which stipulate the halibut retention measures in the salmon troll fishery, NMFS is taking inseason action to close the incidental halibut fishery because the Area 2A commercial halibut quota has been reached. NMFS is also

providing notification of the closure of the directed halibut fishery by the IPHC.

Dated: August 7, 1996.

Richard W. Surdi,

Acting Director, Office of Fisheries Conservation and Management, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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50 CFR Part 660

[Docket No. 960126016-6121-04; I.D. 080596D]

Fisheries Off West Coast States and in the Western Pacific; West Coast Salmon Fisheries; Inseason Adjustments from the U.S.-Canadian Border to Leadbetter Point, WA

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Inseason adjustments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces that the possession and landing limit in the commercial salmon fishery in the area from the U.S.-Canadian border to Leadbetter Point, WA, was increased to 200 coho salmon per opening beginning August 2, 1996. This adjustment is intended to increase economic efficiency in the fishery. NMFS also announces that the bag limit in the recreational salmon fishery in the area from the U.S.-Canadian border to Cape Alava, WA, was decreased to one fish per day at the opening of the season on August 5, 1996. This adjustment is intended to prolong the season and provide fishing opportunity to a larger number of recreational fishermen.

DATES: Modification of the commercial possession and landing limit is effective 0001 hours local time, August 2, 1996, through 2400 hours local time, September 30, 1996. Modification of the recreational bag limit is effective 0001 hours local time, August 5, 1996, through 2400 hours local time, September 26, 1996. Comments will be accepted through August 27, 1996.

ADDRESSES: Comments may be mailed to William Stelle, Jr., Director, Northwest Region, NMFS (Regional Director), NOAA, 7600 Sand Point Way NE., Seattle, WA 98115-0070. Information relevant to this action has been compiled in aggregate form and is available for public review during business hours at the office of the Regional Director.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: William L. Robinson, 206-526-6140.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In the annual management measures for ocean salmon fisheries (61 FR 20175, May 6, 1996), NMFS announced that the 1996 commercial fishery for all salmon except chinook salmon in the area between the U.S.-Canadian border and Leadbetter Point, WA, would open July 26, and fishing would follow a cycle of 3 days open and 4 days closed. The fishery would close the earlier of September 30 or attainment of the 18,800 coho salmon quota. Each vessel would be able to possess, land and deliver no more than 75 coho salmon per open period.

The best available information on July 31 indicated that commercial catches for the first open period totaled 3,100 coho salmon. The preseason objective for the possession and landing limit was as a catch-dampening measure to prevent exceeding the quota during the first open period. Increasing the possession and landing limit to 200 coho salmon per opening would increase economic efficiency and provide additional harvest opportunity to commercial fishermen. This adjustment would be effective starting with the second open period on August 2-4.

In the annual management measures, NMFS announced that the 1996 recreational fishery for all salmon except chinook salmon in the area between the U.S.-Canadian border and Cape Alava, WA, would open August 5 and continue through the earlier of September 26 or attainment of the 5,800 coho salmon subarea quota. The bag limit would be two fish per day.

Based on historical catch and effort levels available on July 31, it is expected that the quota would be reached and the fishery would be closed within 2 days of the season opening. Opening the season with an adjusted bag limit of one fish per day will provide a longer season and additional fishing opportunity to more recreational fishermen.

Modifications of limited retention regulations and recreational bag limits are authorized by regulations at 50 CFR 660.409(b)(1)(ii) and (iii). All other restrictions that apply to these fisheries remain in effect as announced in the annual management measures.

The Regional Director consulted with representatives of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Department of Fish and Game, and Pacific Fishery Management Council regarding this action. The State of Washington will manage the commercial and recreational fisheries in State waters adjacent to these areas of the exclusive economic zone consistent with this Federal action. As provided by the inseason action procedures of 50

CFR 660.411, actual notice to fishermen of this action was given prior to August 2, 1996 (reopening date of the commercial fishery between the U.S.-Canadian border and Leadbetter Point, WA), and August 5, 1996 (opening date of the recreational fishery between the U.S.-Canadian border and Cape Alava, WA), by telephone hotline number 206-526-6667 or 800-662-9825 and by U.S. Coast Guard Notice to Mariners broadcasts on Channel 16 VHF-FM and 2182 kHz. Because of the need for immediate action to adjust these fisheries in a timely manner, NMFS has determined that good cause exists for this action to be issued without affording a prior opportunity for public comment. This action does not apply to other fisheries that may be operating in other areas.

Classification

This action is authorized by 50 CFR 660.409 and 660.411 and is exempt from review under E.O. 12866.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: August 7, 1996.

Richard W. Surdi,

*Acting Director, Office of Fisheries
Conservation and Management, National
Marine Fisheries Service.*

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