



NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE



Revised 3-11-2011 in orange font

Charter Halibut – 2011 IPHC Recommendations

Halibut Fishery Management

The International Pacific Halibut Commission (IPHC) manages the halibut resource and fisheries under an international agreement between the United States and Canada. The IPHC meets annually to review the status of the halibut stock and halibut research, as well as recommend catch limits by IPHC regulatory area and changes in regulations. The IPHC recommendations are implemented in the United States by the Northern Pacific Halibut Act, which provides that the Secretary of State, with the concurrence of the Secretary of Commerce, may accept or reject halibut fishery regulations recommended by the IPHC. In addition, the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) may develop halibut fishery regulations, not in conflict with IPHC regulations, that allocate the halibut resource among U.S. fishermen in and off of Alaska. Visit the websites for the IPHC (www.iphc.int) and NPFMC (<http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/npfmc/>) to get involved and learn about the regulation process and halibut fishery management.

IPHC Recommendation for a 37-inch Maximum Size Restriction in Area 2C

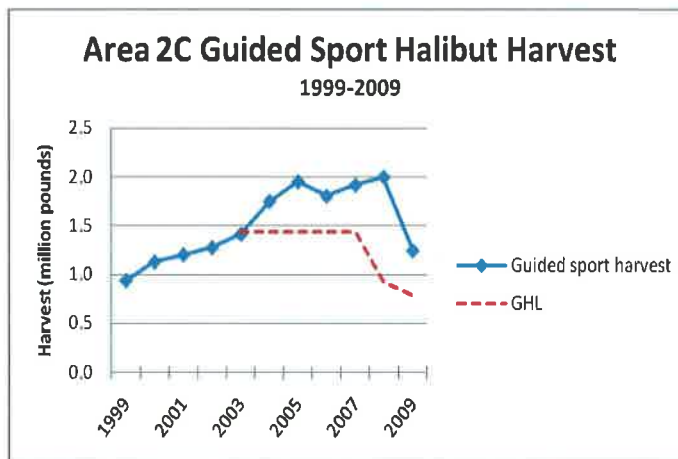
At the IPHC 2011 Annual Meeting, the Commissioners recommended continuation of a one-fish daily bag limit implemented by NOAA Fisheries in 2009, with an additional restriction that the retained fish be no longer than 37 inches, total length. The length limit was selected to reduce the harvest of halibut in Area 2C (Southeast Alaska) to the Guideline Harvest Level (GHL). The calculation used to determine the size limit was based on an assumption that the 2011 harvest (in number of fish) would be slightly less than the 2010 projection, and that each fish harvested would be of a size equal to the maximum limit. This length limit will require a charter angler to retain the carcass until landing, when halibut are filleted at sea, so enforcement officers can verify compliance with the length restriction. Each halibut filleted at sea may only be cut into no more than 2 ventral pieces, 2 dorsal pieces, and 2 cheek pieces, with skin on all pieces. Contact IPHC staff with questions about the recommendations at 206-634-1838.

NOAA Fisheries implemented the regulatory recommendations of the IPHC due to concerns over declining halibut stocks.

Background on Management of the Charter Halibut Fishery

Since 2007, the charter fishery in Area 2C has been subject to numerous restrictions implemented by NOAA Fisheries in an attempt to more closely align charter harvest with the GHL; charter anglers are currently restricted to a one-halibut daily bag limit. These measures have not been sufficient to maintain the charter harvest within the GHL. Halibut harvest in the Southeast Alaska charter fishery, Area 2C, has exceeded established annual GHLs, approved by the Secretary of Commerce, each year since 2004.

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The NPFMC recommended a limited access program for the charter sector, which was effective on February 1, 2011. Although the limited access program is expected to stabilize participation in the charter sector, it is not anticipated to reduce charter harvest. The NPFMC also recommended the halibut Catch Sharing Plan (CSP) to establish an allocation of halibut between the charter and commercial fishing sectors and implement a framework of management measures that are intended to keep the halibut harvest by the charter fishery within its allocation. The plan also would allow charter operators to lease individual fishing quota from commercial halibut quota holders to offer charter clients an opportunity to harvest additional halibut. The Proposed Rule for the CSP should be available for public comment in March or April 2011. If approved, it would replace the GHL policy in 2012.

Each year, the IPHC estimates the exploitable biomass of halibut using a combination of harvest data from the commercial, recreational, and subsistence fisheries, as well as information collected during scientific surveys and sampling of bycatch in other fisheries. At its 2010 Annual Meeting, the IPHC served notice to the public that it would consider action for 2011 in the absence of effective management of the charter harvest in Area 2C. At the 2011 IPHC Annual Meeting, the Commission noted that the NPFMC approved a CSP to more effectively manage harvest by the charter sector in IPHC Areas 2C (Southeast Alaska) and 3A (Central Gulf of Alaska). The Commission also noted that the CSP for Area 2C fisheries has not yet been approved, and thus recommended regulatory action this year designed to restrict charter harvest of halibut in Area 2C to the NPFMC GHL implemented by NOAA Fisheries in 2003.