



Charter Halibut Management Committee

REPORT

1-4 PM, December 3, 2018, Anchorage, AK

The Charter Halibut Management Committee met in Anchorage, AK on December 3, 2018 from 1 – 4 PM to review analysis of potential charter halibut management measures and recommend measures for implementation in 2019 in IPHC areas 2C and 3A.

Committee Members in attendance:

Andy Mezirow, Chairman
Steve Zernia
Matt Kopec
Dan Donich

Stan Malcolm
Kent Huff
Seth Bone
Denise May

Steve MacLean
Mike Flores (ph)

Members absent: Richard Yamada

Others in attendance:

Sarah Webster (ADF&G)
Jim Hasbrouck (ADF&G)
Bob Powers (ADF&G)
Forrest Braden
Natasha Hayden
Martin Schuster

Yvonne Yang
Tom Gemmell
Mel Erickson
Lara Erikson (IPHC ph)
Marian Ford
Steve Keith (IPHC ph)

Jim Martin
Jamie O'Connor
Brian Ritchie
Karla Bush (ADF&G)
Kurt Iverson (NOAA)
Kristen Labrecque

2019 Charter Halibut Management Measures

Ms. Sarah Webster (ADF&G) presented the results of the analysis of management measures for charter halibut fisheries in Areas 2C and 3A for 2019. After review and discussion of the analysis, the committee recommended the following management measures:

In Area 2C

If the allocation is 0.81 MIb: Status Quo. One fish bag limit, with a reverse slot limit allowing the harvest of one fish less than or equal to 38 inches or greater than or equal to 80 inches.

If the allocation is above or below 0.81 MIb adjust the lower limit of the reverse slot limit up or down to keep the projected harvest within the allocation.

In Area 3A

Two fish daily bag limit with a 28-inch maximum size limit on one fish, four-fish annual limit, one trip per vessel per permit per day, Wednesday closure all year and:

Adjust Tuesday closures according to Table 15 in ADF&G analysis of proposed harvest regulations for 2019 to bring the projected harvest within the Area 3A allocation. If the allocation is above

2.023 million pounds, adjust the size of the second fish, up to a maximum of 30 inches, to keep the charter harvest within their allocation.

The committee notes that they have chosen precautionary management measures in the past to keep their harvest within their allocation and note that for the 2018 management measures they recommended more closed days than were ultimately put in regulation. The committee encourages the Council and IPHC to continue to act conservatively to keep the Area 3A charter harvest within their allocation.

Rationale:

Area 2C representatives noted that Status Quo regulations project a harvest that is slightly above the projected allocation, but feel that the projected overage is due to an optimistic estimate of angler effort. Area 2C representatives feel that the smaller lower limit of the reverse slot limit imposed in 2018 will result in reduced bookings for 2019, and report that bookings for 2019 are below bookings for 2018 at the same point last year. Additionally, restrictions in king salmon fishing, while not analyzed in the current analysis, will exacerbate continuing halibut harvest restrictions to further drive bookings down. For these reasons the Area 2C representatives feel that status quo management measures will keep the area 2C charter halibut sector within their allocation for 2019. Area 2c representatives also point out that management measures adopted in the past have resulted in harvests that did not meet the full allocation in most years.

Area 3A representatives note that a 28% increase in Area 3A distributed mortality may not be a realistic outcome of the January IPHC meeting. Continued large fluctuations in distributed mortality and management measures that attempt to address these fluctuations, either up or down, are not good for business planning. Area 3A representatives feel that although restricting the upper limit of the maximum size of the second fish may result in some halibut “left in the water”, management measures requested for analysis did not include a second fish larger than 30 inches, and recognize that the charter halibut fishery in Area 3A has been over their allocation in recent years. Therefore, it is reasonable to limit the Area 3A charter catch to 2.088 million pounds, the maximum projected catch with no closed Tuesdays and a 30-inch limit on the second fish.

Other issues:

Chairman Mezirow addressed public comment received and posted on the Council agenda.

The committee approved the following proposal:

The Charter Halibut Management Committee requests that the Council consider revising the Halibut Catch Sharing Plan to reduce the halibut harvest limits for non-guided anglers when halibut abundance reaches a certain level. The intention is that any halibut savings would not be redirected to other halibut sectors (charter, directed, or PSC) but remain in the water as a conservation measure.

POST-MEETING AMENDMENT

After publication of draft minutes, and at the request of the committee chairman, the proposal above should be modified to indicate that the modification to the Halibut Catch Sharing Plan would apply only to unguided anglers in Area 2C. Unguided anglers in Area 3A would not be affected by any modifications to the Halibut CSP.

The Committee discussed disparity in the published halibut length/weight tables from the IPHC and length and weight recorded from various halibut derbies in Alaska and published world records. Mr. Steve Keith (IPHC) noted that the IPHC has initiated a study to examine the halibut length and weight relationship with the intention to revise those tables, if necessary, in the future.

The committee discussed the possibility of considering charter halibut management measures on an extra-annual timescale, such as using a 3-year rolling average. No additional action was recommended.

Public Comment:

Mr. Tom Gemmell provided public comment.