



Charter Halibut Management Committee

REPORT

October 23, 2025

Virtual only

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council's Charter Halibut Management Committee held an online public meeting October 23, 2025. At this meeting the Committee developed a list of management measures (e.g., bag limits, size restrictions) to be analyzed for 2026 as well as considered a proposal for a Charter Halibut Permit discussion paper. All meeting materials are posted to the eAgenda.¹

Committee members in attendance:

Brian Ritchie (Area 3A; chair)	Seth Bone (Area 2C)	Forrest Braden (Area 2C)
Daniel Donich (Area 3A)	Adrienne Swan (Area 2C)	Chance Miller (Area 3A)
Matt Kopec (Area 3A)	Stan Malcolm (Area 2C)	
Scott McKelvey (Area 2C)	Steve Zernia (Area 3A)	Sarah Marrinan (<i>staff coordinator</i>)

Members absent: Richard Yamada (Area 2C) and Mike Flores (Area 3A)

Others in attendance:

Adam St. Saviour	Karla Bush	Ben Hinde
Phil Joy	Celeste Fenter	Joel Steenstra
Tom Gemmell	David Dentinger	Marcie Hinde
Ben Jevons	Kayla Buster	Paul Olson
Heather Mann	Kim Landeen	Chris Conder
Jed Ullrich	Billy Hayden	Andy Mezirow

The meeting was called to order with a summary of the proposed agenda and introductions from members.

Final 2024 and Preliminary 2025 Charter Halibut Harvest Estimates

Adam St. Saviour (ADF&G) presented the final estimates of total charter halibut removals (harvest plus release mortality) for 2024 and preliminary estimates of removals in 2025, which are also summarized in documents posted to the eAgenda.

First Adam discussed data sources and analytical methods for this year's estimates. ADF&G eLogbooks have been mandatory in Area 2C since 2021, but this year eLogbooks became mandatory in Area 3A as well. This should increase the speed at which data are available for analysis and allow Adam to incorporate data from later in the summer rather than having to project out after August. Additionally,

¹ Link to eAgenda with all meeting materials and written public comment:
<https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/3103>

Adam updated the group on his efforts to migrate programming of harvest outputs into R, a modern programming language.

For Area 2C, the final 2024 estimate for total charter halibut removals was 0.853 Mlb, 11,000 lbs more than the preliminary estimate of 0.842 Mlb. The allocation was set at 0.810 Mlb, which equates to a 5% overage in 2024. Statewide harvest survey (unguided) estimates of effort are not available at the time of the preliminary estimates, so these instead rely on a forecast that uses previous years data. Adam noted that in Area 2C, unguided harvest was up considerably in 2024 (1.411 Mlb). In Area 3A, the final 2024 estimate for total charter halibut removals was 1.617 Mlb. This was 9,000 lbs less than the preliminary estimate of 1.608 Mlb and 14% under the allocation of 1.890 Mlb for 2024. Unguided harvest in Area 3A has been generally decreasing since 2019.

In 2025, preliminary estimates for Area 2C showed a 1.9% overage of total removals relative to the Area 2C allocation of 0.720 Mlb. For Area 2C, mean weight was slightly higher than predicted (9.20 lb, relative to a predicted 8.78 lb); however, less fish were harvested relative to what was predicted (76,683 fish relative to a predicted 78,195 fish) for an estimated total removals of 0.734 Mlb. For Area 3A in 2025, preliminary estimates of total removals showed a 5.6% underage relative to the allocation of 1.480 Mlb. Area 3A had an estimated total removals of 0.1.387 Mlb, relative to the predicted value of 1.453 Mlb.

Public Comment

Oral public comment was received by Joel Steenstra in addition to his submitted written testimony. He shared his expectations for a substantial reduction in charter bookings for June 2026 in his region (Craig) due to Chinook salmon restrictions. He hoped that the expectation for reduced June halibut effort in 2C may be taken into consideration when designing management measures. Additionally, Joel testified about concerns around opportunities for growth from the unguided rental boat fleet in his region and its possible effect on the halibut stock and 2C charter businesses.

Management Measures for Analysis for 2026

Area 2C

The Committee requested the following harvest measures for analysis for Area 2C for 2026.

1. Projected charter removals (Mlb, includes release mortality) for Area 2C in 2026 under **reverse slot limits ranging from U32O50 to U50O80 with a 1-fish bag limit**. *All values in the table should include corrections for errors in estimation of average weight and inflation factors for release mortality.*
2. Analysis for #1 and a **limit of one trip per vessel and one trip per permit per day**.
3. Projected charter savings per day (in thousands) for Area 2C in 2026 under **reverse slot limits with lower limits ranging from 32 to 50 inches and an upper limit of 80 inches with a 1-fish bag limit; with days closed between May 15 and September 15 for Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday**. *All values in the table include corrections for errors in estimation of average weight and inflation factors for release mortality. The Committee also requests an Excel workbook version of the data be provided in addition to the document tables.*
4. Analysis for #3 and a **limit of one trip per vessel and one trip per permit per day**.
5. Analysis for #1 with an **annual limit of 3 fish and an annual limit of 2 fish**.

This list of measures for analysis was developed by Area 2C Committee members after consideration and discussion from other Southeast operators. Members worked to capture a very broad range of potential measures to hopefully cover any allocation that may be identified at the IPHC, well also considering equity among a diverse fleet of operations in Southeast. This list of measures for analysis is the same as

requested last year, with different days of the week considered for DOW closures and the addition of annual limits for analysis. The consideration of a differential size limit that changes mid-season, (as requested for analysis in 2024) was not included.

There was discussion between Area 2C Committee members and Adam around the value of switching the day that is chosen for DOW closures year-to-year. Several Committee members voiced support for switching the DOW closures each year, if this measure were to be used. They felt that given the magnitude of pre-bookings, a standard closure day may provide more opportunity for anglers to adjust around open days, diminishing the effectiveness of the measures. There was also discussion about the idea of using numbered calendar days for DOW closures rather than all Mondays, for instance. Adam expressed that using current methodology, DOW closure is big effort as it is. He highlighted plans to migrate the analysis to R in order to increase analytical efficiency.

Area 3A

The Committee requested the following harvest measures for analysis for Area 3A for 2026. All options include, unless otherwise noted, one trip per vessel per day, one trip per CHP per day, and all Wednesdays closed to retention of halibut:

Option 1

- Daily bag limit of two fish;
- Maximum size limit of 26-32 inches on one fish;
- Day of the week closures on Tuesdays between April 7 through Oct 6 as needed, or through the entire season;
- No season open/close dates;
- In addition to DOW closures, Season open date of May 1st - June 1st, weekly;
- In addition to DOW closures, Season close date of September 1st - October 1st, weekly

Option 2

- Daily bag limit of one fish of any size;
- Day of the week closures on Tuesdays between April 7 through Oct 6 as needed, or through the entire season;
- No season open/close dates;
- In addition to DOW closures, Season open date of May 1st - June 1st, weekly;
- In addition to DOW closures, Season close date of September 1st - October 1st, weekly

Area 3A members highlighted their intent with this list is to provide a broad enough range of measures for analysis to cover a possible increase/ decrease of up to 25% in their allocation. The options as originally provided were a collaborative effort between charter halibut user groups in Southcentral.

The **first option** requested for analysis is familiar in that it largely covers measures recently analyzed and implemented in Area 3A. Committee members stated that adjusting the size limit and DOW closures are measures that have shown to be effective and ADF&G can model them with past data. There was some discussion about the appropriate range of dates to use for DOW closures. It was determined that the analysis should provide a reasonable range of peak season dates and also include the possibility of a DOW closure all season. If DOW measures are recommended at the December Council meeting, members emphasized the importance of careful wording to ensure the only days closed are those needed to bring the sector under their allocation. Changing start/ ending season dates would be a new type of management measure to be analyzed and considered. This type of measure, if adopted, would truncate the start date and/or closure date for charter halibut fishing in Area 3A. Some concerns were raised around differential impacts across ports/ businesses, but the majority of Area 3A members were interested in seeing this analysis.

The **second option** requested for analysis is a 1-fish bag limit, with no size limit on that fish. It was noted that this management measure has been discussed for Area 3A in the past, but never implemented. While there may be savings from fewer harvested fish, this measure could also increase the average weight of those fish retained and increase discards as anglers high-grade for their one fish. Additionally, some members highlighted a drawback of moving to a 1-fish bag limit, is the hope that the RQE will soon relieve some of the more restrictive management measures, and the transition back to a 2-fish limit could present some challenges. However, 3A operators often wonder what the implications of a 1-fish limit would be and if it could relieve other measures, so this analysis would be useful for consideration in December. The Committee requested the 1-fish bag limit be considered in combination with the other measures listed under Option 1.

There were several additional measures proposed in the original motion that were ultimately not adopted by the Committee. The Committee had a robust discussion around these alternative measures, and the minutes below provide a summary of the points raised:

- **Annual limits**

Annual limits have been considered and implemented in Area 3A in the past. They were discussed again at this meeting, but not included in the list of measures to analyze. Members expressed that they felt this type of measure disproportionately affected some types of operations and anglers. Members expected they could achieve appropriate harvest levels without this type of measure.

- **Daily bag limit of one fish of any size, with a reverse slot limit with maximum size limit of 60-80 inches and minimum size of 34-40 inches.**

A 1-fish bag limit with a reverse slot limit was proposed in combination with other measures listed for Option 1. This combination of management measures would mirror what has been used recently for Area 2C. Some members expressed opposition to changing the management regime for Area 3A this drastically. They felt it could change the experience for anglers, especially consistent clients and lead to an awkward transition when there is hope the RQE will begin to relieve some of the management measures and transition back to a 2-fish limit in the near future. In addition, it was expected this would be a challenging analysis without data on previous angler behavior for these measures in Area 3A. More members were interested in the results for an analysis of a 1-fish limit alone, therefore Option 2 as specified above was what was ultimately requested by the Committee.

- **Daily bag limit of one fish of any size *or* two fish which are each under 26-34 inches in length.**

Adam highlighted that we do not currently have a way to analyze this option given its heavy dependence on angler preferences and behavior. The analysis would first need to predict how many anglers would opt to keep one fish versus how many would choose to keep two smaller fish. Then the analysis would need to project yield for each category. While some members highlighted the merits of this option in terms of possibly increasing angler satisfaction, without having historical data, at this time, it was not clear how to predict removals under these measures.

Charter Halibut Permit Discussion Paper

The Committee requested the Council initiate a discussion paper of Charter Halibut Permit use and the effects of CHLAP on effort and harvest measures. Analysis should include data for each permit type-transferable, non-transferable, CQE, and Military permits -and for each Area 2C and 3A.

The analysis should include the following and may include additional information analysts find noteworthy:

1. Trends in annual renewal and retirement.

2. Trends in ownership transfer and lease transfer.
3. A description of the extent to which businesses are exceeding CHP caps through lease transfer.
4. Trends in CHP activity in terms of both trip counts and angler days. Include a description of any relationship between trends in angler-days and non-transferable CHP use.
5. Holding constant the most recent FCEY, average weight, and HPU, project the maximum effort level allowing for the following harvest measures:
 - 2C
 - U45080 reverse slot with no additional harvest measures.
 - One fish of any size with no additional harvest measures.
 - Two fish of any size with no additional harvest measures.
 - 3A
 - One fish of any size and a second fish of 28", closed Wednesdays, and a one-trip daily limit.
 - One fish of any size and a second fish of 32" with no additional harvest measures.
 - Two fish of any size with no additional harvest measures.
6. Holding constant the most recent FCEY, average weight, HPUE, and angler effort, project the maximum harvest measures available assuming full RQE pools:
 - For 2C use a reverse slot table.
 - For 3A, *in order*, increase size of the second fish up to 32", open up days of the week, repeal the one-trip daily limit.

Rationale:

The Council has a responsibility to measure the effectiveness of its programs across time and the effects of those programs on the fisheries it manages. There is no recent analysis on CHLAP performance or trends, or how capacity in the program relates to harvest measures available to guided anglers.

The RQE is also scheduled for implementation in 2026. The program will lean on trend information in CHP activity and available harvest measures to make tactical decisions on quota purchases, CHP purchases, and to project revenue. The proposed discussion paper will provide important context for administrators and stakeholders for both programs.

It was highlighted that this motion includes elements from a similar motion the Committee recommended in December 2024. That previous motion was not approved by the Council at that time; however, the rationale provided by the Council highlighted limited staff capacity at the time given these staff were also engaged in efforts for the RQE funding mechanism.

Other Business/ Future Meetings

Sarah Marrinan highlighted upcoming meetings of relevance to charter halibut stakeholders, including:

- IPHC Interim meeting, Dec 2, 2025; *Virtual*
- NPFMC meetings, Dec 1-9, 2025; *Egan Center Anchorage, AK*
- Presentation Q/A from Ian Stewart on halibut stock assessment, Dec 3, 2025 12-1pm AKT; *Egan Center Anchorage, AK* (in person only)
- Charter Halibut Management Committee, Dec 3, 2025 2-6pm; *NPFMC Office Anchorage, AK*
- Annual IPHC meeting, Jan 19-22, 2026; *Hyatt Regency Bellevue, WA*