



## Charter Halibut Management Committee

### REPORT

October 21, 2022

The North Pacific Fishery Management Council's Charter Halibut Management Committee held an online public meeting October 21, 2022. At this meeting the Committee developed requests for analyses by ADF&G of potential halibut removals in 2023 under a range of management scenarios. The analyses will be reviewed by the Committee at a subsequent meeting prior to the December 2022 Council meeting and will inform their recommendations to the Council for charter halibut management measures in 2023. All meeting materials are posted to the eAgenda<sup>1</sup>.

#### Committee Members in Attendance:

|                                      |                        |  |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|--|
| Andy Mezirow (Area 3A), <i>Chair</i> | Mike Flores (Area 3A)  | Richard Yamada (Area 2C)                 |
| Seth Bone (Area 2C)                  | Kent Huff (Area 2C)    | Steve Zernia (Area 3A)                   |
| Forrest Braden (Area 2C)             | Matt Kopec (Area 3A)   | Brian Ritchie (Area 3A)                  |
| Daniel Donich (Area 3A)              | Stan Malcolm (Area 2C) | Sarah Marrinan, <i>Staff coordinator</i> |

#### Members Absent:

*None*

#### Others in Attendance:

|                     |                 |              |
|---------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Sarah Webster       | Kayla Carr      | Mason Smith  |
| Ben Jevons          | Shelby Restrepo | Kurt Iverson |
| Brianna Bowman King | Kari Nore       | Tom Gemmel   |

#### Agency staff updates

Sarah Webster (ADF&G) provided an update on ADF&G Sport Fish Division staff changes. Bob Powers and Jim Hasbrouck have both recently retired. ADF&G has welcomed a number of new staff including:

- Adam Reimer, Chief Fisheries Scientist
- Brianna Bowman King, Statewide Bottomfish Coordinator/Fishery Biologist,
- Ben Jevons, Guide Registration and Logbook Program Coordinator,
- Kayla Carr, Logbook Program Research Analyst, and
- Shelby Restrepo, Fishery Biologist working with the Logbook Program as well as the Statewide Harvest Survey.

Kurt Iverson (NMFS) spoke to three topics that may be of interest to the Committee. Firstly, that NMFS intends to provide an electronic option for renewing Charter Halibut Permits, and this may be available as early as 2023. Secondly, Kurt notified the Committee that NMFS will be submitting a proposal to the

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<sup>1</sup> <https://meetings.npfmc.org/Meeting/Details/2956>

IPHC during the interim meeting, which if adopted, would allow consumption of one fillet of halibut on board a vessel while fishing. Current regulations prohibit this, due to concerns over the enforceability of bag limits. Finally, Kurt provided a brief update on the status of the RQE funding bill in the U.S. Congress. Although previously attached to a large bill with a different version passing both the House and the Senate, that bill has been passed in a much different form which does not include the RQE language. There is still a chance that language could get added to another bill (e.g., house budget bill), but unclear whether it will pass through this legislative session.

## **Final 2021 and preliminary 2022 charter halibut harvest estimates**

Brianna Bowman King (ADF&G) presented the final estimates of charter harvest for 2021 and preliminary harvest estimates for 2022. The estimated removals for Area 2C and 3A were remarkably consistent with estimates presented last year in October. For Area 2C, the estimated removals were at 1.163 million lb which was 43.6% over its allocation for 2021. For Area 3A, total removals were at 2.455 million lb, representing a 25.9% overage. The overages last year were primarily driven by the uncertainty of the continuing pandemic on tourism and charter effort. Given the low harvest and effort of 2020, a “COVID-buffer” had been applied in 2021 with the expectation effort would still be down. Realized numbers associated with harvest and effort were generally back up to pre-pandemic levels in 2021.

For 2022, preliminary estimates showed 0.844 million lb of removals in Area 2C for a 2.9% overage relative to the allocation. Preliminary estimates for Area 3A showed 1.77 million lb, for an underage of 16% relative to the allocation. The Committee discussed a few reasons for this underage in Area 3A. While the harvest was a little higher than predicted (167,090 relative to 159,563 fish predicted), the average weight was lower than expected (10.53 lb relative to the predicted 13.02 lb). This may have to do with more people choosing to retain a second fish and it may be related to the IPHC revising the length-weight relationship chart by Area. Some members suggested less trips occurred due to the high price of fuel and poor weather in South Central this summer.

## **Management Measures for Analysis for 2023**

### **Area 2C**

The Charter Halibut Management Committee members request the following harvest measures for analysis for the 2023 fishing season:

- Reverse slot limit with U35-U50 on the low end and O50-O80 on the high end.
- Reverse slot limit with U35-U50 on the low end and O80 on the high end, analyzed with a day of the week closure starting from the end of the season (after September 15) working to the beginning of the season (before May 15) for each day of the week.
- Reverse slot limit with U35-U50 on the low end and O80 on the high end, analyzed with two day of the week closures (for each combination of days with at least two days between closures) starting from the end of the season (after September 15) working to the beginning of the season (before May 15).
- Annual limits of 2-3 fish, in combination with each of the above options.

### **Area 3A**

The Charter Halibut Management Committee requested the following management measures for analysis for Area 3A for 2023. Unless otherwise noted, all scenarios include one trip per vessel per day, one trip per charter halibut permit per day:

1. Maximum size limit of 26 – 32 inches on one fish combined with one or more Tuesday closures from June 01 – August 31 or for the entire season, with Wednesdays closed all season
2. Status quo with all Tuesdays closed and additional days closed on Mondays or Thursdays combined with maximum size limits, with Wednesdays closed all season

3. Maximum size limit on one fish combined with annual limits of 2 – 4 fish, with Wednesdays closed all season
4. Maximum size limit on one fish combined with annual limits of 2 – 4 fish and Tuesday closures, with Wednesdays closed all season
5. Status quo with all days of the week open and a season closure prior to May 16 or June 1 and after July 31, with Wednesdays closed all season
6. Maximum size limit of 26 – 32 inches on one fish combined with one or more Wednesday closures from June 01 – August 31 or for the entire season

### **Future meetings**

The Charter Halibut Management Committee reviewed the following upcoming meetings:

- The IPHC will hold its Interim meeting **Nov 30 – Dec 1, 2022.**
- The Charter Halibut Management Committee is scheduled to meet **Wednesday Dec 7, 2022** (in-person/ virtual) to review ADF&G analysis of predicted charter halibut removals and provide final recommendations of 2023 management measures.
- The Council and its Advisory Panel will meet **Dec 8-13, 2022** and will receive the Charter Halibut Management Committee report and provide recommendations to the IPHC.
- The IPHC will hold its Annual Meeting **Jan 23-27, 2023**