

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council and Board Members

FROM: Jane DiCosimo  
Fishery Biologist

DATE: January 20, 1999

SUBJECT: Halibut

## ACTION REQUIRED

- (a) Status report on local area management plan (LAMP) proposals and task force activities.
- (b) Status report on ADF&G charter logbooks.
- (c) Status report on Council and GHIL Committee activities for managing halibut guided sport fishery.
- (d) Status report on Council activity for managing halibut subsistence.

## BACKGROUND

- (a) Status report on LAMP proposals and task force activities

No BOF or Council action is expected on any LAMPs for the remainder of 1999. Cook Inlet and Kodiak proposals were due in 1998, while Prince William Sound and Southeast Alaska proposals are due in 1999. A BOF workgroup is planned to develop the Cook Inlet LAMP proposal for a charterboat moratorium. The regulations for the Sitka Sound LAMP are still under development at NMFS and are not likely to be in place by the start of the IFQ season, or possibly the summer charter season.

- (b) Status report on ADF&G charter logbooks

Weekly saltwater sportfishing charter vessel logbooks were implemented in 1998. A summary of preliminary 1998 data is attached as Attachment 1(b). This data will be instrumental in the preparation of the Council's GHIL/moratorium analysis. ADF&G staff will not be able to compare logbook results with the State-wide harvest survey for another 6-8 months, and will take at least three years to verify the accuracy of the logbook data. Logbook data indicates a steady decline in resident sportfish licenses and a 1% increase in 1998 non-resident licenses. Nearly all (97%) sport anglers in Southeast Alaska (Area 2C) were non-residents, while 67% were non-residents in Southcentral Alaska (Area 3A).

- (c) Status report on Council and GHIL Committee activities for managing halibut guided sport fishery

The NPFMC GHIL Committee met in March 1998, June 1998, and January 1999 to provide industry advice to the Council in its development of management measures for the halibut guided sport fishery. In April 1998, the Council approved management alternatives for analysis that were based on the committee recommendations. The alternatives as approved by the Council are included here as Attachment 1(c)(1). Staff of the Council, NMFS, ADF&G and International Pacific Halibut Commission prepared a discussion paper of those alternatives.

ADF&G has proposed adding an additional alternative to the analysis (Attachment 1(c)(2)). The new alternative proposes an allocation range for this sector, expressed in absolute pounds (as opposed to a floating percentage), and possibly based on 125% of the 1998 catch, rather than 125% of the 1995 catch. The GHIL committee adopted the ADF&G proposal and suggestions by staff for a revised list of management alternatives (Attachment 1(c)(3)). The Council is scheduled to review the discussion paper and committee recommendations this week.

(d) Status report on Council activity for managing halibut subsistence

The Council has postponed final action on management measures authorizing a subsistence/personal use fishery for Pacific halibut until resolution of subsistence management of all fish and wildlife in the State of Alaska.

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1999 CHARTER VESSEL LOGBOOK PROGRAM

## PRELIMINARY RESULTS

The Division of Sport Fish initiated a statewide logbook reporting program for saltwater charter vessels in 1998. Over 100,000 daily records were received from charter vessel operators during the 1998 fishing season. About eight months of Administrative Clerk time was required to key the logbook information. The summaries from this data that are presented below should be considered very preliminary at this time.

## SOUTHEAST ALASKA – IPHC AREA 2C

Approximately 1,250 vessels were licensed in 1998 with the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) as charter vessels intending to operate in Southeast Alaska. ADF&G staff issued about 910 logbooks to fishing businesses with vessels homeported in the Southeast Alaska area. Of the logbooks issued for these vessels about 290 were in the Southern Southeast area (Ketchikan and Prince of Wales Island), 80 to Petersburg/Wrangell, 205 to Sitka, 300 to Northern Southeast (Juneau, Gustavus, Elfin Cove, Angoon, Hoonah) and about 20 each to both Yakutat and Haines/Skagway.

If ADF&G received at least one weekly logbook form that contained information from at least one charter trip that fished either exclusively for bottomfish or fished part of their trip for bottomfish the charter vessel turning in the form was considered an “active” charter vessel. We have identified 625 unique vessels that were active in Southeast Alaska in 1998.

These 625 active vessels conducted 17,326 charter fishing trips where clients fished either exclusively for bottomfish or fished part of their trip for bottomfish. The number of clients on these charter trips is estimated at 61,820; an average of four clients per trip. Only three percent of the clients were residents of Alaska. The clients on these charter trips harvested 63,852 halibut and caught and released an additional 28,673 halibut.

## SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA – IPHC AREA 3A

Approximately 1,320 vessels were licensed in 1998 with the Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) as charter vessels intending to operate in Southcentral Alaska. ADF&G staff issued about 655 logbooks to fishing businesses with vessels homeported in the Southcentral Alaska area. Of the logbooks issued for these vessels about 460 were issued to vessels from Cook Inlet, 120 to Prince William Sound, and the remaining 85 to the Kodiak/Alaska Peninsula area.

If ADF&G received at least one weekly logbook form that contained information from at least one charter trip that fished either exclusively for bottomfish or fished part of their trip for bottomfish the charter vessel turning in the form was considered an “active” charter vessel. We have identified 518 unique vessels that were active in Southcentral Alaska in 1998.

These 518 active vessels conducted 18,530 charter fishing trips where clients fished either exclusively for bottomfish or fished part of their trip for bottomfish. The number of clients on these charter trips is estimated at 97,671; an average of five clients per trip. Only 33 percent of the clients were residents of Alaska. The clients on these charter trips harvested 161,701 halibut and caught and released an additional 148,012 halibut.

## ALASKA SPORT FISHING LICENSE SALES DECLINE IN 1998

The number of Alaska residents who purchased resident sport fishing licenses declined by over 3,100 people, a drop of nearly three percent from 1997 license sales. The number of nonresidents that purchased a sport fishing license increased by almost 1,900 people, an increase of one percent from 1997.

## MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

### Alternative 1. Status quo. Do not develop regulations to implement a halibut Guideline Harvest Level.

- Instead, develop local area management plans as quickly as possible for areas with documented problems, through facilitation, etc., if possible.
- Employ the following six tools within a local area management plan (LAMP) to curtail catch rates of guided sport anglers: (1) line limits on boats, (2) annual angler limits, (3) vessel trip limits, (4) super-exclusive registration of charter vessels, (5) moratorium, and (6) sport catcher vessel only area (SCVOA) to address gear conflicts. These tools could be employed, as well as others not listed, within a LAMP framework to curtail guided sport catch rates.

### Alternative 2. Under a GHL,

- Retain GHL at specified levels and convert the GHL to an allocation.
- Manage the guided sport fishery under status quo or according to LAMPs approved by the Council.
- Consider moratorium in the LAMPs.
- Bank uncaught halibut from the sport fishery to provide extra fish to sport fishery during subsequent years of low quota to provide stability to guided sport fishery.

### Alternative 3. Under a GHL,

- Manage guided sport fishery status quo.
- Apply range of management measures listed above to curtail catch rates of guided anglers once GHL is attained.
- Apply management measures up to 2 years after attainment of GHL (1 year if data is available, but at the beginning of a year for industry stability).
- Employ combination of management measures (e.g., line, boat, annual and/or trip limits) depending on the level of catch reduction required.
- Include a moratorium under this alternative.

### **HALIBUT CHARTERBOAT GHL DISCUSSION PAPER**

The Department of Fish and Game is submitting one additional management alternative for Council consideration when reviewing the GHL discussion paper during their February meeting. The new alternative and amended language to alternative 4 are written in **bold underline**.

#### **Alternative 1. Status quo. Do not develop regulations to implement a halibut Guideline Harvest Level.**

Local area management plans would be developed on a separate track.

#### **Alternative 2. Convert the GHL to an allocation.**

The guided sport halibut fishery would be allocated 12.76% of the combined commercial and guided sport halibut quota in area 2C, and 15.61% in Area 3A. The commercial fishery would be allocated 87.24% and 84.39% of the combined quota in Areas 2C and 3A, respectively. Under a GHL as an allocation, the guided sport fishery would close when that sector reached its allocation.

#### **Option A: Area-wide moratorium**

#### **Option B: Local moratorium**

#### **Alternative 3. Convert the GHL to an allocation range.**

**This allocation range will have an upper and lower limit and would be a fixed amount expressed in pounds of halibut. The allocation range would be set by IPHC Areas 2C and 3A.**

#### **Options for Analysis:**

**Option A: The upper limit of the allocation range would be set at 125% of the 1995 guided sport halibut harvest. The lower limit of the allocation range would be set at 100% of the 1995 guided sport halibut harvest.**

**Option B: The upper limit of the allocation range would be set at 125% of the 1998 guided sport halibut harvest. The lower limit of the allocation range would be set at 100% of the 1998 guided sport halibut harvest.**

#### **Management Intent:**

**If the guided sport halibut harvest exceeds the upper limit of the range in a year, the guided sport fishery would be restricted to reduce the harvest back within the allocation range.**

**If the guided sport halibut harvest is restricted and the harvest is reduced below the lower limit of the range guided sport fishery management measures would be liberalized to increase the harvest back within the allocation range.**

**Alternative 4. Under a GHL, or an allocation range, apply a range of management measures listed below to curtail catch rates of guided anglers once the GHL or the allocation is attained.**

Apply management measures up to 2 years after attainment of GHL (1 year if data is available, but at the beginning of a year for industry stability).

- line limits
- boat limits
- annual angler limit
- vessel trip limit
- super-exclusive registration
- sport catcher vessel only area
- sportfish reserve
- rod permit

**Option A: Area-wide moratorium**

**Option B: Local moratorium**

**AREA 2C SPORT AND COMMERCIAL HALIBUT HARVESTS: 1995 – 1998**

YEAR	<u>SPORT CHARTER HARVEST</u>		<u>COMMERCIAL HARVEST</u>	
	# OF FISH	MILLIONS LBS.	MILLIONS LBS.	QUOTA
1995	47,338	0.94	7.79	9.00
1996	41,060	0.92	8.53	9.00
1997	42,206	0.86	9.64	10.00
1998*	63,852	1.78	9.66	10.50

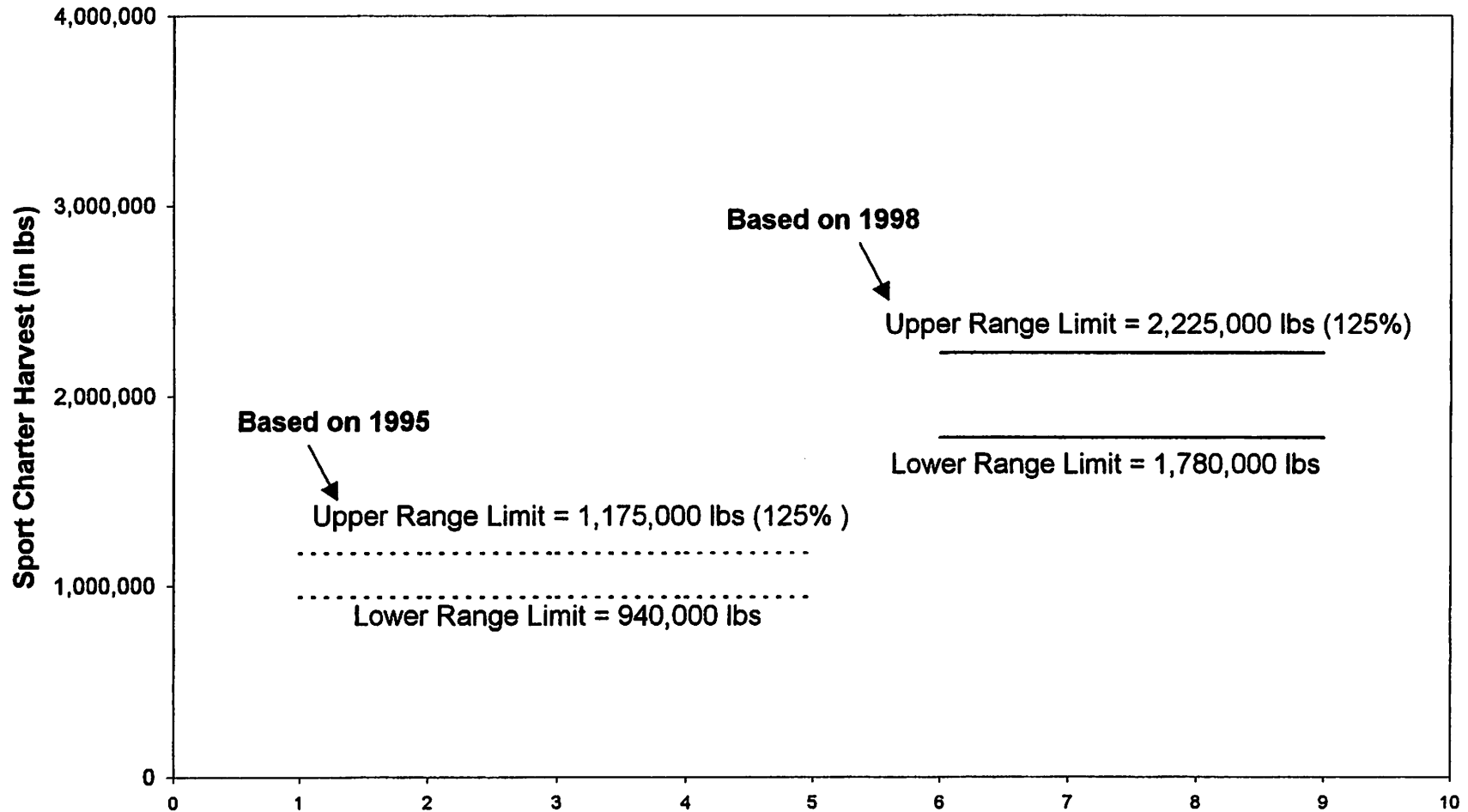
\*Charter harvest data in 1998 are based on preliminary results from the 1998 Saltwater Charter Vessel Logbook. The charter harvest data for 1995 – 1997 are from the annual Statewide Harvest Study report.

**AREA 3A SPORT AND COMMERCIAL HALIBUT HARVESTS: 1995 – 1998**

YEAR	<u>SPORT CHARTER HARVEST</u>		<u>COMMERCIAL HARVEST</u>	
	# OF FISH	MILLIONS LBS.	MILLIONS LBS.	QUOTA
1995	138,025	2.84	18.19	20.00
1996	146,066	2.86	19.69	20.00
1997	156,924	3.49	24.68	25.00
1998*	161,701	3.38	24.64	26.00

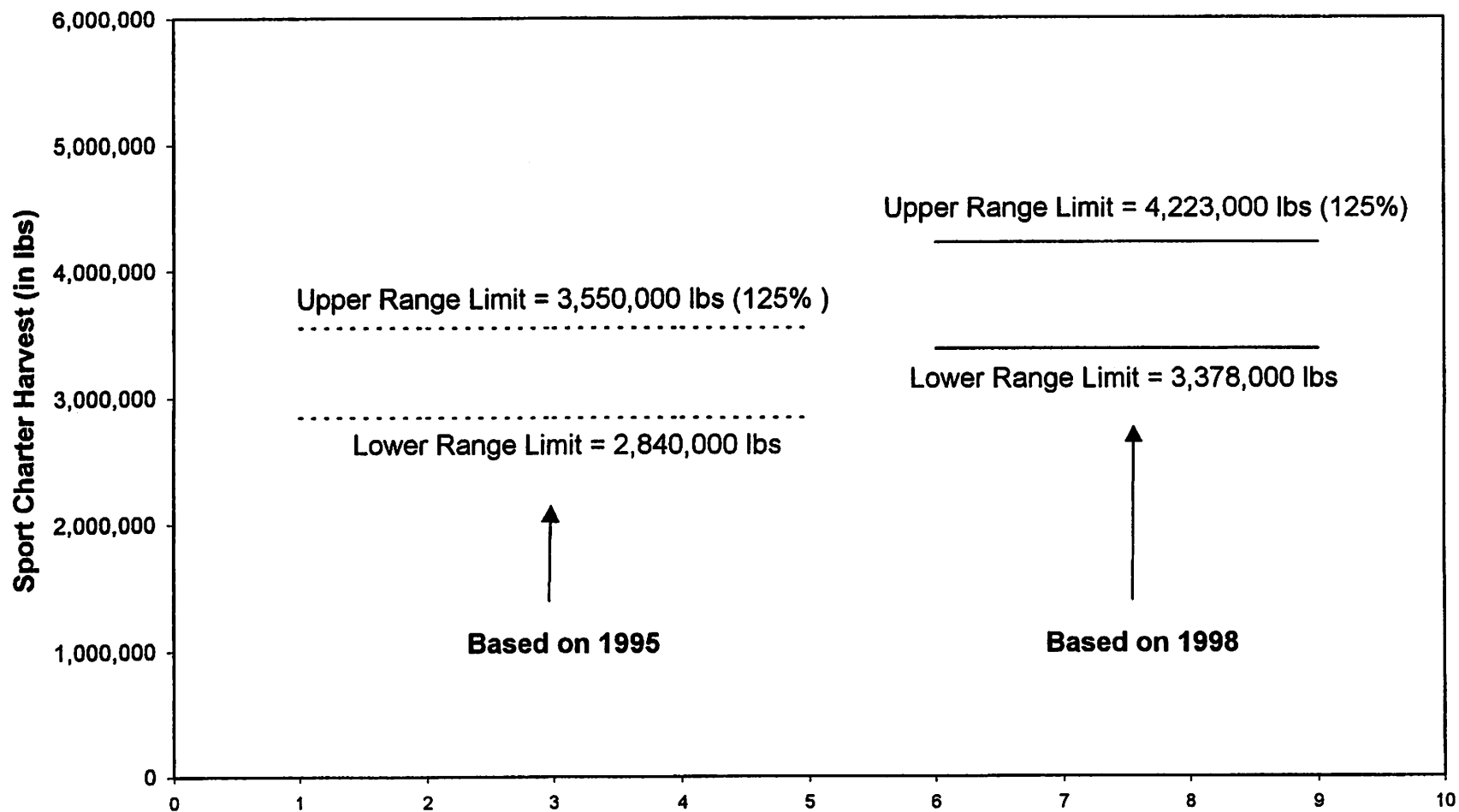
\*Charter harvest data in 1998 are based on preliminary results from the 1998 Saltwater Charter Vessel Logbook. The charter harvest data for 1995 – 1997 are from the annual Statewide Harvest Study report.

## Area 2C Charter Harvest Allocation Range Using 1995 and 1998 Harvest Estimates





## Area 3A Charter Harvest Allocation Range Using 1995 and 1998 Harvest Estimates



## Halibut GHL Committee Minutes January 12, 1999

The GHL Committee convened on January 12, 1999 at 9 a.m. Committee members in attendance were Chairman Dave Hanson, Joe Kyle, Ed Dersham, John Goodhand, Doug Ogden, Larry McQuarrie, Mike Bethers, and Bob Ward for Tim Evers. Mary Jo McNally and Robert LaGuire were absent. Staff in attendance were Jane DiCosimo, Chris Oliver, John Lepore, Earl Krygier, Rob Bentz, Kevin Delaney, Scott Meyer and Mike Bethe. Eleven members of the public were in attendance.

The committee had provided comments on the October 12, 1998 draft GHL discussion paper directly to Council staff because of difficulties in scheduling a Fall 1998 committee meeting. The committee discussed the November 11, 1998 draft. A committee member objected to revisions that addressed comments that were submitted by non-committee members at the staff's request. Council staff discussed with the committee that the discussion paper is a Council document and may therefore not reflect the views of individual committee members.

Rob Bentz, ADF&G Sportfish Division, presented preliminary results of the 1998 charter vessel logbook program. He clarified that logbooks were issued to lodges but lodge logbook data cannot be separated from the total database. He also reported that outfitters cannot be managed by the State without direct authorization from the State Legislature. ADF&G staff will not be able to compare logbook results with the State-wide harvest survey for another 6-8 months, and will take at least three years to verify the accuracy of the logbook data. ADF&G staff clarified that it would recommend that the Council use the 1998 logbook data and reevaluate it as data is revised. Staff also reported on a steady decline in resident sportfish licenses and a 1% increase in 1998 non-resident licenses. Nearly all (97%) sport anglers in Southeast Alaska (Area 2C) were non-residents, while 67% were non-residents in Southcentral Alaska (Area 3A). The committee concluded that sportfish licenses do not specifically reflect halibut charter effort. Staff and the committee expressed concern on the validity of the logbook results since it has not yet been verified with the 1998 postal survey and its usefulness in evaluating participants in terms of the moratorium alternative may be limited. The fleet had been notified that non-compliance in returning logbooks would result in warnings in 1998 and citations in 1999. Bob Ward requested that logbook data be presented in terms of carrying capacity of the charter fleet.

Jane DiCosimo reviewed the discussion paper with the committee. The committee provided a number of corrections and clarifications that should be incorporated into the analysis of the various alternatives. The committee clarified that the discussion paper does not accurately explain the revised sportfish reserve concept or boat limits. The sportfish reserve would be triggered only in years of low halibut abundance when the bag limit and season length would be jeopardized. Boat limits would limit a boat to taking only one trip in 24 hours, but would not affect multi-day charters.

Kevin Delaney, ADF&G, reported on the status of the Alaska sportfish fishery. He reported that the State of Alaska is opposed to a statewide or area-wide halibut charter moratorium due to potential ripple effects of a halibut charter moratorium on other sportfish fisheries statewide, the need to provide room for economic activity in the recreational sector in many coastal communities in 2C and 3A, the lack of a halibut conservation issue, and the lack of constitutional authority for such a moratorium. The State recommends that user conflicts, and localized or seasonal depletion would be best addressed in LAMPs. Data and monitoring needs have been addressed by implementation of the Sportfish Charter Logbook. The remaining allocation issue would be best addressed by an analysis of GHL management alternatives.

Rob Bentz presented a revision of Alternative 3 and a new alternative to convert the GHL to a range for consideration by the committee. The committee concurred with the ADF&G proposal to change the GHL to a fixed allocation and to include this alternative in the analysis. They identified that the fatal flaw of the current

GHL approach is that it is tied to abundance; when abundance is high, the charter fleet can't take advantage of the full GHL and when it is low there is insufficient allocation to meet the industry's minimum needs for the bag limit and season length. A range for the GHL is necessary to recognize the lack of management precision, the difference in converting pounds to fish, the need to provide a 'floor' of allowed halibut removals for industry today and a 'ceiling' to allow for limited growth. The committee requested that ADF&G staff provide a more thorough presentation for the Council on the ramifications of its proposed alternative and the effects of using the preliminary 1998 logbook data instead of the postal survey results. Some members of the committee were concerned that the alternative did not include an area-wide moratorium. The committee further expressed concern that if the data used to calculate the GHL (equal to 125% of the 1995 charter catch based on the postal survey) might be replaced by more accurate data (1998 logbook), then the cap itself (125%) should be reexamined using the 1998 logbook data.

Ed Dersham provided a report on the status of the local area management plan process. Cook Inlet and Kodiak proposals were due in 1998, Prince William Sound and Southeast Alaska proposals are due in 1999. A workgroup is planned to develop the Cook Inlet LAMP proposal.

**The committee made the following recommendations to the Council:**

1. Update the Halibut Charter problem statement (developed in January 1995) to reflect revised halibut biomass estimates, changes in commercial halibut quotas, changes in resident and non-resident licenses, changes in visitor trends, and changes in fishing patterns as of 1998 to more clearly define the problem to be addressed by implementation of a GHL and/or charter moratorium. The statement could be further refined to remove those points that are being addressed by the Council/Board of Fisheries local area management process (#1 and #2) and the development of the Sportfish Charter Logbook Program (#5 and #6).
2. Add a new alternative to the analysis to address instability in the halibut charter industry due to an overcapitalized fleet and its latent capacity and the prospect of industrialized sportfishing in Areas 2C and 3A. The new alternative is an area-wide moratorium only, using the same moratorium criteria as stated in the June 1998 committee minutes.
3. Accept the revised list of alternatives by ADF&G (which incorporates the staff revisions) and modify Alternatives 2 and 4 to include: 1) an area-wide moratorium only, using the same moratorium criteria as stated in the June 1998 committee minutes; and 2) a prohibition on new licenses that would be triggered upon attainment of the GHL.
4. The GHL should be measured in numbers of fish (net weight) using the average weight of fish reported by area by ADF&G as a conversion factor.
5. The committee continues to affirm its recommendation that a halibut GHL is not needed. Necessary limitations on halibut charter removals or effort can be implemented through the joint Council/Board LAMP process on a community by community basis.

The revised list of alternatives as recommended by the committee to the Council is attached to the minutes.

The committee adjourned at approximately 5 p.m.

## REVISED LIST OF GHL ALTERNATIVES FOR ANALYSIS

**Alternative 1. Status quo. Do not develop regulations to implement a halibut Guideline Harvest Level.**

**Alternative 2. Convert the GHL to an allocation.**

The guided sport halibut fishery would be allocated 12.76% of the combined commercial and guided sport halibut quota in area 2C, and 15.61% in Area 3A. The commercial fishery would be allocated 87.24% and 84.39% of the combined quota in Areas 2A and 3C, respectively. Under a GHL as an allocation, the guided sport fishery would close when that sector reached its allocation.

Option A: Area-wide moratorium

Suboption: Prohibit new charter licenses upon attainment of the GHL

Option B: Local moratorium

**Alternative 3. Convert the GHL to an allocation range. (ADF&G proposal)**

The allocation range will have an upper and lower limit and would be a fixed amount expressed in numbers of halibut. The allocation range would be set by IPHC Areas 2C and 3A. Some or all of the management measures listed below would be implemented up to 2 years after attainment of the GHL (1 year if data is available), but prior to January 1 for industry stability. If the guided sport halibut harvest exceeds the upper limit of the range in a year, the guided sport fishery would be restricted to reduce the harvest back within the allocation range using management actions listed below. If the guided sport halibut harvest is restricted and the harvest is reduced below the lower limit of the range guided sport fishery management measures would be liberalized to increase the harvest back within the allocation range.

- line limits
- annual angler limit
- vessel trip limit
- super-exclusive registration
- sport catcher vessel only area
- sportfish reserve

Option A: The upper limit of the allocation range would be set at 125% of the 1995 guided sport halibut harvest. The lower limit of the allocation range would be set at 100% of the 1995 guided sport halibut harvest.

Option B: The upper limit of the allocation range would be set at 125% of the 1998 guided sport halibut harvest. The lower limit of the allocation range would be set at 100% of the 1998 guided sport halibut harvest.

**Alternative 4. Under a GHL, apply a range of management measures listed below to curtail catch rates of guided anglers once GHL is attained.**

The GHL functions as a cap. Apply management measures up to 2 years after attainment of GHL (1 year if data is available, but prior to January 1 for industry stability).

- line limits
- boat limit
- annual angler limit
- vessel trip limit
- super-exclusive registration
- sport catcher vessel only area
- sportfish reserve
- rod permit

Option A: Area-wide moratorium

Suboption: Prohibit new charter licenses upon attainment of the GHL

Option B: Local moratorium

**Alternative 5. Area-wide moratorium only.**

The criteria for an area-wide halibut charter moratorium under Alternatives 2, 4, and 5 are:

Years of participation

- 1995, 1996, and 1997 IPHC licenses and 1998 logbook (*committee preferred option*)
- 2 of 3 years (1995-97) plus 1998 logbook
- 1 of 3 (1995-97) plus 1998 logbook
- license or logbook in any one year (1995-98)

Owner vs Vessel

- owner/operator or lessee (the individual who has the license and fills out logbook) of the charter vessel/business that fished during the eligibility period (based on an individual's participation and not the vessel's activity) (*committee preferred option*)
- vessel

Evidence of participation

- mandatory:  
IPHC license (for all years)  
CFEC number (for all years)  
1998 logbook
- supplementary:  
Alaska state business license  
sportfish business registration  
insurance for passenger for hire  
ADF&G guide registration  
enrollment in drug testing program (CFR 46)

vessel upgrade

- license designation limited to 6-pack, if currently a 6-pack, and (*committee preferred option*)  
inspected vessel owner limited to current inspected certification (held at # of people, not vessel size)
- allow upgrades in Southeast Alaska (certified license can be transferred to similar sized vessel)

transfers

- yes (*committee preferred option*)

duration for review

- tied to the duration of the GHM (*committee preferred option*)
- 3 years
- 5 years (3 years, with option to renew for 2 years)

## HALIBUT ISSUES/TASK FORCE Concept Document

- 1) The North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (Council) established a Guideline Harvest Level (GHL) for the sport charter fishery in September 1997. The allocation was stated as a fixed proportion of a floating TAC. Management measures to facilitate implementation were not adopted at that time. The Secretary of Commerce has not yet signed the GHL into regulation, in fact, the Secretary sent the GHL back to the council asking for further definition on how the GHL would be implemented.
- 2) The Council appointed a stakeholder committee to suggest strategies for the implementation of the GHL. This committee has met and a report of their efforts and a summary of other comments will be presented to the Council in February 1999. In addition to implementation strategies the report will also include an alternative, suggested by the State of Alaska, to the GHL itself. The State's alternative proposes a fixed allocation, stated as a range. The Council will likely accept the report and put the options, including the State's alternative out for analysis.
- 3) The Alaska Board of Fisheries put out a call for proposals for the development of Local Area Management Plans (LAMP's) for halibut fisheries. The Board has received proposals from Kodiak, Lower Cook Inlet, and Upper Cook Inlet, which are the areas scheduled for discussion during the 1998/1999 cycle. Communities in Prince William Sound and Southeast Alaska are also discussing LAMP's. The three issues highlighted to date are clarification of the GHL concept adopted by the Council, defining the geography for LAMP's and a debate on the need for a moratorium.
- 4) Until the Council clarifies the GHL and provides a list of tools to be utilized to implement the GHL, a clear foundation for development of LAMPs (Local Area Management Plans) will not exist. Work on LAMPs should begin but many issues will remain unresolved until the GHL is clarified.
- 5) A Task Force of stakeholders from user groups and communities across the State (2C, 3A?) should be assembled with staff support to begin identifying and addressing issues as we lay a foundation for the LAMP process. — Specifically stakeholders need to address the issues of geography for LAMPs
- 6) Obvious questions on geography include but are not limited to:
  - a) Do we utilize IPHC areas 3A and 2C as a basis for LAMP's?
  - b) Do we use ADFG Commercial Fisheries management areas?
  - c) Do we draw "new" lines altogether or "new" lines around homeports within either IPHC or ADFG areas?
  - d) How do we resolve questions about overlap?
- 7) Stakeholder group should develop a list of issues that need to be addressed
  - a) Address questions about size/location of sport charter harvest.

- b) How can we get harvest/effort data on IFQ fishery by whatever area is selected?
- c) Moratorium questions
- d) Stakeholders should agree upon a database and assessment program.

**PROBABLE TIMELINE FOR ISSUE:**

**December – Homer BOF – table proposals and develop task force concept, call for nominations to participate**

**January – Kodiak BOF – table proposals and develop task force concept, call for nominations to participate**

**February – council accepts options for evaluation including State's proposal for GHL**

**February – Upper Cook Inlet Board of Fisheries meeting – table proposals and further develop task force concept, call for nominations to participate**

**March – Anchorage BOF further develop/finalize task force concept, select participants**

**April – Organizational meeting of Task Force, issue identification, information, etc.**

**June – Council accepts analysis and submits for public review**

**Sept/Oct – Council adopts GHL and implementation strategy**

**October – Board of Fisheries work session – formalize process and timeline for Task Force and development of LAMPs**

**BOF 1999/2000 Cycle forward – develop comprehensive LAMP's utilizing BOF process**