Suggested Personal-Use Regulations for Red Abalone
(Haliotis rufescens) in Oregon

Although we have known that red abalones were in the Brookings area since 1953, little attention had been paid to the animal. The people in the Brookings area who knew about the abalone were quite reticent about divulging any information and we were inclined to believe that this was the northern limits of this animal's range. These factors, combined with the press of other work, diverted our attention to other species and we more or less ignored the possibility of a fishery for this animal.

With the advent of two California men coming to Oregon to do research on this resource and the resultant publicity attracting people to the area to hunt abalones, it would seem advisable to promulgate regulations for this animal's protection, until we can learn more about it's life history in Oregon waters. Although our knowledge of the red abalone in Oregon is quite limited, we do have the years of research in California to guide us in the preliminary regulatory steps. For the other species of abalones that occur in Oregon, we do not have this guide. Therefore, no recommendation is made at this time for harvesting any species other than H. rufescens. It is felt that at the present time, regulations should be kept quite stringent. We now know that the red abalone occurs as far north as Coos Bay. We also feel quite sure that the northern limit of this species probably occurs in Oregon. How rapidly this species declines in abundance as it approaches this northern limitation is unknown. As we progress in our abalone research and increase our knowledge of this animal in Oregon waters, we can then either liberalize bag limits or reduce them. At the present time it is felt that the proposed regulations will adequately protect this resource in Oregon until further information can be obtained. Some of the objectives desired from the proposed regulations are: protection from depletion; assurance of a continuing incoming year class; restriction of the harvest until such time that we can justify a fishery from
the biological standpoint; and protection of small abalones from injury or harvesting. It has been well established that abalones are easily injured and subject to much predation, if improperly replaced on the bottom.

The life history of the red abalone, as known from work in California, is as follows. The sexes are separate and eggs and sperm are released into the water where fertilization takes place. Development follows the typical mollusk cleavage stages and continues to the trophophore larvae stage. At this time the trophophores break out of the egg membranes as free-swimming larvae. In 2 days the shell appears and at the end of 7 days complete metamorphosis has taken place. From this stage on, the growth rate is not as clear cut as it could be. California workers believe that an 8-inch red abalone will be 10-13 years of age and have had 6-7 years of reproductive activity. California work indicates that they reach sexual maturity at 6 years (shell diameter of 4 inches) of age, and a large female abalone will produce from 1-2 million eggs. Correspondence with California biologists indicates that their belief that spawning occurred between mid-January and mid-March may be wrong. Red abalones usually are found from the intertidal zone to the 100-foot depths. Their principal foods are sea lettuce, eel grass, various species of rock kelps, and diatoms. They are seldom found beyond the zone of plant growth. California tagging indicates that they move about very little, foraging at night and returning to their "home spot" by daylight. Some individuals have stayed at a single home spot as long as 2 years. California statistics and limited information from Oregon indicate that an 8-inch abalone will yield a 12-16 ounce trimmed foot. A 9-inch abalone will double this meat yield.

The following personal-use regulations are at the present time in effect in California. The following are quoted from the California Fish and
1- Abalone may be taken only from March 16 to January 14. Not more than five abalones, in the aggregate of all species, may be taken or possessed by any person during any one day. Every person while taking abalones shall carry a device which is capable of measuring accurately the size of the abalone taken, which size shall conform to the following minimum: red abalone, seven inches; green abalone, six and one-quarter inches; pink abalone, six inches; black abalone, five inches; all other species, six inches. Any abalone under the minimum size which are detached must be replaced without delay on the surface from which taken, with the shell outward. Legal-sized abalone must be brought ashore high water mark attached to the shell and alive. Abalone not in the shell may not be transported or possessed, except when being prepared for immediate consumption.

2- Spades, shovels, hoes, rakes or other appliances operated by hand, except spears or gaff hooks, may be used to take mollusks, sand crabs and shrimp, except that no device more than 36 inches in length may be used to take abalones.

3- In all ocean districts south of Yankee Point, Monterey County, mollusks and crustaceans may be taken by the use of the hands or by devices less than thirty-six (36) inches long, known commonly as abalone irons, in the manner commonly known as skin diving or by the use of diving apparatus commonly known as self-contained underwater breathing apparatus (S.C.U.B.A.). No type of underwater artificial breathing device may be used in taking mollusks or crustaceans in any other districts. For the purpose of this regulation breathing tubes are not considered to be underwater artificial breathing devices.

4- Abalone may be taken only by use of abalone irons, less than thirty-six (36) inches long.

The following regulations pertaining to abalones are quoted from the State of California Fish and Game Code 1957, fortieth edition.

1- Pink abalone (Haliotis corrugata), red abalone (Haliotis rufescens), black abalone (Haliotis crassidens), and green abalone (Haliotis fulgens) may be taken only between March 16 and January 14.

2- Abalones shall be brought ashore above high-water mark attached to shell and alive. Except as otherwise provided, abalones not in the shell may not be transported nor possessed, except when being prepared for immediate consumption.

3- Abalone may be taken only for food purposes, except as specifically authorized to be taken for bait purposes, and may not be dried.
4- It is unlawful to use any device or apparatus, other than diving equipment, more than 36 inches in length to take abalone. Spears or gaff hooks may not be used for the purpose of taking abalone.

5- (This is a commercial regulation) It is unlawful to take any abalone, the shell of which, measured in greatest diameter, is less than the following specifications: red abalone, eight inches; green abalone, seven and one-quarter inches; pink abalone, six inches; black abalone, five inches.

After carefully looking at the existing personal-use regulations in California, I would like to submit for consideration the following personal-use regulations for Oregon.

1- No abalone shall be taken for personal-use that measures less than 8 inches at the greatest diameter.

2- Limit of 3 red abalone per day or in any 7 consecutive days per person. No individual shall gather abalone for anyone except himself while sport fishing.

3- Abalone fishermen will carry a suitable measuring device at all times while fishing for abalone.

4- No abalone measuring less than 8 inches in greatest diameter shall be removed from the rocks or molested in any way.

5- The first 3 abalone removed from the rocks measuring 8 inches or greater shall constitute the daily bag limit.

6- Any "short" or sub-legal abalones accidentally removed from the sub-straeta shall be replaced, foot down and in as nearly the same spot as removed from as possible.

7- Gaff hooks and spears are absolutely prohibited in fishing for abalone.

8- No abalone iron shall be used that exceeds 36 inches in length. Irons shall be flat and without hooks or sharp cutting edges.

9- All abalone taken shall be brought ashore above the high-tide line, in the round, with the foot still attached to the shell.

10- Abalone shall be taken for food purposes only.

In brief summary the above regulations are submitted with the following thoughts in mind: 1- Protection from depletion and assurance of a continuing incoming year class by a minimum size regulation. 2- Restriction of harvest by a daily and possession bag limit, until more is known about this animal in Oregon waters.

3- Protection of sub-legal individuals from harvesting or injury by gear
restrictions and requiring measuring devices.

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