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NORTH PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Charter Halibut Management Committee

REPORT

Sept 30, 2026

Virtual only

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC/Council)'s Charter Halibut Management Committee held an online public meeting on Wednesday, September 30, 2026. At this meeting the Committee reviewed a discussion paper on Charter Halibut Permit use, received public testimony, and made several motions. All meeting materials and written comments are posted to the eAgenda.¹

Committee members in attendance:

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

Members absent: *none*

Others in attendance:

Adam Eno	Darryl Bosshardt	Kristen Labrecque
Adam St. Saviour	Doug Duncan	Kristopher Carroll
Andy Mezirow	Emily Scott	Loretta Brown
Angela Abolhassani	Geoff Jans	Mel Erickson
Ben Hinde	James Kearns	Paul Olson
Ben Jevons	Jerome Wolfe	Phil Joy
Braeden Van Deynze	Karla Bush	Russel Dame
Bryan Gibson	Kathy Hansen	Scott Vulstek
Kevin Burchfield	Kayla Buster	Wayne Nasu
Chris Conder	Kim Landeen	

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

Charter Halibut Permit Use and Angler Effort Discussion Paper

Sarah Marrinan (NPFMC) and Adam St. Saviour (ADF&G) provided a staff presentation on the Charter Halibut Permit Use and Angler Effort Discussion Paper. This discussion paper was tasked in December 2025 by the Council and is intended to provide useful context in considering recent trends in the charter halibut fisheries. The discussion paper covered seven specific requests, including trends in charter halibut permit (CHP) registration, retirement, use, transfers, and consolidation through leasing. One request evaluates use among Community Quota Entities (CQEs), and one request focuses specifically on use among permit holders that hold the up to the cap (*i.e.*, 5 CHPs). Two of the requests consider hypothetical scenarios based on the most recent analysis of projected charter halibut removals under different

¹ Link to eAgenda with all meeting materials and written public comment:

<https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/7157>

management measures. The first set of scenarios looks at the reduction in effort (*i.e.*, angler-days) required to achieve a specific set of more desirable management measures, holding all other factors constant. The second set of scenarios considers what less restrictive management measures may have been possible in 2026 if the RQE held up to the maximum holdings cap for Area 2C and for 3A, holding all other factors constant.

Public Testimony

Five public comments letters are attached to the eAgenda and the Committee received oral public testimony from Darryl Bosshardt, James Kerns, Mel Erikson, Geoff Jans, and Andy Mezirow.

Oral public testimony covered a number of points. Several testifiers supported moving away from the Catch Sharing Plan allocation structure by distinguishing between commercial and recreational halibut sectors (*i.e.*, including guided and unguided together). These testifiers expressed concern that the charter sector is bearing disproportionate restrictions relative to unguided recreational fishing and advocated for a one-fish-of-any-size opportunity for the recreational sector as a whole. In contrast, one testifier recommended the Committee pursue actions that could move through the Council process quickly and provide meaningful relief to charter operators.

Several testifiers also advocated for action to increase or separate the RQE/GAF cumulative limit. They stated this would allow both provisions to function, and the testifiers felt there would be both demand for it from the charter sector as well as interested supply from commercial QS holders when they are looking to sell. One testifier felt that GAF should be eliminated, and moving to a one-fish-of-any-size opportunity across all recreational anglers would allow this to occur. One testifier advocated for restricting the leasing of non-transferable CHPs and one testifier encouraged evaluation of a registration system for unguided rental boats. One testifier stated that the discussion paper indicates existing tools, including RQE and reductions in charter effort, are unlikely to achieve a one-fish-of-any-size opportunity for guided anglers. This testifier encouraged the Council to develop clear, consistent criteria for evaluating whether allocations among sectors are fair and equitable.

Committee Discussion

The Committee recommended two motions following the review of the CHP discussion paper.

Motion 1 – Expanded Discussion Paper

The Charter Halibut Management Committee requests the Council task NPFMC staff with an expanded discussion paper of charter halibut management to compare the following dynamics of recreational and commercial fisheries:

- examination of the relationship between allocation and the quality of the fishing opportunity, including the effects of harvest restrictions (size limits, daily bag limits, annual limits, closed days, and season length;
- how each fishery responds to increases and decreases in allocation and abundance;
- differences in how participants respond to increasingly restrictive regulations, including changes in effort, participation, trip demand, and substitution to other fisheries or activities;
- differences in the ability of each sector to adapt to reduced allocation, including consolidation, efficiency, changes in effort, changes in revenue, and changes in customer demand;
 - the role of access and opportunity in generating recreational economic activity;

- the potential for regulatory restrictions to reduce economic activity and other tangible and intangible benefits even when the recreational fishery remains open;
- the importance of regulatory predictability and stability to businesses and participants;
- whether management systems based primarily on pounds of mortality adequately account for the different ways commercial and recreational fisheries produce benefits from the halibut resource;
- Identify the objectives and assumptions supporting the differential treatment of halibut anglers and the establishment of different management approaches and harvest regulations in NPFMC-managed waters. Where possible, evaluate whether those objectives and assumptions remain applicable under current conditions and underscore MSA principles;
- Explore the benefits of parity in recreational harvest across Alaska waters.

Additionally, the Charter Halibut Management Committee requests the Council task NPFMC staff to include the following in the expanded discussion paper:

GAF Performance. Examine GAF use over time, current industry reliance on the program, and evaluate whether the current GAF program limits provide qualified charter halibut permit holders sufficient opportunity to offer guided anglers additional harvest opportunity. Assess whether potential expansion of the GAF program would advance or undermine the RQE's ability to provide shared recreational opportunity.

RQE Capacity and Impacts on the Commercial Halibut Fishery. Evaluate what changes to the RQE program would be required to acquire sufficient quota to support a daily bag limit of one halibut of any size with no day closures in Areas 2C. Identify the additional quota needed under current conditions and the program changes required, including cumulative holdings limits, annual acquisition caps, and eligible quota categories.

Using available information, identify management options responsive to these findings. Identify essential data gaps, additional analytical requirements, and a proposed schedule for Council consideration. *A focused GAF performance assessment may be returned separately if it can be completed sooner.*

Motion passed unanimously.

Rationale for Motion 1:

Committee members recognized that this motion is robust; however, they did not want to miss an opportunity to highlight concerns within the sector and to focus on some of the charter fishery nuances that are important to downstream management impacts.

In the rationale for this expanded discussion paper, members explained that there is a distinct difference between how the recreational halibut fishery and commercial halibut fishery are affected by and respond to low and high halibut abundance scenarios. Members stated that in low abundance scenarios they have an inferior product to offer, thus they have both decreased supply as well as decreased demand, that price will not offset. In the other extreme, a recreational fishery cannot capitalize on the gains of high abundance in the same way as a commercial fishery. Members also highlighted the importance of stability and predictability in the charter halibut fishery. With anglers needing to book trips far in advance, not knowing which days will be open or the size of the fish they can catch can be extremely challenging for anglers and operators. Because of these differences, they felt that the management approach employed through the CSP may not be appropriate for a recreational fishery. Members are interested in consideration of recreational-specific management measures, including potential allocation floors during periods of low abundance.

The motion also asks for a review of GAF performance, industry reliance on the program, and potential impacts on other programs (e.g., RQE). The rationale raised concerns about RQE capacity with the discussion paper demonstrating a best-case scenario of a 38-inch fish, and this would be with phasing out all of the GAF use. Members stated that such an outcome may not provide an attractive opportunity for recreational anglers or support the businesses that serve them.

Motion 2 – Guided Angler Fish and Recreational Quota Entity

The Charter Halibut Management Committee requests the Council stay the GAF phase out provision in the RQE with a 10-year sunset in Area 2C. (amendment passes) GAF would become uncoupled from the RQE and not influence RQE caps. Total GAF cap 10%. (amendment passes)

The Committee also requests the Council increase the annual transfer cap for the RQE to 2% in Area 2C.

Motion passed unanimously.

Rationale for Motion 2:

The motion recommends that the GAF total transfer limit would be uncoupled from the RQE total transfer limit. Currently this cumulative limit restricts the combination of long-term RQE transfers and short-term lease transfers of GAF to 10% in Area 2C and 12% in Area 3A, essentially phasing out GAF if the RQE purchases up to its limit. This motion would separate these limits such that 10% of the commercial IFQ in Area 2C could be leased in a season and 10% of the commercial QS could be transferred to the RQE in total. In Area 3A, 12% of the commercial IFQ could be leased in a season and 12% of the Area 3A commercial QS could be transferred to the RQE in total. The motion would generate a sunset date for the separation of these limits, such that in 10 years the limits would again be cumulative. In practice, this means that if at that time the RQE held up to the cumulative cap, there would be no GAF lease transfers approved in that year. The Committee is recommending these changes to the cumulative limits for both Area 2C and Area 3A.

The committee supported consideration of a separation of the annual GAF/RQE transfer limit as an immediate measure to provide stability for the charter halibut sector. The committee noted that GAF transfers in Area 2C are already approaching the combined 10% limit, due to increasingly restrictive management measures in this area. Members shared that many charter halibut operators and anglers have come to rely on GAF during these times of low abundance. Members expressed concern that the harvest measure analyzed in the discussion paper under full RQE holdings show that these holdings may not be sufficient to stabilize charter businesses or meet angler demand on their own. Increasing the cap would provide near-term flexibility and the sunset provision would require the issue to be reconsidered in the future.

Some Committee members felt that GAF should not be viewed as a permanent solution for the charter sector. These members highlighted that reliance on GAF can discourage transfers to the RQE by creating an incentive for IFQ holders to retain quota for leasing to the charter sector. Members also expressed concern that long-term reliance on quota leased from a competing sector creates uncertainty for charter businesses, since the availability of GAF could change based on conditions in the commercial fishery. Some members expressed concern around sunseting the GAF provisions, as some charter operators have purchased commercial QS so that they may lease GAF to themselves. However, they felt a sunset provision may be considered at this stage.

This motion also requests that the Council consider increasing the annual transfer limit for the RQE in Area 2C from 1% to 2% of the Area 2C commercial QS pool. The Committee noted that the Council previously considered annual transfer caps ranging from 0.5% to 5% but selected 1%. The committee stated that the 1% cap is expected to constrain the RQE's ability to purchase quota even when sufficient funds are available, limiting its ability to be effective in the near future.

Other Business/ Future Meetings

The Committee considered and recommended a third motion under “other business”.

Motion 3- GOA Halibut Mortality

The Charter Halibut Management Committee recommends that the Council initiate a sector-neutral review of Pacific halibut mortality in the Gulf of Alaska, including trawl PSC, fixed-gear and directed commercial discard mortality, and charter release mortality.

The review should evaluate whether current PSC ceilings, discard-management measures, minimum-size requirements, and charter release-management measures remain appropriately calibrated to current stock conditions, actual mortality, and demonstrated fishery performance, and should identify practicable opportunities to reduce avoidable halibut mortality without unnecessarily constraining viable fisheries.

The analysis should also consider the age and size composition of mortality, recognizing that the biological effect of halibut mortality may differ among sectors and is not necessarily equivalent on a pound-for-pound basis.

Where relevant measures fall principally within IPHC authority, including the commercial minimum size limit, the Council should coordinate with or request appropriate analysis from the IPHC.

Motion passed unanimously.

Rationale for Motion 3:

The committee supported consideration of a review of Pacific halibut mortality across all sectors in the Gulf of Alaska. The review could evaluate opportunities to reduce avoidable halibut mortality while maintaining reasonable fishing opportunities across sectors. Committee members noted it is important to assess whether existing mortality limits as well as commercial and charter management measures remain appropriate under current stock conditions. The committee noted that some of the scope may fall outside its direct authority but supported forwarding the concept to the Council with IPHC consultation.

Additional topics

Daniel Donich asked how one might get involved in the RQE Committee Process. Richard Yamada and Forrest Braden explained that there are bylaws that describe board representation and if someone wishes to write a letter of interest they can send that to either Richard or Forrest.

Ben Jevons and Kayla Busters encouraged all operators to review charter halibut stamp use for 2026 as soon as possible. ADF&G cannot edit stamp usage after Dec 31 of this year and any issues at that point will be directed to NMFS. To ensure the fastest corrections, please review your usage, and respond to kayla.buster@alaska.gov with any discrepancies. For details on how to do that, see our Charter Halibut page: <https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=SFGuidesLicense.Halibut>

Sarah highlighted upcoming meetings of relevance to charter halibut stakeholders:

- NPFMC (Council) meetings, Oct 5-13, 2026; *Egan Center Anchorage, AK and virtual*
- Charter Halibut Management Committee, Oct 21, 2026; 8:30am – 1:30pm; *virtual*
- NPFMC (Council) meetings, Nov 30- Dec 9, 2026; *Egan Center Anchorage, AK and virtual*
- IPHC Interim meeting, Dec 1, 2025; *Virtual*
- Charter Halibut Management Committee, Dec TBD, 2026; *in person*

Brian noted that Stan Malcom has stepped down from the Committee, therefore there will be a call for nominations for an Area 2C seat on the Committee. Letters of interest can be submitted to the Council.