



## Puget Sound halibut fishery to open for select dates starting May 20

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### Contact

Fish Program Contact: Heather Hall, 360-902-2487

Public Affairs Contact: Eryn Couch, 360-890-6604

OLYMPIA - The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife announced today the expected dates of this year's Puget Sound halibut fishing season, which was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The halibut fishery will open in Marine Areas 5 through 10 beginning May 20 through June 30 on alternating days. The season structure was revised from what was originally planned to allow the halibut fishery to proceed in a manner that is consistent with the guidelines to limit travel. Anglers are encouraged to participate in these dates only if they can do so locally as part of a day trip, while also practicing physical distancing.

"In talking with public health officials and our partners at Washington's ports, we think we've found a balance between being able to provide these opportunities and bring that value back into these communities, while also continuing to prioritize public health," Larry Phillips, WDFW coastal region director. "These dates depend on anglers continuing to get outdoors responsibly – something we know folks can do because we've seen a lot of great examples of it these last couple of weeks."

Anglers should only venture out well-prepared. WDFW is also recommending that people bring their own needs for personal hygiene; for example, handwashing materials, toilet paper, and face masks or bandanas. People are also reminded to be prepared to change plans if access sites are congested. Fishers are also reminded to check ahead to ensure that your intended access site is open and be aware of some local alternatives. Anglers should be aware that the Port of Neah Bay is closed to the public, there is no moorage or fuel available at that location.

Similar to last year, anglers fishing for halibut in Marine Area 6 will not be able to retain lingcod incidentally caught when fishing for halibut seaward of the 120-foot depth boundary. The depth restriction is designed to protect rockfish species, including yelloweye rockfish, which are listed under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). However, lingcod retention will still be allowed seaward of the 120-foot depth restriction in Marine Area 5, which is outside of the area where yelloweye rockfish are listed.

In all marine areas open to halibut fishing, there is a one-fish daily catch limit and no minimum size restriction. Anglers may possess a maximum of two halibut in any form while in the field and must record their catch on a WDFW halibut catch record card. There is an annual limit of four halibut. Recreational fishery samplers will be available to collect catch information at fishing access sites throughout Puget Sound while practicing physical distancing guidelines.

Because halibut fisheries are managed to a quota, anglers should check the WDFW website to ensure a specific area is open prior to fishing. Complete information on recreational halibut regulations and seasons is available online at <https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/regulations/halibut>. Season details are listed below.

### 2020 Puget Sound halibut seasons

- Marine Areas 5 – 10 will open May 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, June 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29.
- Puget Sound will be managed to an overall quota of 77,550 pounds as long as there is sufficient quota.
- Marine Areas 11, 12, and 13 will remain closed to halibut fishing to protect threatened and endangered rockfish species.

### 2020 Pacific Coast halibut seasons

- Marine Areas 1 – 4: will remain closed for now, WDFW will continue to work with public health officials and partners at coastal Washington ports to develop a halibut season opening plan for coastal marine areas.

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