



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Sustainable Fisheries Division F/NWR2
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Seattle, WA 98115-0070

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Record

FROM: Frank Lockhart

Assistant Regional Administrator for Sustainable Fisheries

SUBJECT: Categorical Exclusion (CE) for 2012 Proposed Changes to
the Area 2A Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan and
Annual Domestic Regulations

NAO 216-6, Environmental Review Procedures, requires all proposed actions to be reviewed with respect to environmental consequences on the human environment. This memorandum summarizes the determination that proposed changes to the Area 2A Pacific Halibut Catch Sharing Plan and Annual Domestic Regulations qualify to be categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

Description of the Action(s)

This proposed action is to make minor revisions to the Pacific Fishery Management Council's Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) and to issue regulations authorizing fishing for halibut in Area 2A (Washington, Oregon and California) in 2012 consistent with the CSP, codified regulations, and the applicable regulations of the International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC).

The changes to the CSP for 2012 are as follows:

- Adjust the season structure in the Washington South Coast subarea;
- Adjust the Oregon contribution to the Columbia River subarea and the subarea allocation split between the spring and summer fisheries;
- Adjust allocation percentages in the Oregon Central Coast subarea spring and nearshore fisheries and;
- Adjust Oregon Central Coast subarea language regarding the movement of quota from the spring fishery to the summer and nearshore fisheries within the Oregon Central Coast subarea.

The changes to the Washington South Coast subarea are intended to maintain the opening day and days per week prior to a scheduled management closure and then to allow the fishery to be open one or two days after the management closure to maximize the use of



the quota. The changes to the Columbia River subarea spring and summer allocations are intended to better align the subarea allocations with historical effort and maximize the use of the entire subarea allocation, and the change to the Oregon contribution to the subarea is intended to better align the Oregon contribution to the historical catches from Oregon. Finally, the changes to the Oregon Central Coast subarea are intended to give the public maximum access to the quota better aligning the subarea allocations to historical catches. The annual domestic halibut regulations will allocate the Total Allowable Catch (TAC) for Area 2A, set by IPHC at its January meeting, according to the CSP.

Effects of the Action(s)

This action makes minor changes to the CSP that do not have the potential to pose significant effects to the quality of the human environment. These changes will not affect the overall allocations to any fishery in Area 2A. In addition, these changes are within the scope of previously published regulations. None of the changes to the CSP affect the overall amount of Pacific halibut taken in Area 2A, the effects of Pacific halibut fisheries on other species, the areas where fishing occurs, or the gear types used. The proposed action would have no effect on the Area 2A Total Allowable Catch, which is set by IPHC. The 2012 halibut fishing regulations will be consistent with the CSP, codified regulations, and IPHC regulations and TAC, and therefore, will not have any effects that have not been previously analyzed.

NEPA Determination

After reviewing this action in relation to NAO 216-6, I have concluded that the proposed action would not have a significant effect, individually or cumulatively, on the human environment. Further, I believe that the proposed action may appropriately be categorically excluded from the requirement to prepare either an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement, in accordance with Section 6.03c.3 of NAO 216-6. Specifically, this project fits under the categorical exclusion described in Section 6.03d.4(a) of NAO 216-6.

Additionally, this project does not involve: (1) A geographic area with unique characteristics; (2) public controversy based on potential environmental consequences; (3) uncertain environmental impacts or unique or unknown risks; (4) establishment of a precedent or decision in principle about future proposals; (5) cumulatively significant impacts; or (6) adverse effects upon endangered or threatened species or their habitats. Therefore, the project does not trigger the exceptions for categorical exclusions listed in NAO 216-6, Section 5.05c.