NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
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# Charter Halibut Management Committee

REPORT

October 21, 2026

Online only

*The North Pacific Fishery Management Council's Charter Halibut Management Committee held an online public meeting on October 21, 2026. At this meeting the Committee developed a list of halibut management measures (e.g., bag limits, size restrictions) to be analyzed for 2027 as well as discussing the first year of charter halibut stamp program that funds the Recreational Quota Entity. All meeting materials are posted to the eAgenda.*[1]

**Committee members in attendance:**

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| Brian Ritchie (Area 3A; chair) | Seth Bone (Area 2C) | Forrest Braden (Area 2C) |
| Richard Yamada (Area 2C) | Adrianne Swan (Area 2C) | |
| Matt Kopec (Area 3A) | Mike Flores (Area 3A) | |
| Scott McKelvey (Area 2C) | Chance Miller (Area 3A) | Sarah Marrinan (*staff coordinator*) |

**Members absent:** Daniel Donich (Area 3A) and Steve Zernia (Area 3A)

**Others in attendance:**

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| Adam Eno | Adam St Saviour | Ben Jevons |
| Craig Schwanke | Daniel Teske | Doug Duncan |
| Geoff Jans | Heather Mann | Jake Wieliczkiewicz |
| Jason Pawluk | Jeff Rice | Jeff Wedekind |
| Jess Etheridge | Joel Steenstra | Kade Hollling |
| Kathy Hansen | Kayla Buster | Kelly Reppert |
| Keith Ware | Kim Landeen | Kristen Labrecque |
| Kristopher Carroll | Lauren Howard | Lindsay Anthony |
| Luke Dillard | Mel Erickson | Nicole Schmidt |
| Phil Joy | Scott Vulstek | Serine Reeves |
| Victor Vasquez | | |

Chair Brian Ritchie called the meeting to order with a summary of the proposed agenda and introductions from Committee members.

## Discussion on Recreational Quota Entity Charter Halibut Stamps

The Committee received presentations from Doug Duncan (NMFS) and Ben Jevons (ADF&G) with an update on the first year of implementation of the Recreational Quota Entity (RQE) charter halibut stamp. Presentations are available on the Committee's eAgenda. The charter halibut stamp is designed to

[1] Link to eAgenda with all meeting materials and written public comment: https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/7156

generate revenue to support the RQE's purchase of commercial halibut quota share (QS) in Areas 2C and 3A. Halibut QS held by the RQE will augment the guided recreational halibut allocations in these management areas in order to provide less restrictive management measures for fishing on a halibut charter.

Doug's presentation focused on stamp-fee revenue collected thus far, compliance, the importance of timely account reconciliation, and the process for transferring funds to the RQE. Doug highlighted that at the time of the presentation, more than 185,000 stamps had been reported as used, with about 137,000 purchased at this time. This represents $2.7 million collected through eFISH thus far, and approximately 48,000 stamps remained outstanding, representing just under $1 million in expected revenue.

**Charter Halibut Permit (CHP) holders must purchase enough stamps to cover reported use by December 31.** CHP holders are responsible for these balances, which include activity from any permits that are leased to non-holders. CHP holders with unresolved negative balances by Dec 31 will receive a reconciliation notice and have 30 days to pay or demonstrate an error. Unresolved balances can result in frozen accounts and restrictions on permit registration and transfers of CHP and IFQ. Doug encouraged permit holders to review their eFISH accounts and ADF&G logbook records well before the deadline.

This year, the RQE purchased nearly 26,000 Area 2C halibut quota share units, equivalent to approximately 1,200 pounds in 2026. These holdings are expected to contribute to the 2027 charter allocation, representing an initial demonstration of the program's potential to increase charter fishing opportunity. NOAA is working through the process to approve a grant for the RQE with the hopes this will transfer in 2027.

Ben's presentation provided information to assist charter operators with new stamp-tracking tools to ensure accurate data transmission for billing through NMFS. Businesses can use the eLogbook review application to track validated halibut stamps by vessel, permit, and date range. Ben strongly encouraged businesses to use the tool to compare logged stamps against angler counts and identify discrepancies.

ADF&G staff (including Ben, Kayla Buster, and Christopher Carroll) have contributed extensive outreach efforts related to the RQE charter halibut stamp including webinars, one-on-one trainings, website updates, and tutorial videos. Ben acknowledged the combined coordinated efforts of 429 businesses and over 600 guides participating. ADF&G expects outreach needs to decline as users become more familiar with the system, but anticipates that data corrections, technical support, and RQE-related edits will remain substantial. **Ben emphasized that ADF&G staff remain available to help resolve issues as operators work to settle their outstanding stamp fees for 2026.**

## Update on the October 2026 NPFMC meeting

Brian provided an overview of the motion the Council made at its October 2026 meeting related to Guided Angler Fish (GAF) and RQE cumulative caps after reviewing the D1 Charter halibut permit discussion paper. He explained the first action alternative (Alternative 2) will examine decoupling the GAF limit from the RQE total transfer limit, and making the GAF limit a separate 5% or 10% limit on the total Area 2C quota share pool that may be transferred from the commercial sector. An element under this alternative would sunset (i.e., end) the separate cap after 5 or 10 years and return to a cumulative cap structure. The second action alternative (Alternative 3) would revise the annual RQE transfer provisions such that 2% of Area 2C's commercial quota share pool and 2.4% of the Area 3A quota share pool could transfer to the RQE in a year. This would be a doubling of the current annual limits for each area.

There was some discussion within the Committee about whether a separate 5% cap on GAF transfers in Area 2C would actually be more restrictive for Area 2C operators than opportunities provided under status quo transfer limits. Whether it is more restrictive would depend on how much quota share was held by the RQE at the point when this amendment was actually implemented. It was noted that this would be further examined in the analysis.

## Final 2025 and Preliminary 2026 Charter Halibut Harvest Estimates

Adam St. Saviour (ADF&G) presented the final estimates of total charter halibut removals (harvest plus release mortality) for 2025 and preliminary estimates of removals in 2026, which are also summarized in documents posted to the eAgenda.

## Management Measures for Analysis for 2027

The CHMC requests the following harvest measures for analysis for **Area 2C** for 2027:

1. Projected charter removals (Mlb, includes release mortality) for Area 2C in 2027 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. Projected charter savings per day (in thousands) for Area 2C in 2027 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; analyzed Friday through Wednesday (excluding Thursday). 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.

3. Analysis under a one-fish bag limit and one fish of any size per year (to be recorded on the back of the angler's license), with the balance of harvest measures according to a reverse slot table ranging from U28O80 (or whatever U number is needed to reach down to an allocation of 651K pounds) to U50O80. All values in the table should include corrections for errors in estimation of average weight and inflation factors for release mortality.

4. #3 should also be analyzed with day closures overlayed.

**Rationale:**

Committee members noted that request #1 and 2 are what has been analyzed and considered in the past for Area 2C. The first request is a reverse slot table and the second request includes savings from day-of the-week closures overlayed on the reverse slot table that could be included if necessary. This would provide information on harvest reductions for up to 6 days of the week closed (i.e., excluding Thursday). This analysis would also provide a demonstration of the differentiated savings for each day, which could be used to understand which days provide the most savings if one day was selected for closure. Members noted that they have relied on these measures in the past because, ultimately, they felt they have been the most equitable ways to distribute the burden of having to reduce to these very low allocations.

The third request for analysis is focused on the goal of trying to provide the opportunity of a halibut of any size for an angler. This management structure would allow a charter angler to only harvest 1 halibut of any size within a calendar year, but any other halibut they caught would be subject to a reverse slot limit. Request #4 would overlay day of the week closures on top of the management measures identified in request #3. Committee members spoke to the importance of this concept as a way to provide a true sportfishing opportunity, even if that opportunity limited charter anglers to 1 halibut of any size per year.

The CHMC requests the following harvest measures for analysis for **Area 3A** for the 2027 season:

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. The analysis should include the 2026 management measures as a reference:

Option 1

- Daily bag limit of two fish; Maximum size limit of 26-32 inches on one fish; with the other fish permitted to be of any size.
- Day of the week closures on Tuesdays between ~~April 6~~ June 1 through ~~October 5~~ Sept 2 as needed, or through the entire season; Including scenarios with no Tuesday closures.
- Day of the week closures on Thursdays beginning July 8 evaluated incrementally in adjacent weeks before and after July 8 as needed to achieve the allocation.

Option 2

- Daily bag limit of one fish of any size;
- Day of the week closures on Tuesdays between ~~April 6~~ June 1 through ~~October 5~~ Sept 2 as needed, or through the entire season;
- Day of the week closures on Thursdays beginning July 8 evaluated incrementally in adjacent weeks before and after July 8 as needed to achieve the allocation.
- Reverse slot limit of U50 and O60 and building out.

Option 3

- Daily bag limit of one fish of any size or two fish falling within a size limit of 26-32 inches. Analyze the maximum size limits in one-inch increments.
- Day of the week closures on Tuesdays ~~April 6~~ June 1 through ~~October 5~~ Sept 2 as needed or through the entire season;
- Day of the week closures on Thursdays beginning July 8 evaluated incrementally in adjacent weeks before and after July 8 as needed to achieve the allocation.

**Rationale:**

Committee members requested that the analysis should "waterfall" from top to bottom in each option of the motion, with the first series of considerations analyzed to meet allocation, and then adding bullets as needed to illustrate to a 25% reduction from the 2026 Area 3A allocation as desired by the Council.

Members noted that status quo management styles (represented in Option 1) are preferred for marketing and education of the fleet and clientele. The fleet preference is in Option 1, with the other analysis included to show options at a lower allocations. Additional management measures analyzed under Option 1 could include adding Tuesday day-of-the-week closures if needed. Day of the week closure analyses will start in the middle of the season to maximize daily savings and will work outward toward the beginning and end of the season. Analysis of a third day-of-the-week closure (i.e., Thursday) could be layered under Option 1 during peak season if another lever was required to further reduce harvest. The intent is to analyze the least amount of additional closed days (i.e., if 0, then 0) necessary during the highest part of the season (weeks just before and after July 8), in order to bring the projected harvest to allocative levels. This measure was recommended for analysis as an alternative to looking at closing the shoulder seasons. Shoulder seasons closures were analyzed last year but not well received from constituents in the Lower Cook Inlet and other areas that operate earlier or later in the season. Day-of-week closures in peak season would be paired with a high level of clientele. In short, closures for halibut a few additional days in July could mean less dramatic changes in management measures overall to prioritize stability.

Under Option 2, the Committee members requested analysis of a one-fish bag limit as was considered last year. An analysis of a one-fish bag limit, with a reverse slot limit was also requested for 2027. Members did not believe the reverse slot limit was analyzed last year, but thought it had been considered in 2015, 2017, and 2018.

Finally, under Option 3, the Committee is interested in measures of *either* a daily bag limit of one fish of any size *or* two fish falling within a size limit of 26-32 inches. Members thought this concept had been discussed in the past.

### Public Comment

Keith Ware provided oral public comments along with his written testimony expressing concerns about the halibut harvested on self-guided charter boats around Elfin Cove. Three additional written comments were received and are linked on the eAgenda.

## Other Business/ Future Meetings

Sarah Marrinan highlighted upcoming meetings of relevance to charter halibut stakeholders. Upcoming meetings include:

- IPHC Interim meeting, Dec 1, 2026; *Virtual*
- NPFMC meetings, Nov 30- Dec 9, 2026; *Eagan Center Anchorage, AK and virtual*
- Presentation Q/A from Ian Stewart on halibut stock assessment, Dec 2, 2026; 12-1pm AKT; *Eagan Center Anchorage, AK* (in person only)
- Charter Halibut Management Committee, Dec 2, 2026; 2-6 pm; *NPFMC Office Anchorage, AK*
- Annual IPHC meeting, Jan 25-28, 2026; *Fairmont Empress Victoria, BC, Canada*