



Charter Halibut Management Committee

REPORT

Dec 7, 2022, Hybrid In-person/ Zoom meeting

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council’s Charter Halibut Management Committee held a public meeting December 7, 2022 to review the analysis of potential Area 2C and 3A charter halibut management measures for 2023 and provide recommendations to the Council. All meeting materials are posted to the [eAgenda](#).

Committee Members in Attendance:

In person

Andy Mezirow (Area 3A), *Chair*
Mike Flores (Area 3A)
Forrest Braden (Area 2C)
Kent Huff (Area 2C)

In person

Daniel Donich (Area 3A)
Steve Zernia (Area 3A)
Stan Malcolm (Area 2C)

Virtual

Matt Kopec (Area 3A)
Richard Yamada (Area 2C)
Seth Bone (Area 2C)

Sarah Marrinan, *Staff coordinator*

Members Absent: Brian Ritchie (Area 3A)

Others in Attendance:

In person

Brianna Bowman
Sarah Webster
Kurt Iverson
Ben Jevons

In person

Karla Bush
Tom Gemmel
Tony Severson
Shelby Restrepo

Virtual

Tom Meyer
Kayla Joy Carr
David Creighton
Mason Smith
Jim Kearns

Virtual

Steve Ramp
Jess Rude
Mel Erikson
Alicia Miller

Committee Chair Andy Mezirow called the meeting to order at 8:10am.

Andy noted that this year was particularly challenging for the Charter Halibut Management Committee members in their role of gathering input from the broader charter industry due to the compressed timeframe of the process, which resulted in very little time to review documents. In addition, the lack of an interim harvest strategy policy at the IPHC creates more uncertainty in which possible allocations to use as a baseline for analysis. Therefore, the Committee needs to make broader recommendations than they typically do to cover the range of uncertainty. Members had very little time to conduct outreach to the charter community on possible management measures to meet this broad range. **Andy challenged the staff to come up with ideas and recommendations on how to improve the schedule of this process to be able to provide the information sooner, so Committee members have time to socialize their ideas with the greater charter community.**

Agency Staff Updates

Ben Jevons (ADF&G) was introduced as the Program Coordinator for the guide registration and Saltwater Logbook program. **The Committee had a short question and comment period on the**

eLogbook program. The eLogbook is required in Area 2C and Ben noted there has been an uptick in operators using it in Area 3A. The eLogbooks Program has dramatically reduced the level of errors in logbook data and the time ADF&G must take to address these errors. The eLogbook program is also designed to work offline.

Committee members asked about the possibility of tracking the size restricted halibut, i.e., “the second fish”. Ben responded that that isn’t built in now, but it is possible. One member suggested that checking a box to identify when a small fish is caught could help clarify assumptions about the “second fish” and help operators track which clients have already retained their small fish. That term is sometimes used to reference a fish under the lower size limit, but one member pointed out sometimes they are both small, or sometimes the first fish is the small one. This could help understand the true impact of reducing the size limit.

One member stated they would like to have continued access to their information. Currently their experience was that the access expires which makes it difficult for them when they are trying to get licenses etc. Ben mentioned that access expires December 31 to allow for programming updates. However, he agreed that operators should have continued access and they are looking into finding the best way to ensure that this happens.

One member felt the program functions much better on an iPad instead of an iPhone. This member recommended other 3A operators try the program. They felt the eLogbook was a timesaver that makes less clerical errors and can help operators avoid unnecessary calls from enforcement due to these types of errors.

Andy suggested that Committee members and other operators should take note of any issues or questions that arise during the upcoming season and that the Committee should circle back to this discussion in October of 2023. Ben stated that he could also be contacted directly for any further feedback or questions on the Logbook program by Committee members or others (ben.jevons@alaska.gov or 907-267-2299).

Kurt Iverson (NMFS) noted that the **2022 Guided Angler Fish (GAF) report** was prepared by Mason Smith (NMFS).¹ There were no big surprises. GAF remains popular in Southeast Alaska. There were more GAF issued and more GAF taken. Prices were higher this year, the highest they have ever been. In Area 2C the GAF conversion factor dropped quite a few pounds. This appears to be due to people using GAF to catch smaller fish as well as the adjustments to the IPHC’s length- weight relationship table.

Kurt also updated the Committee on the forthcoming option to **register for Charter Halibut Permit (CHP) electronically** through the eFish accounts.

ADF&G Analysis of Management Measure Scenarios for 2023

The Committee receive a presentation of the ADF&G analysis of management options for the Area 2C and 3A charter halibut fisheries for 2023 from Brianna Bowman (ADF&G). This report and the corresponding presentation are linked in the [eAgenda](#).

Because the IPHC’s interim management procedure has expired, the Regulatory Area Total Constant Exploitation Yield (TCEYs) and resulting allocations for 2023 are unknown. The analysis used the 2022 allocations of 0.82 Mlb (Area 2C) and 2.11 Mlb (Area 3A) as reference points. In addition, ADF&G requested a range of possible allocations based on the formulas from prior interim agreements these were provided by Ian Stewart (IPHC Secretariat) to provide a broader basis for the Committee consideration. The range of allocations are in the table below:

¹ <https://media.fisheries.noaa.gov/2022-12/gaf-report-2022-akro.pdf>

Area 2C	2019 -2022 Interim Agreement (2C + 2B agreements, 2022 FISS distribution and relative harvest rates)	Pre 2019 Interim Agreement (2022 FISS distribution and relative harvest rates)
2022 Coastwide TCEY (41.2 Mlb)	0.87	0.92
2023 Coastwide reference TCEY (F43) (52 Mlb)	1.02	1.09
Area 3A	2019 -2022 Interim Agreement (2C + 2B agreements, 2022 FISS distribution and relative harvest rates)	Pre 2019 Interim Agreement (2022 FISS distribution and relative harvest rates)
2022 Coastwide TCEY (41.2 Mlb)	1.82	1.89
2023 Coastwide reference TCEY (F43) (52 Mlb)	2.23	2.37

For Area 2C, status quo management measures were predicted to result in a yield of 0.867 Mlb. For Area 3A, status quo management measures were predicted to result in a yield of 2.023 Mlb. The rest of the analysis was provided according to the requests from the Charter Halibut Management Committee from the Oct 2022 meeting. For both areas, many options within the requested range of measures could be adopted for remaining under the 2022 allocations (noting 2023 allocations are highly uncertain). The analysts also requested the Committee work to focus on a narrowing list of measures for analysis in future years.

Public Testimony

The Committee received testimony from two members of the public (Jim Kearns and Steve Ramp). Public testimony and subsequent discussion touched on the policy choice of having different management measures apply to the for charter and unguided anglers and the concept of regulating rental boats under the same management measures as charter operations. It was noted that the Council has made at least two attempts at looking at what it would take to regulate unguided rental boats and it has proved to be a very difficult issue to even identify these vessels. However, at least one member felt like it is a significant issue to address and encouraged continued attention to the topic.

Recommended Management Measures for 2023

After review of the analysis of management measures the Charter Halibut Management Committee provided the following recommendations.

For Area 2C, the Charter Halibut Management Committee recommends a progression of management measures in the following order as needed to remain under the allocation:

1. A reverse slot with an upper limit fixed at O80, and a lower limit decreased until the allocation is reached, but no lower than U40; Yield 0.867 – 1.121 million pounds (**Table 2C.5**).
2. If the allocation is insufficient to maintain at least a U40 on the lower limit, add Monday closures starting September 18 and work consecutively toward the beginning of the season until the allocation is reached; Yield 0.867 - 0.734 million pounds (**Table 2C.8.b**).

3. If a lower limit of U40 can't be reached after closing all Mondays, add an annual limit of 3-fish as necessary to meet the allocation (Yield 0.693 million pounds); if possible, use any unused allocation to increase the lower limit above U40 until the allocation is reached; Yield 0.686 – 0.723 million pounds (**Table 2C.10.b**).
4. If the allocation is not reached by closing all Mondays and a 3-fish annual limit, allow the lower limit to drop until the allocation is reached; Yield 0.564 – 0.686 million pounds (**Table 2C.10.b**).

If an annual limit is adopted in Area 2C, implement a requirement for charter anglers to record, immediately upon retaining a halibut, the date, location (IPHC area), and species (halibut) on their harvest record, consistent with the past reporting requirement in Area 3A.

Rationale and discussion:

Area 2C committee members stated that recommending these types of restrictions are not taken lightly by the Committee. They understand these measures (e.g., annual limits, day of the week closures, etc.) will have real durable impacts on businesses. They noted the Catch Sharing Plan was a blunt tool that does not allow for more refined business-specific response and therefore the impacts to individual businesses are varied as a result of management measures chosen. Given the lack of an interim harvest strategy from the IPHC, both areas were required to cover a wide range of circumstances, which included bringing in some very undesirable measures to the list. Members stated they arrived at the proposed hierarchy of measures as a compromise, including all the available tools.

For Area 3A, the Charter Halibut Management Committee recommends the following progression of measures:

All allocations shown below include, unless otherwise specified: a daily bag limit of 2 halibut; with no annual limit per charter angler; 1 trip per halibut charter vessel per day; and 1 trip per charter halibut permit per day.

- If the allocation is less than 2.37 Mlb, but greater than or equal to 2.075 Mlb:
 - a daily bag limit of 2 halibut, with one fish of any size, and one fish less than or equal to 28 inches;
 - Adjust the number of Wednesdays closed to retention of halibut, with a second fish of 28" or less, according to **Table 3A.13 (page 74)** in ADF&G analysis of proposed harvest regulations for 2023, to bring the projected harvest within the Area 3A allocation.
- If the allocation is less than 2.075 Mlb, but greater than 1.75 Mlb:
 - in addition to all closed Wednesdays, close as many Tuesdays as needed to keep the charter harvest within their allocation (**Table 3A.5, page 65**)
- Should the allocation be below 1.75 Mlb:
 - lower the size of the second fish to as low as 26 inches associated with an allocation of 1.69Mlb (**Table 3A.5, page 65**)

Rationale and discussion:

Area 3A Committee members noted this proposal represented the easiest ways to cover the very large range of allocations that could be set at the IPHC. They emphasized that it was alarming to look at the extreme measures and felt optimistic that they would not need to apply for 2023. Members stated that providing consistent regulations was a big part of the strategy behind what was proposed. Consistent

management measures allow for better ADF&G projections and is desirable from a business and marketing standpoint.