



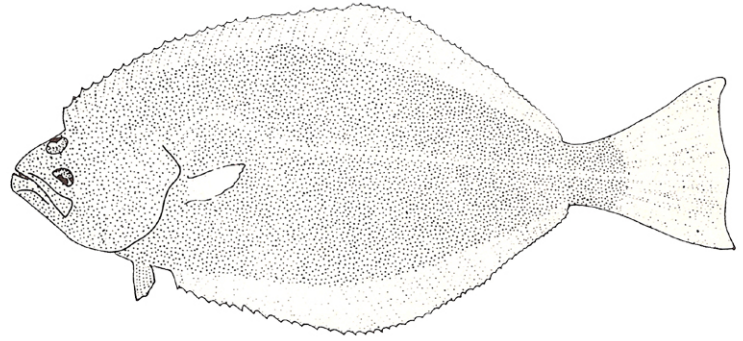
2015 California Halibut (*Paralichthys californicus*) Fact Sheet

Recreational Fishing Regulations

- ✓ 22 in. minimum total length
- ✓ 3 fish bag and **possession** limit north of Pt. Sur, Monterey County
- ✓ 5 fish bag and **possession** limit south of Pt. Sur, Monterey County

No more than **one** daily bag limit may be taken or possessed by any one person, regardless of whether the fish are fresh, frozen, or otherwise preserved. See California Code of Regulations Title 14, sections 1.17, 7.00, 7.50(a), 27.60(c) and 195. For more complete rules and regulations regarding bag and possession limits and other fishing regulations, visit the CDFW website at:

www.wildlife.ca.gov/Fishing/Ocean/Regulations/Sport-Fishing



DFG artwork by D. Miller, R.N. Lea

Q & A: California Halibut

Q) *What is the difference between Pacific and California halibut?*

A) California halibut have less than 77 dorsal soft rays, and the eyes may be on the left or right side of the head; Pacific halibut have more than 80 dorsal soft rays, and the eyes are always on the right side of the head. The corner of the mouth of California halibut extends beyond the eye. Pacific halibut are typically caught in deep water, off northern California.

For Pacific halibut information, visit the CDFW website at: www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/Pacific-Halibut

Q) *Will salt water rust out a fish hook?*

A) No. Modern hooks tend to resist the corrosive effects of saltwater. If left inside a fish they will likely be pushed through the digestive system and may damage organs. However, if removing the hook will result in increased damage, cut the line and release the fish with the least amount of handling possible.

Q) *How do I prevent tail splitting?*

A) Try not to land undersized fish. Bring it to the side of the boat and release the fish from there. If you do land a "shaker," use a soft net with the smallest mesh available. Tail splits, if not severe, will heal, but make the fish susceptible to fin rot.

Q) *Is it legal to use a treble hook?*

A) Yes, but treble hooks may make releasing halibut and other finfish difficult.

Q) *Are halibut from San Francisco Bay safe to eat?*

A) Based on mercury and PCBs, the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) recommends that men over 17 and women over 45 consume no more than 2 servings per week. OEHHA recommends that women ages 18 to 45 and children under 17 consume no more than 1 serving per week (information correct as of 11/04/2011). Visit www.oehha.ca.gov/fish/ for the most up-to-date recommendations.

California Halibut Facts

- Can be either right- or left-eyed.
- Young hatch in the water column with an eye on each side of the head. One eye then migrates to the other side of the head as the young mature and the fish settle to the sea floor.
- Can grow up to 5 ft long, weigh up to 72 lbs, and live as long as 30 yrs.
- Range from Quillayute River, WA to Magdalena Bay, Baja California. The California fishery primarily extends from Bodega Bay to San Diego.
- Inhabit nearshore, sandy, shallow water habitat.
- California halibut are broadcast spawners. They release eggs and sperm directly into the water column where they meet randomly to form fertilized eggs.
- Recruitment success is largely environmentally driven. Warmer water temperatures are generally favorable for larval development.
- California halibut are visual ambush predators. They primarily prey on fish but also eat crustaceans and mollusks.
- Female California halibut grow faster than male California halibut. At 22 in., females are about 4 to 5 years old while males are around 6 years old.
- In Southern California, 50 percent of male California halibut are mature at 9 in. or 2 years old; 50 percent of females are mature at 18.5 in. or 4 years old.



CDFW Northern/Central California Finfish Research and Management Project

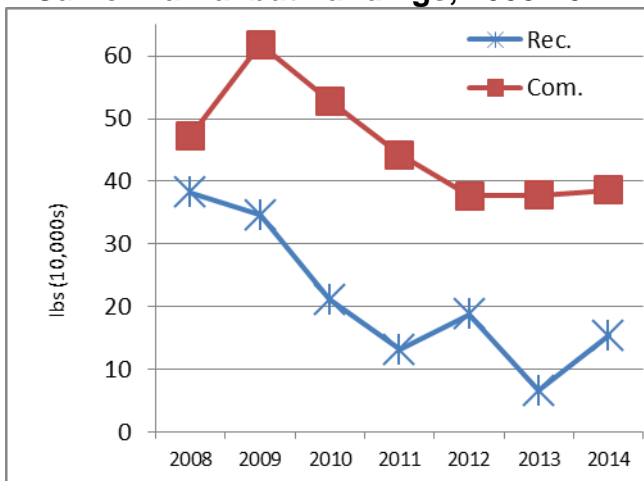
The Northern and Central California Finfish Research and Management

Project collects data and monitors state-managed finfish species (especially halibut) in northern and central California. Five scientists and a supervisor work on the project, with staff located from Eureka to Monterey. Scientists collect data on length, weight, sex ratios, and age structure of California halibut populations. These data are used to help manage the fishery.

Commercial vs. Recreational

Recreational anglers often wonder how their catch compares with the commercial catch. The graph below compares total commercial catch (trawl and hook-and-line) with total recreational catch north of Point Conception. From 2008 to 2014, the recreational take each year ranged from 15 to 45 percent of the total take. In 2014, the recreational fishery accounted for 29 percent of the total take. Recreational catch data are available at www.recfin.org. Data are collected by California Recreational Fisheries Survey program samplers, who interview anglers returning from fishing trips. Commercial catch records are maintained by the CDFW in the form of landing receipts. Every time a fish is sold, a receipt records the weight, general location where caught, and port of landing.

**Recreational and Commercial
California Halibut Landings, 2008-2014**



Data source: www.recfin.org and CDFW landings data



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California Halibut Fishery North of Pt. Conception

California halibut were first described in San Francisco Bay in 1859 and have been a staple for anglers for the greater part of the last century. Although they range north to Washington, they are most abundant south of Bodega Bay. With no closed season, recreational anglers may target California halibut year-round, although fish availability is best during the summer. California halibut are an important commercial species. Methods of take include hook-and-line and trawl gear. Permitted commercial fishermen may only catch California halibut with trawl nets in federal waters (three nautical miles from shore).

CDFW Monitoring

California halibut settle, or 'recruit', into bays and estuaries as young-of-the-year (YOY) and juveniles. They become available to fishermen years later, after they reach minimum legal "keeper" size. Recruitment appears to be environmentally dependent, and increases during warmer water periods associated with El Niño events. The CDFW's Bay-Delta Region monitors YOY in monthly San Francisco Bay otter trawls. Other factors that may affect recruitment include availability of mature females, food and water quality.

Project scientists can tell how old halibut are by looking at bones called **otoliths** located in the fish's head. Age can be determined by slicing through otoliths and counting the concentric growth rings, similar to the growth rings in a tree. Project scientists collect otoliths when possible during sampling. These ages, combined with halibut length and sex, are an important component to stock assessments. The majority of halibut in the fishery are 4 to 10 years old.

Stock Assessment

The first ever statewide California halibut stock assessment was completed in 2011, and encompassed the years 1971 through 2010. Separate assessments were completed for areas north and south of Pt. Conception. Assessments are updated every five years.

The 2011 assessment is available online at:

www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/NCCFRMP/Halibut-Studies/Halibut-Assessment

Further Information

www.wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/NCCFRMP#29429327-california-halibut