



Guided Angler Fish Program 2016 Annual Report

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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.

