



# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

For Advance Release  
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The Pacific halibut fleet was getting gear ready this week for its annual dash to the fishing grounds in search of one of the choicest foods provided by the sea. The season begins at midnight April 15.

The only deep-sea fishery under international regulation, the halibut fishery is controlled jointly by the United States and Canada through the International Fisheries Commission. This year the Commission's regulations which have been approved by both the President of the United States and the Governor-General of Canada, will allow fishermen to take 51,000,000 pounds--a half million pounds up from the quota of 1943. No specific date has been set for closing of the season; it will end when the quota has been caught.

Last year the normal flow of halibut into United States markets was disrupted by price schedules which became effective in the middle of the season and which made it more profitable for many fishermen to land their catches at nearby Canadian and Alaskan ports rather than at Seattle, usually the center of the U. S. halibut trade.

This year, according to Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Deputy Coordinator of Fisheries, efforts are being made by Federal agencies, in conjunction with similar agencies in Canada, to make possible the normal flow of this important fish. If adjustment of price schedules do not succeed in reestablishing the normal flow of halibut to the market, OCF may use other means, such as allocation, to achieve this end.

The halibut fishery is regulated due to the fact that intensive fishing in former years was so depleting the fishery that the industry was threatened with extinction. The work of the International Fisheries Commission in protecting the halibut is frequently cited as being an outstanding example of intelligent conservation work.

The halibut is a giant flounder. While the male rarely grows to a weight of more than 40 pounds, females have been found weighing ten times as much. Only in recent years was it discovered that while halibut might within a few years grow to a size of interest to commercial fishermen, in actuality the halibut does not

reach spawning age until it is twelve years old. Thus many halibut were taken several years before they were old enough to add to the species. Now minimum size regulations protect young halibut.

The halibut is caught in deeper waters than any other commercial species and it is one of the chief species still caught by hook and line rather than in nets or traps.

Like all flounders, the halibut is a bottom feeder and lives close to the ocean floor where it is caught with lines ranging from 300 to a little more than a thousand feet in length. The species probably can live comfortably at greater depths, but it is not at present economical to fish for them in such deep waters.

The Pacific halibut, like its cousin in the Atlantic, is found in places where the warm waters from the south mix with Arctic currents. It is almost always found in waters with temperatures ranging from 37 to 47 degrees Fahrenheit. In the Pacific its habitat is a rough crescent beginning off the U.S. Northwest coast continuing around south of the Alaska peninsula. It is also found in waters near Russia and Japan.

Early in life the halibut looks and swims like most other small fish; soon, however, it begins to swim at an angle and the eye on the downside begins a migration to the top. When developed, both eyes are on the top side of the fish, the top side takes on protective coloration and the lower side becomes white.