



Guided Angler Fish Program 2016 Annual Report

Prepared by Julie Scheurer
November 16, 2016

In 2014, NMFS implemented the Guided Angler Gish (GAF) Program as part of the Catch Sharing Plan for International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) Regulatory Areas 2C (Southeast Alaska) and 3A (South Central Alaska). The GAF Program authorizes limited annual transfers of commercial halibut individual fishing quota (IFQ) as GAF to qualified charter halibut permit holders for harvest by charter vessel anglers in Area 2C and Area 3A. Using GAF, qualified charter halibut permit holders may offer charter vessel anglers the opportunity to retain halibut of any size up to the limit for unguided anglers when the charter management measure in place limits charter vessel anglers to more restrictive size or harvest limits.

For 2016, charter vessel anglers in Area 2C were limited to one halibut per day that was less than or equal to 43 inches or greater than or equal to 80 inches total length. In Area 3A, charter vessel anglers were allowed to keep two fish per day. If two fish were kept, one had to be less than or equal to 28 inches total length. Additionally, charter anglers in Area 3A had a 4-fish annual limit. Charter vessels in Area 3A were limited to one trip per day, and no charter fishing for halibut was allowed in Area 3A on Wednesdays for the entire season. Using GAF, charter vessel anglers in Area 2C and Area 3A could harvest up to two halibut of any size per day, and GAF were not subject to the annual limit or daily closures in Area 3A.

NMFS issues GAF in numbers of halibut based on a conversion factor from IFQ pounds. The conversion factors for GAF leases in 2016 were 65.1 lb IFQ per GAF in Area 2C and 36.1 lb IFQ per GAF in Area 3A (Table 1), based on the average weights of GAF harvested in each area in 2015. For 2017, the conversion factors will be 74 lb IFQ per GAF in Area 2C and 42 lb IFQ per GAF in Area 3A (Table 1), based on the average weights of GAF harvested in 2016.¹

For 2016, NMFS processed 158 transfers totaling 57,506 lb of IFQ to 43 different charter halibut permit holders. These transfers authorized the potential harvest of up to 1,012 additional halibut as GAF by charter vessel anglers (Table 2). The number of transfers, pounds of IFQ transferred, and number of fish that GAF permit holders were allowed to harvest all increased compared to 2015 (Table 2). The number of charter halibut permit holders who obtained GAF permits increased slightly from 2015 to 2016, from 40 to 43.

The percentage of GAF transfers that were “self-transfers,” i.e., the same person held both the IFQ and the charter halibut permit and transferred the IFQ to himself, increased from 12% in 2015 to 21% in 2016 (Table 2). In Area 3A, 38% of all transfers were self-transfers, while only 10% were self-transfers in Area 2C.

¹The conversion factor is rounded to the nearest whole number to more accurately reflect regulatory requirements at 50 CFR 300.65(c)(5)(E), which state that an annual conversion factor will be calculated to convert between net pounds (whole number, no decimal points) of halibut IFQ and number(s) of GAF (whole number, no decimal points) for Area 2C and Area 3A.

GAF participants are given the option of self-reporting cost information for GAF transfers. Of the transfers for which price information was reported, and excluding self-reported prices for self-transfers, lease prices averaged \$5.43/lb in Area 2C and \$5.46/lb in Area 3A (weighted averages). The overall weighted average price per pound of IFQ leased was \$5.43, about the same as in 2014 and 2015 (Table 2).

Charter vessel anglers harvested 749 GAF from both IPHC areas in 2016, compared to 571 GAF harvested in 2015 (Table 3). In 2016, 74% of available GAF were harvested, compared to 70% in 2015 and only 53% in 2014. The increased cost of GAF in 2015 and 2016 (owing to the larger conversion factors) and increased familiarity with the program likely increased the percentage of GAF used relative to the first year of the program because charter halibut permit holders only transferred as much as they thought they could use and were better able to predict how many GAF they would need.

Unused GAF are returned to the IFQ holders either voluntarily in September, or automatically 15 days before the end of the commercial halibut season, which ended on November 7, 2016. Thirteen voluntary returns of GAF to IFQ totaling 4,033 lb were processed in September 2016. Unused GAF were automatically returned to the IFQ account from which they originated in late October 2016. Approximately 9,600 lb of Area 2C IFQ and 1,700 lb of Area 3A IFQ were returned from the charter sector to the commercial sector under the automatic return provision.

Guides are required to electronically report the length of each GAF harvested. The average length of GAF harvested in 2016 was 56 inches in Area 2C (Table 3 and Figure 1) and 47 inches in Area 3A (Table 3 and Figure 2). Using the IPHC halibut length weight conversion table, these lengths translate into estimated average net weights of 73.7 lb in Area 2C and 42.4 lb in Area 3A. These average net weights are converted to the nearest whole pound for the 2017 conversion factor. The conversion factors will increase in 2017 compared to 2016 (Table 1).

The actual number of pounds harvested annually as GAF is calculated by summing the weights from the IPHC halibut length conversion table for each reported length. Table 4 summarizes the estimated pounds of halibut harvested as GAF for each year since the program was implemented.

NMFS' costs associated with management, data collection, and enforcement of the GAF Program are recoverable through IFQ Program cost recovery fees. NMFS does not track fees associated with GAF separately from other IFQ Program fees.

Table 1. IFQ to GAF conversion factors

Year	Conversion Factor (IFQ lb/GAF)	
	Area 2C	Area 3A
2014	26.4	12.8
2015	67.3	38.4
2016	65.1	36.1
2017 ¹	74	42

Table 2. Summary of IFQ to GAF transfers

Year	IPHC Regulatory Area	IFQ Pounds Transferred	Number of GAF Transferred	Number of Transfers (Permits Issued)	Weighted Avg. price per pound	Percentage of self-transfers
2014	2C	29,498	1,117	92	\$ 5.62	14
	3A	11,654	910	19	\$ 5.01	47
	Total	41,152	2,027	111	\$ 5.46	20
2015	2C	36,934	548	119	\$ 5.62	7
	3A	10,337	269	25	\$ 4.66	40
	Total	47,271	817	144	\$ 5.48	12
2016	2C	47,064	723	132	\$ 5.43	10
	3A	10,442	289	26	\$ 5.46	38
	Total	57,506	1,012	158	\$ 5.43	21

Table 3. Summary of GAF landings

Year	IPHC Regulatory Area	Number of GAF harvested (% of amount transferred)	Average Length in inches (range)
2014	2C	800 (72%)	55 (18-77)
	3A	269 (30%)	45 (30-75)
	Total	1069 (53%)	
2015	2C	428 (78%)	53 (27-83)
	3A	143 (53%)	45 (31-84)
	Total	571 (70%)	
2016	2C	529 (73%)	56 (32-82)
	3A	220 (76%)	47 (24-74)
	Total	749 (74%)	

Table 4. Actual pounds of IFQ harvested as GAF as estimated from reported lengths.

Year	Area	Actual Pounds Harvested as GAF determined from reported lengths and IPHC length/weight chart
2014	2C	53,864
2015	2C	27,849
2016	2C	38,968
2014	3A	10,336
2015	3A	5,158
2016	3A	9,332

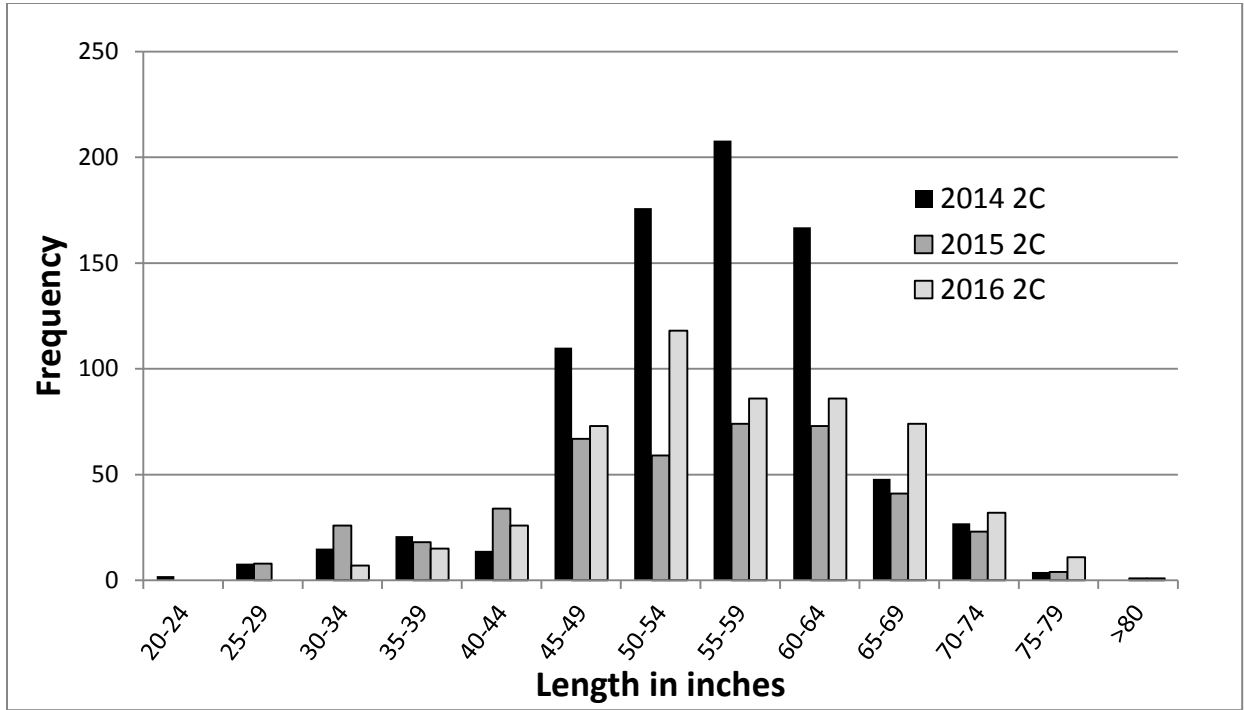


Figure 1. 2014 through 2016 GAF length frequency distribution in IPHC Regulatory Area 2C.

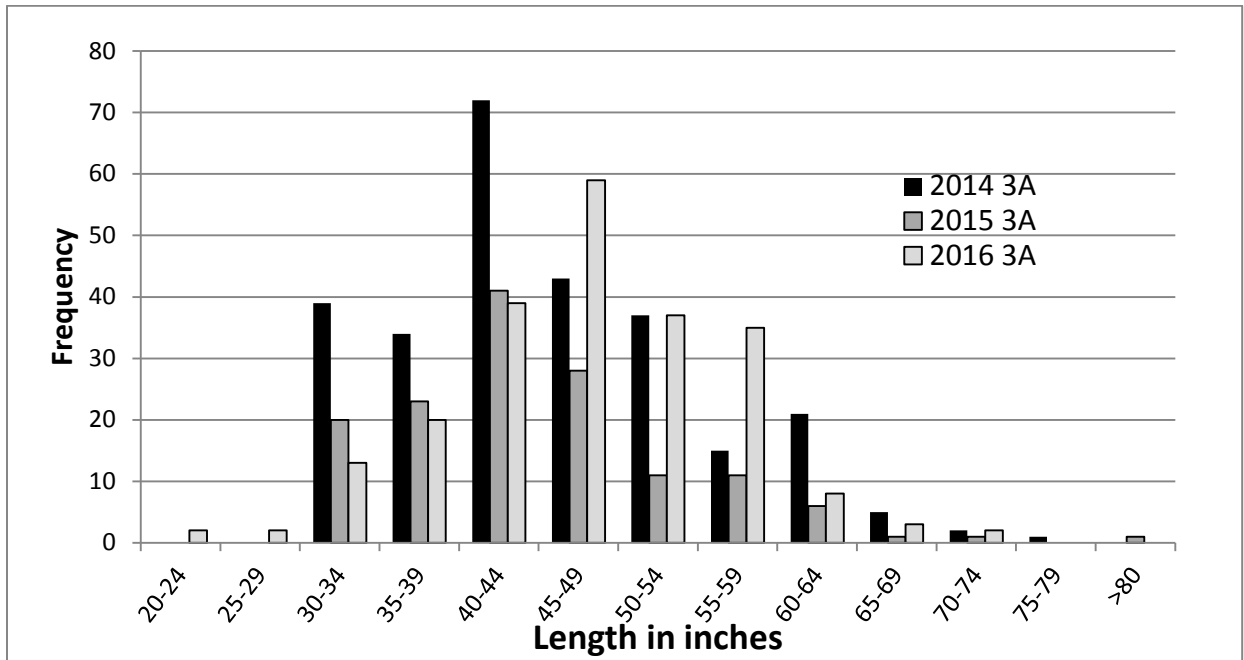


Figure 2. 2014 through 2016 GAF length frequency distribution in IPHC Regulatory Area 3A.